

The kenotic ethics of Philippians 2:5–11 as the spirituality and professional code of ethics of Christian religious education teachers: an ethical-pedagogical construction

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Article History

Submitted: June 24, 2025

Reviewed: May 15, 2026

Accepted: August, 24 2026

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v12i2.1488>

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Abstract: The professional code of ethics for Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in Indonesia has largely been built on Law Number 14 of 2005 and the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics, with biblical clauses serving as a spiritual supplement rather than a constitutive foundation. This framework alone cannot supply a christological basis for forming CRE teachers' professional spirituality. This article reconstructs the code of ethics by grounding it in the kenotic ethics of Philippians 2:5–11. Using theological-narrative exegesis and constructive theology, it advances a four-stage argument: first, an exegesis of the Carmen Christi within its paraenetic context (Phil 2:1–4), read as an ethical-participatory locus in dialogue with Fee, O'Brien, Bockmuehl, Gorman, and Wright; second, a critical diagnosis of the prevailing paradigm; third, a constructive identification of five kenotic movements—*ouch harpagmon*, *ekenōsen*, *morphēn doulou*, *hypēkoos*, and *hyperupsōsen*—as a conceptual structure for professional ethics; and fourth, a pedagogical construction with contextual implications for Indonesian CRE. The article contributes a kenotic spirituality that complements administrative compliance by shaping CRE teachers' professional identity and pedagogical ethics.

Keywords: Christian religious education, kenotic ethics, Philippians 2:5–11, professional code of ethics, teacher spirituality

Introduction

The teaching profession in Indonesia has acquired a firm legal and administrative footing through Law Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, which positions the teacher as a professional required to hold four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional.¹ This normative footing is extended by the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics formulated by the Indonesian Teachers' Association (PGRI), which sets out the teacher's obligations toward students, parents, society, colleagues, the profession, the professional

¹ Republik Indonesia, *Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen* [Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers] (Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara, 2005), art. 7(1).

organization, and the state.² This legal-professional framework is important and irreplaceable: it grants teachers recognition, protection, and standards for which they can be held publicly accountable. Yet because it was designed for the teaching profession as a whole, that framework does not by itself supply a spiritual framework for forming the teacher's identity and inner disposition. It is at this point that the need for a foundation of professional spirituality becomes pressing, particularly for teachers of Christian Religious Education (CRE), whose task is not merely to transmit religious knowledge but to take part in forming students' identity of faith. What is sought here is not an opposition between regulation and spirituality but a supplementation: the two operate on different layers and require each other.

The position of the CRE teacher contains a structural ambiguity worth noting. As a state professional, the teacher is subject to Law 14/2005 and the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics; as a teacher of religion, the teacher exercises a *munus docendi* rooted in the tradition of the church; as a formator of Christian character, the teacher is expected to be an exemplary figure who personally embodies the values of the gospel in everyday pedagogical practice. Bimo Setyo Utomo, in his critical reflection, argues that the CRE teacher is an agent of “spiritual revolution” whose calling exceeds doctrinal transmission and reaches into the existential transformation of students.³ Yonatan Alex Arifianto extends this thesis by positioning the CRE teacher as an ethical-theological actor who confronts the moral decadence of an age of disruption directly.⁴ The question arising from this may be formulated as follows: if the CRE teacher bears both a pedagogical responsibility and a responsibility for faith formation, to what extent has the existing framework of the professional code of ethics accommodated that christological distinctiveness?

A diagnosis of this question discloses several structural limitations. First, the CRE teachers' codes of ethics circulating among various Christian educational institutions are generally composed additively: the PGRI framework is adopted and biblical clauses are then inserted as a spiritual supplement, without theology becoming an architectonic foundation. Second, a deontological framework tends to locate ethics primarily at the level of compliance with rules, so that the dimension of character formation—which is precisely the core of Christian formation—receives insufficient room. Third, the christological basis of CRE codes of ethics is seldom made explicit; as a result, the ethical clauses appear generic and are difficult to distinguish from professional codes of ethics in general. Within such a framework there is a risk that the professional identity of the CRE teacher is reduced to the identity of the teacher in general, while the distinctiveness of the Christian pedagogical calling has not yet received adequate theological articulation.

A survey of the Indonesian literature indicates that this conceptual gap is fairly consistent, and a detailed mapping of it is presented in the second section of this article. What needs noting here is only the pattern: the available studies generally treat the code of ethics as an already existing category—derived from the PGRI framework or from Law 14/2005—and then

² Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia, *Kode Etik Guru Indonesia* [Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics] (Jakarta: PB PGRI, 2008), chaps. I–II.

³ Bimo Setyo Utomo, “(R)Evolusi Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Mentransformasi Kehidupan Siswa,” *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 1, no. 2 (2017): 102–116.

⁴ Yonatan Alex Arifianto, “Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Pendidikan Etis-Teologi Mengatasi Dekadensi Moral di Tengah Era Disrupsi,” *Regula Fidei: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 6, no. 1 (2021): 45–59.

read it through a biblical lens, rather than constructing it from theology as an architectonic category. The scholarly need arising from this map of the literature is a reconstruction of the CRE code of ethics that does not apply a theological veneer to an administrative framework but grows organically from a single substantive christological *locus*.

Philippians 2:5–11, known in New Testament scholarship as the *Carmen Christi* or Hymn of Christ, is among the densest *loci* in the Pauline canon for discussing christology and ethics at once. Michael J. Gorman, in his monumental *Cruciformity*, argues that the kenosis Paul sings is not merely a metaphysical doctrine concerning the two natures of Christ but a master story that shapes the narrative spirituality of the community—a pattern of life that takes its form at the cross.⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, along a different but convergent line, maintains that Christian character formation occurs through continuous participation in a determinative narrative, with the cross as its normative pattern.⁶ This convergence supplies a point of departure: kenosis is not only doctrine but ethics, and as ethics it can serve as a normative architecture for a profession whose calling is formation.

The novelty this article offers lies in a systematic construction that links a theological exegesis of Philippians 2:5–11 to the formulation of a CRE teachers' professional code of ethics architectonically rather than adaptively. Unlike the existing literature, this article does not treat Philippians 2 as a biblical illustration of general ethical values; it makes the internal structure of the text the structure of the code of ethics itself. The article constructively identifies five kenotic movements in the text—*ouch harpagmon* (not exploiting status), *ekenōsen* (self-emptying), *morphēn doulou* (the form of a slave), *hypēkoos* (obedient), and *hyperupsōsen* (highly exalted)—and transforms them into five fundamental clauses for professional ethics: the non-instrumentalization of pedagogical power, epistemic humility, an orientation toward service, relational accountability, and an eschatology of the profession.

This study aims to reconstruct the professional code of ethics of Christian Religious Education teachers in Indonesia upon the foundation of the kenotic ethics of Philippians 2:5–11, and at the same time to offer a framework of professional spirituality that systematically shapes the identity and pedagogical practice of CRE teachers. To that end the article employs a qualitative, library-based method with two complementary approaches: first, a theological-narrative exegesis of Philippians 2:5–11 relying on the standard commentaries of Fee, O'Brien, and Bockmuehl together with Gorman's participatory interpretation; second, a constructive theology that sets that exegesis alongside virtue ethics (Hauerwas), theology of the cross (Moltmann), an ethics of responsibility (Bonhoeffer), and theories of reflective pedagogy (Palmer and Groome), in order to formulate ethical-pedagogical implications for the Indonesian CRE context.

The discussion is arranged in four mutually building sections. The first offers a theological-ethical exegesis of Philippians 2:5–11 as the *Carmen Christi* that serves as a *locus* of professional spirituality, first situating it within the paraenetic context of Philippians 2:1–4. The second offers a critical diagnosis of the prevailing paradigm of the CRE teachers' code of ethics in Indonesia, disclosing its limitations and the need for theological supplementation.

⁵ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 88–90.

⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*, 2nd ed. (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1985), 113–115.

The third builds an ethical architecture for the CRE teaching profession from five kenotic movements identified constructively from the text. The fourth formulates a pedagogical construction and contextual implications for Indonesian CRE, including dialogue with local wisdom and the challenges of the digital age. The article closes with a brief conclusion that summarizes the principal argument without opening new discussion.

Philippians 2:5–11: A theological–ethical exegesis of the *carmen christi* as a locus of spirituality

Before turning to verse 5, the paraenetic context preceding it must be established, since the *Carmen Christi* does not stand alone as a christological treatise. Philippians 2:1–4 has already spoken of encouragement in Christ, consolation from love, fellowship in the Spirit, tenderness and compassion, and then urges the community to be of one mind in one love, to do nothing from selfish ambition or vain conceit, to regard others as more important than themselves, and to look to the interests of others. Only after that sequence of communal imperatives does Paul write: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” This ordering is hermeneutically decisive. The christology of Philippians 2 is not introduced as a doctrine standing on its own but as the ground of a community ethic: Paul supports his ethical appeal by pointing to the pattern of Christ. For an article treating professional ethics, this placement is in fact crucial, since it shows that transferring the *Carmen Christi* into the domain of ethics is not a violation of the text's intent but a following of Paul's own argumentative movement.

Philippians 2:5–11 has long been recognized by New Testament scholars as one of the densest texts in the Pauline canon and at the same time one of the most disputed. Ralph P. Martin, in the classic reference work *A Hymn of Christ*, maps with care the spectrum of interpretation stretching from the patristic period to modern scholarship: from readings that treat the text as a pre-Pauline liturgical hymn to readings that see it as a poetic composition by Paul himself.⁷ Whatever position is taken on its origin, there is broad agreement that the text functions as the theological heart of Philippians and as one of the highest sources of christology in the New Testament. Consequently, any ethical undertaking that seeks to be rooted in the kenosis of Christ must stand upon serious exegetical work on this text.

The exegesis of verse 5 opens a decisive hermeneutical debate. Grammatically the verse consists of two parts: the imperative *touto phroneite en hymin* (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν, “let this be your mind among you”) and the relative clause *ho kai en Christō Iēsou* (ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, “which was also in Christ Jesus”). The interpretive problem lies in the latter clause, which contains no verb in the Greek text, so that a translator must supply one. If what is supplied is a verb in an exemplary sense, the text reads as a call to imitate an attitude that once existed in Christ. If what is supplied is a verb pointing to a reality already in force for the community, the text reads as an invitation to live out a pattern that is already theirs in Christ. Gordon D. Fee, in his influential commentary, argues for the second reading: verse 5 is not a call to imitate Christ from a distance but an invitation to live within the existential reality already granted in Christ.⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, in his rigorous grammatical commentary,

⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 24–26.

⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 191–193.

supports the substance of this thesis while preserving the paraenetic dimension of the text.⁹ This hermeneutical choice is not a purely academic matter; it determines whether the ethic built from the text is imitative or participatory. This article follows the participatory reading without closing off the paraenetic dimension that remains attached to the text.

The phrase *en morphē theou hyparchōn* (“being in the form of God,” v. 6) has triggered one of the deepest debates in Pauline exegesis. N. T. Wright, in *The Climax of the Covenant*, interprets *morphē theou* not merely as an ontological statement about Christ's divine preexistence but as a narrative category parallel to the story of Adam: Christ as the new Adam, differing from the first Adam precisely in not regarding the status of likeness to God as something to be clutched.¹⁰ Gorman, while not rejecting Christ's preexistence, develops this narrative dimension more forcefully: *morphē* points to a form and mode of existence, so that being in the form of God means living in the true divine mode.¹¹ This reading carries a sharp ethical implication: kenosis is not Christ ceasing to be God but Christ demonstrating what it means to be truly God—namely, a God who empties himself.

The phrase *ouch harpagmon hēgēsato* (v. 6b) becomes the next hermeneutical key and at the same time one of the most disputed *cruces interpretum* in Philippians scholarship. Markus Bockmuehl, in his philological commentary, explains that *harpagmos* in a Hellenistic context may point to plunder, to a possession one wishes to retain, or to something regarded as an advantage to be exploited.¹² These three possibilities yield different theological nuances, and this article does not claim to settle that debate. On the reading employed here, the verse declares that Christ did not treat his status as something to be exploited for his own advantage. What is meant by exploiting status here is treating one's position as a source of personal gain to be guarded and enlarged—a logic common in the Greco-Roman honor system, where social status functioned as capital exchangeable for influence, protection, and honor. The phrase thus criticizes directly the logic of seizure and accumulation of power that characterizes the *cosmos* Paul opposes.

The verb *ekenōsen* (“emptied,” v. 7) stands at the center of the entire kenotic debate. Stephen T. Davis, in his essay on the orthodoxy of kenosis, cautions that the theological question is not whether Christ ceased to be God in the kenosis but in what sense Christ emptied himself without losing his divinity.¹³ Sarah Coakley, in her feminist reflection, adds an important dimension: kenosis must not be understood as passive submission or masochistic self-deprivation but as self-emptying as power-in-vulnerability, that is, a power disclosed precisely through vulnerability.¹⁴ For a teacher's spirituality this distinction is crucial: to empty oneself does not mean to annihilate oneself psychologically but to release the claims to power that obstruct authentic service to students.

⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 205–207.

¹⁰ N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 62–64.

¹¹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 164–166.

¹² Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: A&C Black, 1998), 129–131.

¹³ Stephen T. Davis, “Is Kenosis Orthodox?,” in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 113–115.

¹⁴ Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 10–12.

The clause *morphēn doulou labōn* (“taking the form of a slave,” v. 7b) places kenosis within concrete social coordinates. Christ did not merely become human in a generic sense; he took the form of a *doulos*—a slave, the lowest position in the Greco-Roman social order. Jürgen Moltmann, in *The Crucified God*, reads this radical solidarity as a decisive self-disclosure of God: the Christian God is not a God who rules from above but a God who joins himself to the margins of history.¹⁵ What must be noted at the exegetical level is that this downward movement is voluntary and socially directed; its implications for pedagogical orientation are developed in the third section.

The obedience of Christ, *genomenos hypēkoos mechri thanatou thanatou de staurou* (“becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross,” v. 8), is the climax of the descending movement. Fee stresses that the intensification “even death on a cross” is not rhetorical ornament but a theological emphasis: kenotic obedience knows no instrumental limit; it proceeds to the point where the logic of the world runs out.¹⁶ At this point the article turns from exegesis to theological dialogue. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is not offering an exegesis of Philippians 2:8; the doctrine of *Stellvertretung*, vicarious representative responsibility, which he develops in *Ethics*, is brought in here as a dialogue partner that illuminates the structure of obedience the text intends.¹⁷ Within Bonhoeffer's framework, Christian obedience is not heteronomous subordination to an external rule but participation in the responsibility of Christ, who bears the burden of others before God. Transferred into the professional domain, kenotic obedience means an accountability that exceeds administrative compliance: the teacher is responsible to a theological calling before God, before students, and before the community.

Finally, *dio kai ho theos auton hyperupsōsen* (“therefore God highly exalted him,” v. 9) states the eschatological reversal of the kenotic movement. The verb *hyperupsōō* (ὑπερὑψόω) is a verbal form built with the prefix *hyper-*, thus expressing intensification—to exalt to the highest degree—and not a superlative in the grammatical, adjectival sense. Bockmuehl notes that this intensification underscores that the exaltation of Christ is not merely a restoration to a prior status but an exaltation that surpasses it.¹⁸ O'Brien sees in the universal confession *Kyrios Iēsous Christos* (v. 11) a political-theological declaration: Jesus, not Caesar, is Lord.¹⁹ Hermeneutically and ethically, this movement closes the kenotic logic: authentic self-emptying does not end in emptiness but is met by exaltation from God.

Critical diagnosis: Limitations of the prevailing paradigm of the CRE teachers' code of ethics in Indonesia

The regulatory landscape of the teaching profession in Indonesia is framed by two principal pillars: Law Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, and the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics formulated by PGRI. Law 14/2005 positions the teacher as a professional required to

¹⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 205–207.

¹⁶ Fee, *Philippians*, 210–212.

¹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 6 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 220–222. Bonhoeffer is used here as a theological dialogue partner and not as an interpreter of Philippians 2:8; he develops *Stellvertretung* from a broader christological framework, and this article borrows that framework to illuminate the structure of obedience that the text sings.

¹⁸ Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 144–146.

¹⁹ O'Brien, *Philippians*, 236–238.

possess four competencies—pedagogical, personal, social, and professional—with minimum academic qualifications, certification, and measurable competence.²⁰ This framework grants teachers professional recognition on a par with other professions and at the same time directs assessment toward competencies that can be measured and evaluated. The Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics, in turn, functions primarily as a normative framework establishing professional obligations and responsibilities across various educational relationships. Both pillars operate at the normative-professional layer, and precisely for that reason they were not designed to work the layer of inner formation that sustains professional action. It should be noted that the spiritual dimension is not in fact absent from the state framework: the personal competency in Law 14/2005 opens space for discussing teacher spirituality, as Delipiter Lase and Etty Destinawati Hulu have shown in their study of the spiritual dimension within the personal competency of CRE teachers.²¹ What is not yet available is its christological articulation.

In the CRE context, the need for this theological articulation is felt more sharply because of the distinctive demands of the profession. The CRE teacher is not only a teacher who teaches religion but a participant in the theological mandate of the church carried out within the space of formal education. Robert R. Boehlke's work on the history of CRE in Indonesia shows that the mission of CRE is historically rooted in the church as the sending community of faith, and that this root continues to operate when CRE is conducted within the state education system.²² What is being asserted here is not a division between a theological church and a secular state—the Indonesian state, founded on Belief in the One and Only God, in fact recognizes and facilitates religious education—but that each has a different mandate and a different normative language, and that christological language is indeed not the working domain of state regulation. B. Samuel Sidjabat, in *Strategi Pendidikan Kristen*, adds that the function of the CRE teacher is to bridge the reality of faith with the reality of students' experience, a function requiring a theological depth that lies beyond the reach of a professional competency framework.²³ When the prevailing code of ethics does not supply this theological anchor, CRE teachers are left to formulate for themselves the bridge between their professional and their theological identity.

A survey of the Indonesian scholarly literature on the CRE teachers' code of ethics discloses recurring characteristics worth noting. Deni Cardok Tarigan and Dorlan Naibaho, for example, position the CRE teachers' code of ethics as a pillar of spiritual integrity and professionalism at school, yet their discussion moves at the level of implementation without first building its theological foundation.²⁴ Ratnasari, Triposa, and Arifianto, who place the code of ethics in a biblical perspective, do valuable work in drawing together supporting

²⁰ Republik Indonesia, UU No. 14 Tahun 2005, art. 10(1).

²¹ Delipiter Lase and Etty Destinawati Hulu, "Dimensi Spiritualitas dalam Kompetensi Kepribadian Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen," *SUNDERMANN: Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi, Pendidikan, Sains, Humaniora dan Kebudayaan* 13, no. 1 (2020): 1-13.

²² Robert R. Boehlke, *Sejarah Perkembangan Pikiran dan Praktek Pendidikan Agama Kristen: Dari Yohanes Amos Comenius sampai Perkembangan PAK di Indonesia*, vol. 2 (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011), 723-725.

²³ B. Samuel Sidjabat, *Strategi Pendidikan Kristen: Suatu Tinjauan Teologis-Filosofis* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan ANDI, 1996), 226-228.

²⁴ Deni Cardok Tarigan and Dorlan Naibaho, "Kode Etik Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen: Pilar Integritas Spiritual dan Profesionalitas di Sekolah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial dan Humaniora* 4, no. 1 (2024): 58-62.

verses but do not yet raise a single key text into a systematic structure for that code.²⁵ Discussions of the code of ethics in the context of social media and the digital age, such as that developed by Sitompul and colleagues, are phenomenologically rich but not yet embedded in a determinate christological framework.²⁶ The pattern that emerges is fairly consistent: the code of ethics is assumed to be an already existing category and is then read through a biblical lens rather than constructed from theology as an architectonic category. The result is that the theological dimension appears as support rather than as foundation.

The first criticism to be raised is that a deontological-procedural paradigm tends to locate ethics primarily at the level of compliance with rules. Hauerwas, in his widely known critique of modern ethics, cautions that character is more fundamental than decision: the formation of character precedes and determines a person's capacity to make ethical decisions.²⁷ Transferred into the CRE domain, this criticism runs as follows: a code of ethics that only regulates behavior without also forming the teacher's interior risks producing a formal compliance that proves fragile when structural pressure arrives. Cases of teachers' ethical violations on social media, analyzed by Sitompul and colleagues, are a concrete illustration that a regulatory framework alone is not yet sufficient to form ethical discretion at a moment of crisis.²⁸

The second criticism concerns the disconnection of the code of ethics from spirituality. Parker J. Palmer, in *The Courage to Teach*, formulates the arresting thesis that we teach who we are: what is taught is not separable from who teaches it.²⁹ This thesis marks out that pedagogy is at bottom an unfolding of identity, and that a teacher's identity is not formed by external rules alone but by an inner landscape shaped through spiritual practice. When a CRE code of ethics does not take up this dimension, it has not yet touched the core of the matter, namely the formation of the teacher as a spiritual person from whose personhood a pedagogical practice of integrity flows. Yongbom Lee, in his analysis of the kenosis of Christ and Christian discipleship in Philippians 2, affirms precisely this point: kenosis is not a moral rule but an existential pattern that shapes the whole face of a life.³⁰

The third criticism is the unavailability of a christological anchor within the prevailing framework. The four-competency framework of Law 14/2005 was designed to apply equally to teachers of mathematics, of language, and of religion, and precisely there lies its strength as an instrument of the state. Yet when this framework is applied mechanically to CRE teachers without additional articulation, it does not yet accommodate what constitutes the substantive differentiation of the CRE profession, namely its theological calling. Andar Ismail, in his pastoral reflection addressed to a general readership, reminds his readers that Christian spirituality is not a spiritual addition to an already existing identity but a quality of life that

²⁵ Desi Ratnasari, Reni Triposa, and Yonatan Alex Arifianto, "Deskripsi Kode Etik Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Perspektif Alkitabiah: Sebagai Keteladanan Akademik dan Karakter Nara Didik," *Real Didache: Journal of Christian Education* 2, no. 2 (2022): 96–108.

²⁶ Kiran Giovany Sitompul et al., "Kode Etik Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Kebebasan Media Sosial," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial dan Humaniora* 2, no. 2 (2023): 12–23.

²⁷ Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life*, 203–205.

²⁸ Sitompul et al., "Kode Etik Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Kebebasan Media Sosial," 18–20.

²⁹ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 10–12.

³⁰ Yongbom Lee, "The Kenosis of Christ and Christian Discipleship in Philippians 2," *Asia Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (2014): 73–89.

penetrates all of a person's relationships.³¹ This reflection is cited as a pastoral voice that captures the intuition of the faithful, not as a scholarly argument; its argumentative weight lies rather in its convergence with the findings of the scholarly studies mentioned above, namely that the dimension of spirituality inheres in the personal competency of CRE teachers and demands explicit cultivation.

The diagnosis contained in these three criticisms points toward a single constructive conclusion: the professional code of ethics of CRE teachers needs to be supplemented with a substantive christological foundation that functions as an architectonic structure and not merely as biblical ornament. The theological *locus* chosen by this article—the kenosis of Christ in Philippians 2:5–11—offers three advantages: first, it is christological, anchored in the person of Christ rather than in an abstract concept; second, it is ethical, functioning as a normative pattern for character formation as Gorman and Hauerwas maintain; third, it is participatory, inviting teachers not to imitate from a distance but to live within the pattern of Christ. With this foundation, a CRE code of ethics can supplement a framework of administrative compliance with a professional spirituality that forms the teacher's interior.

Kenotic architecture: The five movements of Philippians 2 as a structure for the professional ethics of CRE teachers

This article constructively identifies five christological movements in Philippians 2:5–11 and transforms them into a conceptual structure for the professional ethics of CRE teachers. It must be stressed that this division into five movements is the author's interpretive construction for the purpose of ethical mapping, not a scholarly consensus that Philippians 2 possesses exactly five movements; interpreters divide the structure of this text in various ways, and the division adopted here was chosen for its usefulness in formulating a code of ethics. The methodological principle is that the internal structure of the text is made the architectonic structure of the code of ethics itself. Each of these five movements—the refusal to exploit equality with God, self-emptying, the taking of the form of a slave, obedience to the point of death, and exaltation by God—is mapped onto one substantive clause of the code. In keeping with Gorman's participatory thesis, this approach treats the text not as a source of quotations but as a source of structure.³²

The first movement, *ouch harpagmon*, is transformed into a clause on the non-instrumentalization of pedagogical power. The teaching profession, especially before students who are asymmetrically positioned in power, carries a standing temptation: to treat pedagogical authority as capital to be defended for one's own benefit—reputation, structural position, institutional recognition, even economic advantage. On the reading employed by this article, Christ did not treat his status as something to be exploited for his own advantage, and precisely there lies the normative pattern: pedagogical power is a trust given to be used, not a treasure to be secured. Its ethical implications are concrete: the CRE teacher refuses to make the classroom a stage for the self, refuses to exploit students' vulnerability in order to consolidate authority, and refuses to use religion as an instrument of pedagogical manipulation.

³¹ Andar Ismail, *Selamat Berkembang: 33 Renungan tentang Spiritualitas* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), 45–47.

³² Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 268–270.

The second movement, *ekenōsen*, is transformed into a clause on epistemic humility. Coakley has already cautioned that kenosis is not a masochistic self-annihilation but a release of the claims to power that obstruct authentic encounter.³³ Applied to CRE teachers, this principle demands humility before the biblical text, before the tradition of the church, before students, and before one's own limitations. What is meant is not that teacher and student stand in the same epistemic position—the teacher continues to bear scholarly responsibility, the authority of teaching, and the obligation to safeguard the truth of doctrine—but that both stand alike beneath a truth that belongs to no one. The asymmetry of roles remains and is indeed necessary; what is released is the claim to ownership of the truth, not the responsibility to teach it. Thomas H. Groome translates this disposition into a pedagogy of *shared praxis*: teacher and student participate together in the praxis of faith, with the teacher tasked with opening space for reflection without relinquishing the responsibility of direction.³⁴ Far from weakening the teacher's authority, this epistemic humility establishes it on its proper ground: an authority born of dependence on the Spirit rather than of epistemic arrogance.

The third movement, *morphēn doulou*, is transformed into a clause on an orientation toward service and solidarity with the marginalized. Christ took the form of a *doulos*, the lowest social form, and thereby established the logic of his concern: not for the strong but for the weak. Moltmann has read this movement as a fundamental self-disclosure of God, namely that God is present not in the palace but at the cross.³⁵ For CRE teachers this clause changes pedagogical orientation structurally: primary attention goes not to students who achieve, who are gifted, or who bring credit to the school's reputation, but to those who are weak, marginalized, and vulnerable—students with learning difficulties, students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, students who are minorities along various dimensions. The theological basis of this preferential concern does not stop at Philippians 2. It flows from a wider testimony: the God who defends the orphan, the widow, and the stranger in the Old Testament; Jesus who identifies himself with the least in Matthew 25:40; and Paul who declares that God chose the weak to shame the strong in 1 Corinthians 1:27. Preferential concern is therefore not a reverse discrimination that neglects other students but a correction of the structural tendency of educational systems to privilege automatically those who are already advantaged.

The fourth movement, *hypēkoos*, is transformed into a clause on relational accountability, that is, obedience understood as the responsibility of a calling. The term relational is chosen deliberately here, since Philippians 2 does not itself construct a covenantal category; what it constructs is the pattern of Christ's obedience in relation to the Father who sends him. Bonhoeffer has translated this theme into the doctrine of *Stellvertretung*, vicarious representative responsibility, in which the Christian stands before God bearing responsibility over and for the neighbor.³⁶ For CRE teachers, relational accountability differs qualitatively from administrative compliance, though it does not replace it. It is fourfold: first, to God who calls; second, to the students who are served; third, to the church as the sending community of faith; and fourth, to the state and society as the context of service. Kenotic obedience means an obedience that is “to the point of death” in an ethical sense: unlimited, non-instrumental,

³³ Coakley, *Powers and Submissions*, 33–35.

³⁴ Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 145–147.

³⁵ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 274–276.

³⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 257–259.

non-negotiable. This does not mean the teacher becomes an oppressed or passive figure; rather, the teacher becomes a courageous figure precisely because that accountability is rooted in a ground deeper than everyday structural pressure.

The fifth movement, *hyperupsōsen*, is transformed into a clause on an eschatology of the profession. This clause, often absent from discussions of professional ethics, widens the motivational framework. Within a professional framework oriented primarily toward performance indicators and institutional recognition, motivation is built upon measurable achievement and rewards an institution is able to grant—something legitimate and necessary for the continuity of the profession. From a kenotic perspective, another horizon is added: the eschatological hope that the same God who exalted Christ will exalt those who serve in the pattern of Christ. Gorman, in his participatory reading, insists that *hyperupsōsen* is not a reward exchanged for obedience but an internal consequence of the kenotic narrative structure.³⁷ For CRE teachers, this eschatological clause supplies resilience: kenotic service can be sustained even when institutional recognition is absent, because that service is already rooted in the hope of God's final disclosure.

Taken together, these five movements form an integrated ethical architecture. Unlike conventional codes of ethics, which are usually collections of freestanding clauses without internal connection, the kenotic architecture is narrative: the five clauses follow a single descending-then-ascending movement, from the refusal to exploit status to exaltation by God. This structure is not merely rhetorical; it is a theological structure that shapes the moral imagination of CRE teachers. Each clause is linked to the others: without *ouch harpagmon*, *ekenōsen* becomes impossible; without *ekenōsen*, *morphēn doulou* becomes mere performance; without *hypēkoos*, *morphēn doulou* loses its depth; and without *hyperupsōsen*, the whole kenotic movement loses its eschatological horizon.

Its distinction from the framework of professional ethics operative in Law 14/2005 and the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics can be formulated in three points, which are to be read as supplementation and not as replacement. First, the kenotic architecture adds a focus on formation to a focus on compliance: not only what a teacher must do, but also who is being formed in the doing of it. Second, this architecture adds an internal source of normativity to an external one. CRE teachers remain fully bound by state law, the professional code of ethics, professional standards, and school policy; the pattern of Christ works as an inner norm that lends motivational depth to that compliance, not as a ground for disregarding it. Third, this architecture adds an eschatological horizon to the horizon of structural recognition. These three additions, taken together, form what may be called a kenotic professional spirituality for Indonesian CRE teachers.

An ethical-pedagogical construction: Kenotic spirituality and a contextual Indonesian CRE code of ethics

Moving from a kenotic architecture to a code of ethics operable in the Indonesian context requires two further steps: contextualization within Indonesian culture and operationalization in pedagogical practice. Contextualization is necessary because no theology works in a vacuum; every ethical formulation is always in dialogue with a particular cultural framework.

³⁷ Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 161–163.

For the Indonesian context, this dialogue may be conducted with local concepts of servanthood, with a caution that must be stated. The concept of *kawula* in the Javanese tradition, for example, marks a person's position within the *kawula–Gusti* relation, the relation of servant to lord. Its point of contact with the kenosis of Christ lies in a willingness to place oneself in a serving position. The difference, and this is the decisive one, lies in the direction of the movement: in the *kawula* construction, the position of servant is generally a position assigned by the social order, whereas in Philippians 2 the position of servant is one chosen voluntarily by the very one who was in the form of God. The kenosis of Christ therefore does not legitimate an existing social hierarchy but overturns it from above. Dialogue with local wisdom is accordingly both analogical and critical: it finds resonance without equating.

Robert R. Boehlke has maintained that CRE in Indonesia must be rooted in the experience and context of the nation rather than merely transferring a Western framework into the Indonesian language.³⁸ Kenotic spirituality, precisely because an ethos of service is not a foreign concept within the Indonesian moral imagination, can become a productive meeting point between the theology of the cross and local wisdom, on condition that the difference in the direction of movement just described is preserved as a theological correction.

The first pedagogical implication concerns the formation of teachers' spirituality. Palmer has underlined that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique, because it flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher.³⁹ For CRE teachers this identity and integrity are formed through spiritual practices that return the teacher continually to the kenotic pattern of Christ. Concrete practices that may be proposed include, first, a regular *lectio divina* on Philippians 2 as a formational discipline; second, an annual retreat devoted specifically to reflection on professional vulnerability and the temptations of pedagogical power; third, peer reflection groups that bring concrete ethical dilemmas to be tested in the light of Christ's kenosis; and fourth, spiritual accompaniment that helps CRE teachers recognize and release patterns of grasping after power within themselves. These practices do not replace technical professional development; they become the inner infrastructure that lends theological depth to that development.

The second pedagogical implication concerns the formulation of code-of-ethics clauses that Christian educational institutions in Indonesia might adopt as a supplement to the professional code of ethics in force. On the basis of the five kenotic movements, five clauses may be formulated: first, an anti-*harpagmos* clause, prohibiting CRE teachers from treating pedagogical authority as an instrument of self-interest, including a prohibition on sexual, financial, or emotional exploitation of students; second, a clause of epistemic *kenōsis*, requiring CRE teachers to place themselves as persons open to correction by the text, by tradition, and by students' experience, without relinquishing their scholarly and instructional responsibility; third, a *morphē doulou* clause, requiring an orientation of service above all toward students who are weak and marginalized; fourth, a clause of relational *hypakoē*, establishing a fourfold accountability to God, students, church, and society, over and above—and not as a replacement for—compliance with the regulations in force; and fifth, an eschatological *hyperupsōsen* clause, locating professional motivation within the horizon of hope in God's final disclosure, alongside everyday structural incentives. Unlike conventional codes of ethics,

³⁸ Boehlke, *Sejarah Perkembangan Pikiran dan Praktek Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, vol. 2, 758–760.

³⁹ Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 88–90.

these five clauses do not stand in isolation from one another but form an integral theological narrative.

The third pedagogical implication concerns the transformation of the pedagogical relationship. Within a kenotic paradigm, the relationship of teacher and student continues to acknowledge the asymmetry of roles and responsibilities, but that asymmetry is placed within a logic of shared participation in the love of Christ rather than a logic of domination. Groome names this pattern *shared Christian praxis*: teacher and student participate together in the practice of faith, each bringing a contribution.⁴⁰ The relationship among teaching colleagues also changes, from competition toward kenotic collaboration, in which each teacher acknowledges his or her limitations and relies on the professional community as a space of shared formation. The relationship between teacher and institution is likewise governed by this principle: the CRE teacher works in obedience to the institution, and when he or she judges that institutional policy departs from the theological calling, the principle of *hypakoē* prompts a prophetic criticism delivered through available channels rather than an abandonment of institutional responsibility. Daniel Nuhamara, in his pedagogical reflection, has raised the importance of the CRE teacher as a prophetic voice rooted in the community of faith.⁴¹

The fourth pedagogical implication concerns digital and public ethics. The era of social media places CRE teachers on a new stage: the digital trace, public commentary, participation in online discourse, and algorithmic visibility. Sitompul and colleagues have mapped this ethical complexity, though their analysis is not yet fully rooted in a substantive theological framework.⁴² Within a kenotic paradigm, the digital ethics of CRE teachers can be formulated from the *ouch harpagmon* clause: social media is not a stage for accumulating recognition but a space of service to be inhabited with vulnerability and wisdom. This clause prohibits using students as content, prohibits deploying platforms for unconstructive ideological combat, and demands humility in communication. This last demand is heaviest precisely on platforms designed to reward content that is sharp and divisive: CRE teachers are called to refrain from a manner of speaking that raises reach while damaging fellowship.

The creative tensions arising from this construction deserve honest acknowledgment. First, there is a tension between structural accountability to state institutions and professional organizations and relational accountability to God, church, and students; this tension is not resolved theoretically but lived out practically in everyday ethical discretion. Second, there is a tension between kenosis as ethics and kenosis as danger: a misunderstood kenosis can become a point of entry for the exploitation of teachers by institutions or by patriarchal cultural frameworks, an issue long raised by Coakley in her reflections on gender.⁴³ This construction must be guarded against abuse, since kenosis is a voluntary self-release in the pattern of Christ, not a prescription for structural oppression. E. G. Homrighausen and I. H. Enklaar, in their classic CRE handbook, long ago insisted that Christian service is carried out in the freedom of faith and not in the obedience of a slave.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 155–157.

⁴¹ Daniel Nuhamara, *Pembimbing PAK* (Bandung: Bina Media Informasi, 2007), 88–90.

⁴² Sitompul et al., “Kode Etik Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Kebebasan Media Sosial.”

⁴³ Coakley, *Powers and Submissions*, 3–5.

⁴⁴ E. G. Homrighausen and I. H. Enklaar, *Pendidikan Agama Kristen* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011), 167–169.

The further agenda arising from this construction extends in several directions. First, empirical development is needed in the form of phenomenological research on the practice of CRE teachers who already embody the kenotic pattern, in order to test the validity of this normative construction in the field. Second, curricular development is needed in the form of integrating kenotic spiritual formation into the curriculum for prospective CRE teachers in seminaries and theological faculties. Third, institutional development is needed in the form of dialogue with CRE teachers' organizations in Indonesia in order to formulate a kenotically grounded supplement to the code of ethics. Fourth, ecumenical development is needed in the form of dialogue with the Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions, each of which embodies the kenosis of Christ differently, so that this construction does not become sectarian. These four agendas, taken together, can carry kenotic spirituality from the academic sphere into the concrete pedagogical practice of Indonesian CRE teachers.

Conclusion

This article has constructed a supplementary framework for the professional code of ethics of Christian Religious Education teachers in Indonesia by taking up the kenotic ethics of Philippians 2:5–11 as a systematic-architectonic foundation rather than merely a biblical supplement. Through a theological-narrative exegesis of the *Carmen Christi* read within the paraenetic context of Philippians 2:1–4, a critical diagnosis of the prevailing paradigm of the code of ethics, a constructive identification of five kenotic movements as an ethical structure, and a contextual pedagogical construction, the article offers a supplementation of the framework of administrative compliance with a professional spirituality that forms the interior of CRE teachers. Five clauses—anti-*harpagmos*, epistemic *kenōsis*, *morphē doulou*, relational *hypakoē*, and eschatological *hyperupsōsen*—form an integral narrative architecture that does not merely regulate behavior but also takes part in shaping the professional and pedagogical identity of CRE teachers. The contribution of this article lies in translating Pauline kenosis theology into a professional ethics that is concrete and contextual for Indonesian CRE, providing a framework that is at once christological, ethical, and pedagogical. In turn, this kenotic spirituality positions the CRE teacher not as a mere administrative functionary but as a participant in the pattern of Christ, who emptied himself, became a slave, was obedient to the point of death, and was exalted by God—a pattern that serves as both the measure and the hope of the whole of his or her pedagogical practice.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

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

Credit authorship contribution

The authors share equal responsibility for the preparation of this manuscript. Teintang was involved in establishing the central arguments and outlining the main ideas, whereas Yasin contributed by critically evaluating the content, elaborating on key points, and improving the clarity and coherence of the final manuscript.

AI disclosure

The authors acknowledge using Gemini to develop preliminary ideas and identify relevant references, and Grammarly to improve grammatical accuracy, language clarity, and overall readability. All AI-assisted suggestions were critically reviewed and revised by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the manuscript's accuracy, academic integrity, and final content.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Sekolah Tinggi Teologi IKAT Yogyakarta Research Ethics Committee (No: 377/A/STTIKAT/VIII/26).

Funding information

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

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