

## **Pick Up Your Cross and Teach: A Practical Theological Exploration of the Integration of ‘Cruciformity’ on the Roles of Teachers in South Africa**

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### **Abstract**

*Literature indicates that the South African education sector is under pressure, with teachers leaving the profession. It is evident that teachers are demotivated, anxious, and lack job satisfaction. One aspect linked to improved job satisfaction is spirituality. Spirituality has been shown to impact the way people see the world and how they find meaning, purpose, and direction as they live out their spirituality through their narrative as their calling from God.*

*With this in mind, this article employs an exploratory approach within the field of practical theology to contribute to the perspective of Christian teachers’ roles in South African public schools. The aim is to provide new perspectives for Christian teachers that could potentially improve job satisfaction as they live out their spirituality as their life narrative.*

*The article first explores Dr. Michael J. Gorman’s four seminal works on the topic of ‘Cruciformity.’ Gorman examines Paul’s narrative spirituality, which is cross-shaped according to Paul’s Master Story in Philippians 2 within the missio Dei towards theosis. This section ends with an extraction of the four main characteristics of the cruciform life. Gorman’s work was chosen for its unique focus on how Paul understands his narrative spirituality and how this can be linked to how teachers experience their spirituality in their unique narratives at their schools.*

*Second, education policies regarding the roles of educators in South African public schools are explored. Six main roles, which encompass all the guidelines on the roles of educators in various policies, have been identified.*

*Finally, the four characteristics of cruciform living are integrated into the six roles of educators, offering a unique perspective on how teachers can understand their roles through a cruciform lens. The hope is that these insights will inspire Christian teachers to adopt a cruciform lens, embracing their ‘cross’ as they teach to the glory of God.*

### **1. Introduction**

The education sector in South Africa has been critiqued several times as teachers display low morale and high job dissatisfaction (Mc Ilrath et al. 2021:897). Poor

learner performance and an underperforming education system has seen the South African public focus in on education in South Africa (Botha and Hugo, 2021:65). With pressure mounting from the public, district officials have set out data that almost 250 teachers leave the education sector per month in South Africa, indicating a deep loss of passion for teaching (Bantwini, 2019:721-722). Thaba-Nkadimene (2020:8) explains that low morale among teachers can be attributed to inadequate infrastructure, insufficient educational resources, and poor working conditions. Mboweni and Taole (2022:34-35) explains even further that lack of parental involvement in the lives of learners, increasing violence in schools and insufficient developmental programs all are factors which play a role in the low attrition rates of South African teachers.

The statistics do not look good as researchers have used current data to predict what the future of the South African education landscape would look like. Böhmer and Gustafsson (2023:33) produced predictions on the future to the year 2034 per province. What they show is that a significant number of teachers will be retiring in the years to come, but more alarming is that the number of teachers leaving education before the age of retirement will increase to the point that those leaving are far more than those retiring. All these factors and more are confirmed by a recent literature review study using a scoping review method which ended with 17 literature sources on low job satisfaction factors amongst teachers in South Africa. The study found the following factors which led to the low job satisfaction of South African teachers: Inadequate leadership, lack of support and training from the department of education side, high workload, large class sizes as well as inadequate resources to handle all of the students in one class, poor academic performance as well as substance abuse while parent involvement has diminished, insufficient school infrastructure and resources including technological resources and funding, safety concerns for both students and teachers as well as a lack of recognition (Fourie & de Klerk, 2024:8-11). This reality is equally relevant for Christian teachers working in public schools. As workloads and pressures on teachers have increased over time, pastoral care entered the education sector in the 1950s and has since grown into an established support system (Carroll, 2010:146-147). Baloyi (2016:3-5) found that these teachers face the same challenges as others, with the added pressure of living out their faith in the workplace. The church plays an influential role in South African schools, often through School Governing Body (SGB) members and local Christian teachers. Pastoral care and counselling are essential for supporting both teacher well-being and student needs, while collaboration between churches, schools, and communities can enhance educational outcomes (Baloyi, 2016:5-6).

It is clear that South African public-school teachers are dealing with various challenges that contribute to low job satisfaction, and Christian teachers are no exception. Calls for churches to provide guidance, mentorship, and pastoral care have been highlighted as crucial. Baloyi (2022:8) states that practical theologians

and pastors cannot be silent or absent with regards to the dire state of teaching in South Africa. The study recommended that theologians go the extra mile to reach and pastor teachers as they take hands with all stake holders in South African education sector. This study seeks to answer the call and contribute to this conversation by introducing cruciform narrative spirituality as a resource for teachers, principals, pastors and spiritual guides. This framework can support Christian teachers in public schools to better understand their calling, find meaning, and glorify God in their work as Christian teachers.

## **2. Key Terms and Definitions**

Before advancing to the next sections of this argument, it is important to define key theological terms for readers less familiar with theological studies. All of these terms are explained in greater detail in the works of Gorman, which I will delve into in a later section. My hope is that teachers, whether they have theological training or not, will feel at ease reading the rest of the article hence the brief disruption in the argument. Although “spirituality” is explored in detail later, *narrative spirituality*—the central focus of this article—refers to a spirituality that embodies the story of Christ, following His life story in one’s own life. Michael Gorman coined the term *cruciformity* to describe this narrative spirituality that aligns itself with Christ’s story, a concept that will be further elaborated upon.

The *telos* of living a cruciform narrative spirituality is a journey from *kenosis* to theosis as part of the *missio Dei*. *Kenosis*, derived from Philippians 2, is the theological term for Christ’s act of self-emptying to become human. It involves relinquishing power and embracing vulnerability. This self-emptying, however, is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means to becoming *theotic*. Theotic living, another theological term, represents a way of life that aligns with the mindset of God, wherein one’s relinquishment of power and acceptance of vulnerability allows life and “resurrection” to emerge within the community—in this context, the classroom. This narrative spirituality cannot be lived in isolation. To become theotic, one must take part in the mission God is working out in the world (called the *missio Dei*). This means that being inclusive to others, calling them into the life and work of God is what constitutes a fully *theotic* life.

It is also important to take note that this article does not propose a theology of work, but rather a narrative spirituality true to the cross. Scholarly works on a theology of work, and a theology of work within education have been written.<sup>1</sup> This was not the goal of this article, rather it is a way of life, a way of thinking about teaching. This article aims at shifting paradigms in the way teachers view themselves in the world as Christian’s in public schools, navigating this difficult terrain.

A person who lives a cruciform narrative spirituality as a Christian teacher in a

public school becomes progressively more Christ-like, more aligned with the image of God, fulfilling humanity's call to reflect God's likeness. This ultimate transformation is what could be called *theosis*.

### **3. Job Satisfaction**

From the above sections it is evident that South Africa needs to find a way to boost the job satisfaction of teachers. It would be wise to gain a better understanding of the term 'job satisfaction' at this point. A leading scholar on the topic of job satisfaction is Edwin Locke (1969:316) who defined job satisfaction as follows: Job satisfaction is a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" and that "job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one's job and what one perceives it as offering or entailing." After Lock, job satisfaction was also defined by Glisson and Durrick (1988:75) as "the positive outcome arising from the interplay of job task characteristics, role clarity, and the skills of the worker, combined with the organizational attributes" while a more recent definition is stated by Rao and Karumuri (2019:192) as "all the feelings that an individual has about his/her job. It is an affective reaction to a job that results from the person's comparison of actual outcomes this with those that are desired, anticipated, or deserved." The outcomes one perceives in a job lead to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Job satisfaction has many factors which impact the way outcomes are perceived. Researchers discovered that teachers who find purpose and meaning in their work (Klussman, Nichols & Langner, 2021:97-98), maintain a healthy work spirituality (Suárez, 2015:10), and those who can fulfill their calling (Madero, 2020:179-181) experience greater job satisfaction and higher morale. Interestingly, these three factors are all interconnected through spirituality. This concurs with other researchers pointing out that religiosity and participation in religious devotions such as prayer and mass increase overall job satisfaction at work, even if the participation is outside of work (Wnuk, 2018:289-291, Bednarczuk, 2019:269-270). At work, managers and leaders who promote spiritual values and make an effort to form the organization around these values will have workers with higher job satisfaction (Van der Walt & de Klerk, 2014:8-9, Dik, Daniels & Alayan, 2024:285-291). It seems that spirituality plays an important role in the way people live out their lives at work. The following statement made by Lianto (2023:279) points out that the way people live out their spirituality at work can play a vital role in how they perceive their work:

People do not abandon their spirit element when they set off from home to work. This is what makes the spirituality aspect undeniable in the world of work. Only when a man works by including the heart (spirit), the meaning of work is discovered. Through the work done with the heart, man can reveal his whole and fullness. A workplace is a place of holistic fulfillment

of human beings.

With these perspectives, it becomes clear that spirituality can play a significant role in enhancing job satisfaction. Christian teachers do not set aside their spirituality or religious orientation when entering the school environment, making this article especially relevant. The cruciform narrative spirituality I propose is not focused on evangelization—an approach that could present challenges in public schools—but rather on a way of life. It is not about telling people about the narrative of Christ, but rather living the narrative of Christ. This approach offers Christian teachers' tools to find meaning and purpose in their work as they navigate their daily responsibilities in public school settings.

#### **4. Spirituality**

According to Buck (2006:289-290) spirituality can be defined as “that most human of experiences that seeks to transcend self and find meaning and purpose through connection with others, nature, and/or a Supreme Being, which may or may not involve religious structures or traditions.” Kourie (2010:26) investigates a plethora of definitions of spirituality and summarizes the term as follows: “spirituality in general refers to the values to which we subscribe which give meaning and orientation to our lives. Spirituality entails the ongoing harmonious integration of the whole human person.” From these definitions one sees that spirituality encompasses the whole human and provides meaning, purpose and direction in life. This means that teachers who have a Christian spirituality do not leave their spirituality by the door as they enter a school, rather, spirituality shapes and dictate how teachers go about their day. This makes spirituality a viable option to explore when guiding teachers to find meaning and purpose in their work.

With the above in mind, the central research question that we want to explore can be stated as follows: What can we learn from the work of Michael Gorman and his concept of cruciformity that can be integrated into the workplace spirituality of teachers?

The work of Michael Gorman on Cruciformity focuses on the narrative spirituality of Paul <sup>2</sup>. By investigating the cruciformity concept as lived narrative spirituality, teachers can use this as a model to develop their own lived narrative spirituality. Christian teachers in public schools cannot evangelize or attempt to persuade students of specific Christian doctrines on their own initiative. However, they can embody their Christian spirituality as the guiding narrative of their lives—this is where cruciformity, as a form of narrative spirituality, holds significant strength. This explorative work goes hand in hand with the way Jürgen Moltmann viewed his theological writings, as contributions, not set in stone, but explorative, in dialogue, with the hope of stimulating thoughts and inspiring deeper thinking in the way Christian teachers view their spirituality and their work (Bauckham,

2006:4) The purpose of the article is to focus on the following three aspects:

1. First we will start to elucidate the concept of 'cruciformity' by conducting a analysis of Michael Gorman's four seminal works to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the topic.
2. Then we will examine the contemporary expectations of South African teachers through a detailed review of current education policies.
3. In a third round we will try to synthesize the concept of cruciformity with the professional expectations of teachers by offering cruciform practical theological perspectives on educational practices.

### **5. "Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross" (2001) <sup>3</sup>**

Gorman uses Paul's undisputed letters to uncover the core of Paul's theology and ethics: conformity to the crucified Christ. This is a lived theology mediated by a relationship with the God of Israel, revealed in Jesus Christ. This relationship and ethics are extended to Paul's communities (Gorman, 2021:2-12).

Paul was radically changed when he experienced God in Christ (1 Cor 1:21) (Gorman, 2021:9-10). Paul urged followers of Christ to transform their lives into images of the life of Christ as seen in faith, hope and love which culminates in the self-sacrifice on the cross (Gorman, 2021:13). Paul had an unformulated Triune understanding where Christ as the image of God, reveals God's glory, and the Spirit transforming believers into Christ's image (Gorman, 2021: 46-52).

Gorman sees the centrality of the cross in the way Paul intertwines both the suffering and death of Christ in his own lived narrative (Gorman, 2021:29-30). Through an exegetical analysis Gorman identifies narrative patterns such as obedience, love, grace, sacrifice, altruism, self-giving, voluntary abasement, incarnation, paradoxical power, interchange, apocalyptic victory, reconciliation, and resurrection (Gorman, 2021:71-76). Gorman also identifies Philippians 2:6-11 as 'Paul's Master Story,' a pattern which he sees in all of Paul's letters (Gorman, 2007:150). Gorman then summarizes a final set of 'cruciform patterns' which he sees throughout Paul's letters and the 'Master Story' which are: faithful obedience, voluntary self-giving love, life-giving suffering, and transformative power in weakness (Gorman, 2021:79-80). For Paul, this cruciform way of life must be a living narrative shaping ethics for him (Gorman 2022:15-16) and his communities (Gorman, 2021:80). We will now discuss the 4 crucial cruciform patterns.

### **6. Cruciform Faith(fullness)**

Cruciform faith is fundamental to living a cruciform life (Pickett, 2016:6). Gorman understands the life of Jesus as a model for believers. This is due to Jesus' faithfulness to His Father. (Gorman, 2021:94-95, 111). This way of life

is paradoxically both liberation and enslavement coexisting in a life of obedient humility, liberation from evil with the end culmination of glory (Gorman, 2021:121). This faith is the initiation into the community of Christ as one manifest authentic Christian quality in all circumstances (Picket, 2016:7).

### **7. Cruciform Love**

“Cruciform love” mirrors Christ’s self-sacrifice and other centeredness demonstrated on the cross (Picket, 2016:8), serving both as an act of faith and love that rectifies relational disorder vertically with God and horizontally among creation. This love epitomizes self-giving and other-regarding love, vividly portrayed on the cross and exemplified by Christ, the quintessential human act according to Paul (Gorman, 2021:162). Gorman defines cruciform love as faith in action, seeking others’ good, welcoming diversity, being hospitable, and generous, especially to the marginalized, continuing the cross’s story (Gorman, 2021:240). Justification by faith and sanctification through cruciform love are inseparably connected, as Christian love involves dedicating oneself to others, becoming truly in the image of the God who is love (Bromiley, 1980:230-232).

### **8. Cruciform Power**

Gorman defines “power” as the ability to exert significant control or influence, whether positively or negatively, over individuals and history (Gorman, 2021:247). Christ’s divine power manifests through perceived weakness, contrasting human expectations (Gorman, 2021: 253). This power, seen in Christ’s crucifixion, reveals God’s strength most profoundly in weakness. Gorman draws from Seeley, noting how Philippians 2:6-11 subverts traditional notions of power and honor by attributing these to Jesus instead of power-hungry emperors. This hymn underscores Christ’s kenosis, where power is epitomized in weakness and self-sacrificial love (Gorman, 2021:254-256). Practically, Christians in leadership exemplify cruciform power through humility and Christ-informed interactions, guiding others with love and vulnerability (Picket, 2016:12). <sup>4</sup>

### **9. Cruciform Hope**

Cruciform hope moves beyond merely longing or hoping for a future resurrection. It encompasses a critical view to all utopian ideologies while hoping in a total renewal of the creation when Christ gloriously returns (Gorman 2021:301). Until this happens, cruciform hope is the belief that those who share in Christ’s suffering will also share in His resurrection and glory, a divine work initiated by God that ensures that those who co-suffer with Christ will ultimately be raised from the dead and enter into glory with Christ and creation (Gorman, 2021:279-300). Practically, those embodying cruciform hope maintain courageous joy regardless of circumstance as Christians share in others’ suffering and/or persecution, showing compassion and mercy (Picket, 2016:14) .

I will now explore ‘Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and

Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology,' published in 2009. My analysis will specifically concentrate on sections where Gorman's ideas on cruciformity have evolved or become more profound.

#### **10. Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology (2009)**

The book "Inhabiting the Cruciform God" expands on Gorman's "Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross," exploring the idea that God reveals Himself in the crucified Christ. Gorman's thesis is that Paul's soteriology is theosis, offering a fresh perspective (Gorman, 2009:1-2).

Gorman investigates Paul's soteriological understanding of what it means to be justified over against and critiquing 'cheap justification'. For Paul, transformative participation in faith(fullness) is true justification. This way of life goes beyond mere ethical considerations but stretches into praxis. This praxis is our co-crucifixion towards co-resurrection with Christ which integrates integrating faith, love, power (justice), and hope (Stephens, 2020:331; Gorman, 2009:63-77). Justification satisfies covenant requirements by addressing both vertical (God-oriented) and horizontal (human-oriented) dimensions, leading to reconciliation and transformation through faith and love (Gorman, 2009:48-62).

For Paul then, the telos of cruciformity is the path towards theosis, which signifies restoring humans to God's lost likeness from Genesis 1 (Hooper, 2017:4). Gorman defines theosis as "transformative participation in the kenotic, cruciform character of God through the Spirit-enabled conformity to the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected/glorified Christ" (Gorman, 2009:7). It's crucial to clarify that theosis does not mean humanity becomes divine but rather regains the original image broken by the fall (Hooper, 2017:4), maintaining the creature-creator distinction (Gorman, 2011:17). Theosis combines kenosis (emptying oneself) and pleriosis (becoming full), reflecting that humans are most like God when they act kenotically (Gorman, 2009:48).

#### **11. Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission (2015)**

In "Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission," Gorman argues that Paul wanted early Christian communities to conform to the life of Christ, not just believe it. This concept of cruciformity is central to Gorman's trilogy on Paul's teachings (Gorman, 2015:2). The book argues that theosis and mission are intertwined and addresses critiques of previous works by emphasizing participation in Christ's life and mission, which was previously only touched on (Gorman, 2015:3-5).

Gorman explores Paul's perspective on participation in God's mission (*missio Dei*), emphasizing its transformative impact. The *missio Dei* is defined as God's active role in reconciling the world, inviting human participation (Thiane, 2021:3)<sup>5</sup>. Paul's vision of holistic salvation transforms believers' lives, both

internally and externally, through active participation in Christ's life, empowered by the Holy Spirit (Gorman, 2015:23-26). This participation encompasses salvation, liberation, peace, and justification, evident in terms like co-witness, co-heirs, co-suffer, and co-glorified (Gorman, 2015:33). Paul's communities embodied cruciform lives, challenging cultural norms and facing persecution, thereby setting the stage for evangelism (Gorman, 2015:36-41). Gorman bridges the gap between evangelism and justice, presenting cruciformity as a lifestyle affecting people both theologically and ethically (Gorman, 2013:83). This participatory approach entails individual believers expressing their cruciform lives uniquely in different contexts, emphasizing contextualization (Gorman, 2015:41).

Ultimately, a deeply contextualized church, like Jesus incarnate in Phil 2:6-11, authentically embodies God's mission, presenting a compelling, culturally relevant gospel interpretation (Gorman, 2015:151). The next section will explore the new elements of Cruciform Peace and Cruciform Justice as effects of joining the *missio Dei*.

## **12. Cruciform Peace**

Gorman introduces peace as a new element in cruciform living, viewing it as the fullness of life promised by God, encompassing health, wholeness, and harmony with God, others, and creation (Gorman, 2015:143-148). The church is meant to embody this divine peace as they participate in the *missio Dei* (Gorman, 2015:150-154).

For Paul, peace is a moral and missional imperative, requiring the church to be a haven of peace in a violent world, both internally and externally, to credibly witness God's reconciliation through Christ (Gorman, 2015:159-167). Christians are called to transform the world through forgiveness and harmony, becoming peacemakers who reflect God's peace (Gorman, 2015:192-195; 206-207).

## **13. Cruciform Justice**

Gorman intertwines justice with spirituality and mission, viewing justice as a spiritual dimension rooted in communion with God and integral to cruciform living (Gorman, 2015:212-221). Gorman critiques translation biases that separate 'justice' from 'justification,' emphasizing that for Paul, justification is a transformative process leading to cruciform justice (Gorman, 2015:222-224). The church must embody this justice, offering a place where people can leave unjust ways and experience God's love and peace (Gorman, 2015:225).

Cruciform justice, as Paul understood it, reshapes individuals and communities to absorb injustice rather than inflict it, focusing on embodying a new way of being 'just' rather than fighting every social ill (Gorman, 2015:237; 255-256). Love for God and neighbor fuses spirituality and justice, with the church embodying divine justice and engaging in a cosmic mission of justice and peace,

albeit partially in a fallen world (Gorman, 2015:257-258).

#### **14. Scholarly Critiques**

Before moving on to Gorman's last book, it is important to understand the scholarly critiques he has received over the years on cruciformity since the 2019 book is an answer to the concerns raised. The next paragraph will provide a short overview of the critiques, and then the last book will be discussed:

Tan (2017:174, 178-179) critiques Gorman for insufficiently addressing the resurrection, using a 2007 article that predates Gorman's 2009 book focusing more on resurrection. Finlan (2008:68-80) argues that Paul emphasizes conformity to Jesus's resurrection over crucifixion, citing Philippians 3:10-11. Boakye (2016:58) contends that Gorman's focus on cruciformity risks diminishing the importance of the resurrection, advocating for a continuous, daily experience of resurrection. While agreeing that overemphasis on kenosis can create imbalance, White (2022:172-194) suggests a co-inherent understanding where cruciformity and resurrection mutually qualify each other. However, White's critique only references Gorman's first book, not acknowledging the evolution of his concept. In the next section, I will explore Gorman's fourth book, where he addresses these critiques by re-examining Paul's understanding of cruciformity and resurrection.

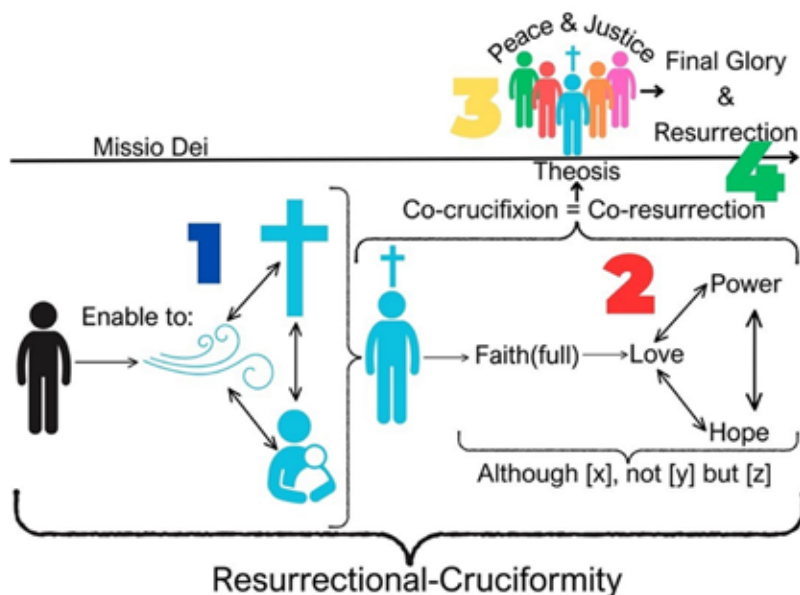
#### **15. Participating in Christ – Exploration in Paul's Theology and Spirituality' (2019)**

In answering these critiques, Gorman provides his rebuttal in 'Participating in Christ – Exploration in Paul's Theology and Spirituality' (2019), explaining his (and Paul's) view on the relationship between crucifixion and resurrection, aiming to understand the interplay between cruciformity and resurrection (Gorman, 2019:77-79). Examining 2 Cor 3-5, particularly 4:7-12, he argues that Paul's experience is better characterized by "participation" and "conformity" to Christ rather than "imitation" (Gorman, 2019:88-92). Gorman proposes "resurrection-suffused" to describe the coexistence of cruciformity and resurrection, highlighting the paradoxical participation in both Good Friday and Easter (Gorman, 2019:92-94). Newbegin supports this, stating the church bears the dying and rising of Jesus (Newbegin, 1995:52). Gorman suggests "resurrectional-cruciformity" to capture the dual embodiment of suffering and glory in the Christian journey, emphasizing that cruciform living is central in the fallen world (Gorman, 2019:93-95). Gupta echoes this by advocating a cruciform hope for future vindication (Gupta, 2022:328). Gorman concludes that present participation in Christ is "resurrection-empowered and resurrection-suffused but cross-shaped," urging critics to recognize that full resurrection glory awaits in the future (Gorman, 2017:74-75).

#### **16. Summary and Model of Cruciformity**

After analysing the 4 works by Gorman on cruciformity and Paul's narrative

spirituality, we will now set out the main points in the following model which will be used to synthesize the concept of cruciformity with the professional expectations of teachers by offering cruciform perspectives on educational practices.



1. Participation in the works of the Triune God is the first part of cruciformity. It is the participation of the whole person which undergoes a transformation.
2. This is a kenotic way of living as one faithfully live out cruciform love, hope and power as one becomes 'co-crucified' in Christ. The aim of this is a theotic living, with Christ being the image of God. The more we become like Christ, the more we become the image of God.
3. The theotic life calls us to participate in the mission of God, which is a life bringing peace and justice to all who cross our path.
4. Lastly, this brings final glory and resurrection to all. This is God's heart and mission.

The next section will give a brief overview of policy providing teachers' roles in schools. These roles will then be synthesized with the above four points to provide a perspective of a cruciform Christian teacher in South Africa.

## **17. Roles of Educators in South Africa**

Teachers recognize that they have specific roles and responsibilities outlined in various policies and documents. However, as noted earlier, Christian teachers do not set aside their convictions and beliefs when entering the school environment. Rather than adopting a dualistic approach, where either spirituality or professional responsibilities must be left behind, this article proposes a synthesis of spirituality

with the expectations of teacher roles and responsibilities as defined by policy. The following section will first outline the roles established in these policies and documents, then integrate them with cruciform narrative spirituality, offering Christian teachers a way to live out their spirituality within the established framework by reinterpreting these roles through a cruciform perspective.

Focusing on the role of teachers, various policies outline the specific duties educators must fulfill to be deemed competent in diverse and inclusive classrooms. These policies include the 'National Department of Education Duties and Responsibilities of Educators,' 'SACE (South African Council of Educators) Code of Conduct,' 'Education Labour Relations Council Manual for Developmental Appraisal,' the 'Committee for Teacher Education Policy (COTEP),' and the 'Norms and Standards for Teacher Educators.' Together, these documents create a consistent regulatory and developmental framework for educators, emphasizing democratic and human rights principles enshrined in the Constitution, while being adaptable to different contexts (Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson and Pillay, 2000: 294).

Harley et al. identified six key roles for educators that are consistently emphasized across these policies (Harley et al., 2000: 294). These roles are:

- A. Mediator of Learning
- B. Pastoral Role
- C. Administrator
- D. Designer of Learning Programs
- E. Lifelong Learner
- F. Community Developer and Citizen

However, Harley et al. also pointed out that while the policies clearly describe the ideal teacher, they often overlook the real-life teacher and the cultural and material constraints of classroom realities. This gap highlights the challenges in achieving the ideal teacher role (Harley *et al.*, 2000: 302). Morrow echoes this view, adding that these teacher roles assume students come from stable families with access to emotional support and health monitoring. In this ideal situation, teaching becomes the primary focus. However, given the challenges in South Africa such as urbanization, single-parent households, orphaned and vulnerable children, adult illiteracy, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and rising violence, schools must often prioritize caregiving responsibilities over teaching (Morrow, 2007: 16-17).

The above (A to F) roles of teachers will now be synthesized with the four cruciformity points to explore how Christian teachers living a cruciform lifestyle can fulfill the roles of good teachers in South Africa.

### **18. The Cruciform Teacher**

In the following section the roles of teachers from (A to F) will be synthesized with the four cruciformity points. This exploration will provide Christian teachers with new perspectives on how to view their roles theologically. This can potentially boost and motivate teachers as they perform these roles through a new cruciform lens.

### **19. Cruciform Participation and Teachers as Mediators of Learning, Administrators, Program and Learning Designers and Lifelong Learners**

As mediators of learning, teachers are expected to have sound knowledge of content and be well-prepared for lessons (Harley *et al.*, 2000:292). Administration of day-to-day tasks is also an integral part of a teacher's role, essential for performing at their best.

A cruciform teacher must recognize their call to the classroom. The classroom, where the teacher mediates learning, is the area where God is at work. A cruciform teacher enters this space with the mindset that the Triune God is already active in the classroom. Therefore, it is imperative that lessons meet high standards and that the teacher has adequate knowledge to deliver the required content, whether it involves administrative tasks or lesson planning. Teaching is more than just imparting knowledge; it is participating in the life and works of the Triune God as cruciform teachers answer the call to the classroom with faithfulness.

This calling can also motivate teachers to pursue lifelong learning. As participants called to the classroom by God, teachers must strive to be at their best. Being a lifelong learner benefits both the learners and the teacher. Moreover, knowing that you are continually improving your knowledge to answer this call is a form of doxology.

### **20. The Kenotic teacher and the Pastoral role**

Being involved in extracurricular activities such as sports, culture, and art, and looking after learners' well-being, is the pastoral role teachers take up (Harley *et al.*, 2000:292). Cruciform teachers, faithfully participating in the works of God, will live lives that showcase kenotic love, hope, and the use of power.

Teachers displaying cruciform love will put the needs of their learners above their own needs within healthy boundaries. Examples of this include teachers who stay in during breaks to listen to learners who need to talk or give up their free time to help a learner understand a concept. Cruciform use of power goes hand in hand with cruciform love, as cruciform teachers redefine power. This is where the "Master story" of Paul plays a crucial role. Even though teachers have a certain amount of authority over learners, cruciform teachers use this authority not to dominate learners, but to incarnate themselves into the worlds of their learners. These teachers use their power to uplift or resurrect the learners in their class or on their sports teams. Cruciform teachers will be vigilant about

how they utilize power and to what effect. For cruciform teachers, power will be used to bring resurrection to the broken in their classrooms. This culminates in cruciform hope. Cruciform teachers can hope in prayer. They can pray for their learners as they empty themselves of concerns about their learners. They can offer their learners to the living God in prayer. This hope can motivate teachers in their classrooms to engage with learners while embracing the kenotic lifestyle.

## **21. Cruciform Teachers Living a Missional Theotic Life Towards the Final Glorification of All**

Not all teachers see the need to participate in community development (Harley et al., 2000:293). Cruciform teachers, however, are already part of a community, the classroom community. They are also participants in the *missio Dei*, as the lives of each child and the day-to-day work of the school are all part of the arena where God is working towards His Kingdom. Teaching is by nature missional. Teachers are called and sent to a classroom community. Cruciform teachers, who are co-crucified with Christ, will bring cruciform justice and peace to this community in which they find themselves—the classroom community. Cruciform justice regarding race, class, gender, and ethnicity in the classroom will create an environment that is never divided or exclusionary. Cruciform peace, concerning the conduct of learners with learners and teachers with learners, will create a space of safety where both teachers and learners can feel cared for and loved.

The *telos* for a cruciform teacher participating in the mission of the Triune God, who lives the kenotic life of love, power, and hope, bringing peace and justice to their classroom community, is the classroom becoming a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The cruciform teacher will never be able to manifest the Kingdom, this is the work of God alone, yet the cruciform teacher's classroom will be a foretaste of it. Learners will experience peace and justice while receiving well-thought-out lessons as teachers empty themselves in their work. Learners who need extra attention or pastoral care will be cared for by teachers who give up their time to listen and make the necessary arrangements if learners need to see other professionals.

If all teachers perceive their call to teach in a cruciform way and live this out in their daily work, the school becomes a beacon of a radically different kenotic way of life, bringing peace and justice into society. If the school itself can become a cruciform entity, it will become a haven for children. Should more than one school in a town or city become cruciform schools, the town would have many "pockets" of the Kingdom of God as a foretaste. This may sound like a dream and might not be entirely realistic, but any principal or teacher inspired by this article can strive to live a cruciform life to the glory of God. If one teacher, who sees 120 children a day, makes their classroom a foretaste of the Kingdom of God by living a cruciform life, the repercussions are immeasurable. Furthermore, if one principal, who oversees 20 teachers in a school, makes their school a foretaste

of the Kingdom of God by managing in a cruciform way, the repercussions are immeasurable. The important thing that needs to change is our perspective on education and how we live our lives as Christians in education.

## **22. Limitations of the Study and Potential Future Research**

This article allows for many other research opportunities to further develop the contribution where its scope was limited in this article.

Since this study is a literature review, no direct empirical data was collected from teachers, which presents an opportunity for future research to incorporate firsthand data on Christian teacher spirituality and how they draw on it to navigate the South African public education sector. Researchers might also explore the impact of a Cruciformity course in Christian schools on teachers' perspectives before and after the course. Additionally, case studies on teachers who live cruciform lives and implement this in their teaching are needed. As this study contributes to the perspectives on Christian teachers' approach to their careers, linking it with motivational theories such as Herzberg's theory or Maslow's hierarchy could enhance and strengthen the Cruciform Christian teaching model. Lastly, the impact of being a Cruciform Christian teacher in public schools on administrators and policy developers could be further researched to investigate how this way of viewing teaching could influence and impact the administrators and policies.

## **23. Conclusion**

This article worked with the central research question: What can we learn from the work of Michael Gorman and his concept of cruciformity that can be integrated into the workplace spirituality of teachers? In answering the question we explored how the concept of cruciformity can intersect with the professional roles of South African teachers, providing new perspectives for Christian educators that could potentially motivate them in their work. Through a thorough analysis of Michael Gorman's four seminal works, this study elucidated the concept of cruciformity, revealing four themes which were then synthesized with the roles of a teacher. By examining contemporary expectations of South African teachers through a broad overview of current education policies, this study identified six roles that teachers are expected to fulfill in today's educational landscape.

Finally, by synthesizing the four themes of cruciformity with the six roles of teachers, this study offered new perspectives to Christian teachers on viewing their work. This synthesis shows the potential implications for Christian teachers who integrate their faith with their teaching work. Ultimately, this article aims to inspire Christian teachers in South Africa to embrace a cruciform lifestyle, providing new perspectives of meaning as they fulfill their professional roles while exemplifying a cruciform lifestyle to the glory of the Triune God.

## 6. Notes

<sup>1</sup> Smith (2018): Explores how faith shapes pedagogical choices, highlighting culture's role in teaching and the importance of integrating faith meaningfully into content. Van Vlastuin and de Muynck (2023): Use the munus triplex concept to depict Christian teachers as prophets, priests, and kings, suggesting a holistic integration of spirituality and work in teaching. Parker (2012): Provides practical guidance for Christian teachers working in secular environments. Sawyer (2020): Frames teaching through a Trinitarian-incarnational lens, emphasizing relational and revelatory aspects, particularly in subjects like mathematics. Pirner (2019): Advocates for public theology in education to promote justice, focusing on religious education's role in fostering critical thinking and social justice. Lyon (2024): Critiques neoliberal education as a quasi-religious system, with elite schools resembling pseudo-religious institutions. Glanzer and Alleman (2019): Analyze the influence of Christian identity on teaching practices. Smit and Felch (2016): Emphasize imagination in Christian teaching, using metaphors such as pilgrimage, gardening, and buildings to conceptualize teaching as a faith-guided journey.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Michael J. Gorman is a highly respected theologian known for his deep knowledge of New Testament Studies and Early Church History. He received his Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1989. In 2001 he wrote the first book 'Cruciformity' which ended in four books on this topic of Paul's narrative spirituality. These four works are:

- "Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross" (2001)
- "Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology" (2009)
- "Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission" (2015)
- "Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul's Theology and Spirituality" (2019)

<sup>3</sup> For this section I will make use of the 2021 edition of *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* which is a celebration of the 20 years mark of his book.

<sup>4</sup> Hooper warns that while embracing cruciformity—self-sacrifice for others—one must not neglect differentiation, maintaining a balance between self-emptying and personal maturity, ensuring mental and emotional health to avoid burnout (Hooper, 2017:8-16).

<sup>5</sup> Thiane (2021:1) provides a broader explanation of the theology behind the *missio Dei* when explaining that this theology is "a result of the nature of God or as an inherent mission of God in which God the Father sent God the Son and together sent God the Holy Spirit into the world. The viewpoint has since risen

to prominence in missiology as it continues to attract theological and scientific attention as the most important theological rediscovery of the 20th century. Equally, research focusing on human participation in *missio Dei* received substantial interest broadly within theology and missiology in particular.”

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