

***Navigate the Sacred-Secular Divide
with Reformed Intellectual Patience
In Indonesia.***

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian Reformed Calvinist theologian must appropriately consider the “sacred-secular divide” (SSD) in order to participate constructively and harmoniously in her context, because despite claims otherwise, practices that separate times and places from divine rule shape her life. She possesses a wealth of resources to enable this from within her theological tradition (Kuyper), from contemporary but non-co-located colleagues (Bailey, Doornbos, McClean, and Webster), and from her immediate social and cultural context (modern pluralistic Indonesia). In light of this, I propose that Christian intellectual patience is a virtue that she can pursue for her to faithfully flourish, because it responds Christianly to both where and when she finds herself. To reach this conclusion we survey the sources and feel the pressure of navigating a night amongst the Indonesian jungle where Wewe Gombel lurks.

Keywords: *Harmony, Indonesia, Neo-Calvinist, Pancasila, Patience, Reformed Theology, Sacred-Secular Divide, Virtue*

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Abstrak: Seorang teolog Calvinis Reformed Indonesia harus dengan tepat mempertimbangkan “kesenjangan sakral-sekuler” (SSD) agar dapat berpartisipasi secara konstruktif dan harmonis dalam konteksnya, karena meskipun ada klaim sebaliknya, praktik-praktik yang memisahkan waktu dan tempat dari pemerintah ilahi membentuk kehidupannya. Ia memiliki kekayaan sumber daya untuk mewujudkan hal ini dari dalam tradisi teologisnya (Kuyper), dari rekan-rekan sezamannya (Bailey, Doornbos, McClean, dan Webster), dan dari konteks sosial dan budaya terdekatnya (Indonesia pluralistik modern). Oleh sebab itu, saya mengusulkan agar kesabaran intelektual Kristiani adalah suatu kebajikan yang dapat ia kejar agar ia dapat bertumbuh dengan setia, karena kesabaran tersebut merespons secara Kristiani baik di mana maupun kapan ia berada. Untuk mencapai kesimpulan ini kita membuat tinjauan literatur dan merasakan tekanan berjalan malam di tengah hutan Indonesia tempat Wewe Gombel bersembunyi.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Harmony, Indonesia, Neo-Calvinist, Pancasila, Patience, Reformed Theology, Sacred-Secular Divide, Virtue*

INTRODUCTION

In caricature, the secular realm conjures crass materialism, relativism sunk into pessimistic nihilism, and cruel capitalism unmoored from any sense of human dignity. Such are the horrors conjured by this fearsome beast. For God-fearing Reformed Calvinist children, as *Wewe Gombel* for Indonesian babes, these boogey men chase them to their mother before nightfall.¹ Once safe in mother’s arms, with her sweet tones comes a swift naming and unmasking of the dualist horror; and thus, the spell is broken. She recounts again the comforting story, that God, who rules over creation, fall, and redemption, summons her

¹*Wewe Gombel* is a female spirit said to lurk in trees and snatch away children, particularly at dusk. It remains wide spread and popular enough to be the subject of horror films in both 1988 (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12935192/>) and 2015 (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4705682/>), as well as an HBO horror anthology entitled *Folklore: A Mother’s Love* which ran for two seasons in 2018-2021 (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9397640/>). The spectre of *Wewe Gombel* lurks not only in the media but in the everyday experience of many Indonesians. For example, in November 2021, an Indonesian family were “certain” that *Wewe Gombel* was responsible for the disappearance of their child. Marteen Ronaldo Pakpahan, *Ibu Sebut Bocah Hilang Dibawa Wewe Gombel Depok, Begini Momen Ditemukannya*, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5820083/ibu-sebut-bocah-hilang-dibawa-wewe-gombel-depok-begini-momen-ditemukannya>. The legend of *Wewe Gombel* was documented by Europeans as early as 1585 by Giovanni Battista de’ Cavalieri in his book *Mostri de Tute le Parti del Mondo Antichi et Moderni*. This work is held by the British Museum. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1846-0509-249 While not universally known, *Wewe Gombel* conveys a terror of darkness and separation from family and safety that is deeply culturally embedded across many generations and communities in Indonesia. *Wewe Gombel* is here used as a metaphor for dualism and the sacred-secular divide, which terrorises Reformed Calvinist communities both in Indonesia and around the globe.

children to fulfil the cultural mandate as agents of kingdom renewal for his glory alone. And all is well. The goodness of the whole world-life-view of Reformed Calvinism rings true, so that her children sleep in peace.²

This tale is cautionary and a warning that simplistic problems and solutions are far less captivating than contemplation of God and all things in relation to God. By the similitude, I suggest that just as a pure materialist might straightforwardly deny the existence of *Wewe Gombel*, so too a Reformed Calvinist might fundamentally reject the existence of the “sacred-secular divide.”³ Axiomatically, if there is nothing beyond the material, why run from the street to the house before sunset, because of *Wewe Gombel*?⁴ Likewise, if it is essentially true that from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, and not only so but without Him was not anything made that has been made, and in Him we live and move and have our being, if all things truly stand in relation to God as Creator, Redeemer, and Lord, why devote a journal volume to a myth claiming there may be anything without Him? Within the given frame of reference, the horror lacks substance and simply is not.

In my experience, I find the SSD defanged in Indonesia, where *Wewe Gombel* roams free, because Indonesia unites spiritual and material realms rather than banishing one or the other entirely. Here the first article of *Pancasila*, the national charter, states “*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*,” that God is One. The constitution of the nation declares the existence of the divine and so conscripts God’s presence into public discourse. Everything pertains to religion and spiritual belief.⁵ Moreover, every Indonesian must bear the name of an official religion upon their identity card (KTP). In this nation, neither personal nor national identity are construed without reference to divine strictures, at least formal religious ones. Even more, the rhythms of hours, days, weeks, and years, follow spiritual leads; here enter more than a dozen national holidays honouring different faiths. And besides this, the reality of spiritual/religious experience is near universal in this country.⁶ Every village has their *dukun* and *adat* remains

²“World-life-view” is taken from Abraham Kuyper’s Stone Lectures and refers to the all encompassing frame of reference, system of beliefs, and way of being that comprises the Christian experience. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931). Contemporary authors more readily refer to “worldview.” For example, Simon Smart ed., *Spectator’s Guide to World Views, A: Ten Ways of Understanding Life (Third Edition)*, (Sydney: Anglican Press Australia, 2016).

³See for example, Albert Wolters, “Nature of Fundamentalism,” *Pro Rege*, Vol. 15: No. 1 (1986), 8. https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol15/iss1/2 Hereafter, the “sacred-secular divide” will be referred to as the SSD.

⁴Indonesians are divided in their beliefs regarding *Wewe Gombel* with some giving the spectre credence, while others sceptically dismiss its existence. “Tentu saja cerita wewe gombel tidak masuk akal. Anda berhak skeptis.” “Certainly, the story of wewe gombel does not make sense. You have the right to be sceptical.” Pakpahan, *Ibu Sebut Bocah Hilang Dibawa Wewe Gombel Depok, Begini Momen Ditemukannya*, (page 2). <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5820083/ibu-sebut-bocah-hilang-dibawa-wewe-gombel-depok-begini-momen-ditemukannya/2>

⁵Tjandra and Deswanto argue that evangelicalism in Indonesia is moving closer towards Pancasila’s inclusivism. Indra Kurniadi Tjandra and Yusuf Deswanto, “The Exclusivism of the Evangelical Church in Indonesia and the Spirit of Pluralism in Pancasila: Can the Two Go Together?” *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 22, no. 1 (June 9, 2023): 105. Accessed December 21, 2023. <https://ojs.seabs.ac.id/index.php/Veritas/article/view/616>.

⁶The Barna Group Survey suggests that 97% of Indonesians believe religion is significant for their life. Barna Group, *The Connectedness Generation Preview* (Barna Group, 2019), 34, doi: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/The%20Connected%20Generation%20Preview.pdf>

strong.⁷ In this context, to uphold the SSD feels akin to living in Narnia as a fawn while denying the pervasive existence of magic. In such circumstances, only the unhinged deny that the world is enchanted. Lived experience increases the absurdity of the monstrous divide under the bed, because there is no “secular” space.

And yet, for every insistence and proof, still the children flee. The souls of saints walk their dark nights. Desperate poverty lies at our gates. Sexual exploitation and slavery crown the technological wave. Amid this, God remains silent and hidden, presumed absent. If not the pain of evil and darkness protesting that the deity long gone, it might be that the forms of piety are hollow. No more is Jesus looking over my shoulder as I click this addictive online game, than he is present at morning prayer. Pursuing the divine only brings sorrow. I shall pay my divine debts on Sunday and retreat to the world on Monday. The sheer mundane boredom of life overwhelms us also. Testimony of pastors and surveys suggest that habitual Christian practice is easily severed from the rest of life for many Indonesians, especially amongst younger generations.⁸ And so, the reality of experience witnesses and bares the substance of godless existence. Despite denials, they rap at the door and demand entry. The boogey men have arrived at the house for tea and no sane, god-fearing person will deny them. Run, my children, run.

With high level denial competing with lived experience, what then is the purpose of such a tale? At least four outcomes come to mind. First, naming a divide solidifies a boundary. Within our practice or our experience, when we label the SSD, we delineate the place of blessing from the place of curse. In drawing this divide, we differentiate those who are with God from those who are without. By marking this line, we designate spiritual behaviour from the rest, and we distinguish life with God from death without him.

Second, value judgments normally accompany such a division. One side of the divide is more desirable than the other. With the separation of us and them, my inherent location implies, by default, that we are better than them. One of the quickest ways to create group unity is to name those who are outsiders. (Usually, this division subsequently cultivates conflict and hostility.) For example, when all is a sea of red and white on national day, it is very easy to spot the foreigner. Naming the SSD is a power move and may be analysed with the tools of identity politics.⁹

There is also a third function. Like the drawing of many other divisions, we often hope that this naming will erect a barrier between the sacred and the secular that will not be ignored. There is the secular. Here is the sacred. The two are distinct and not mixed. This is explicitly called a “divide.” It is a chasm, a gulf, and a bulwark against transgression. The “divide” is named, so that it might be guarded. It is labelled, so that those who keep it may be protected, because crossing boundaries is dangerous. If you leave the house and do not wear your shoes,

⁷A *dukun* is a person of spiritual power often consulted for advice or to gain a blessing or remove a curse. *Adat* refers to local traditions, which include more than science might explain, and is constitutive of identity and experience for both individuals and groups.

⁸The Barna Group Survey, “Global Outlook: The Outcome of Young Christians’ Journeys, ages 18-35” in *The Connected Generation* (Barna Group, 2019), says 64% of Christians in this age bracket in Indonesia are habitual only. <https://theconnectedgeneration.com/>

⁹Because of its history, Indonesia is particularly sensitive to such moves and their consequences.

then you will be dirtied when you step in dung in the street. So likewise, your house will be fouled, and you will bring shame on your family for your foolish behaviour and lack of respect, if you wear your shoes inside. When crossing a boundary, the previously described inherent value judgement brings unavoidable danger (and conflict), but clearly marking the boundary can afford protection.

Fourth, naming the SSD enables cleansing practices, when passing from one realm to the other. If the transition is mapped and controlled, then curse can be expunged, and blessing invited. Washing appropriately can bring safe passage across the boundary. In this way, not only labelling the chasm on a map, but marking a safe road through, brings comfort to those who are running in fear. Marking the features and thus shepherding travellers to safety is not a purely intellectual exercise, but also a practical one. Dare I suggest, it is a pastoral practice. With these four observations we see that, even without “substance,” naming the SSD can describe experience, embolden/dignify persons, protect honour, and remove shame.

RESEARCH METHOD

In light of these things, we frame our question and summarise thus. The SSD is fundamentally denied within a Reformed Calvinist whole world-life-view. This is confirmed by the formal frames of life and society in Indonesia. However, daily Christian experience counters such assertions because it denies the reign of God outside explicitly sacred spaces. Therefore, the SSD functions not as a theological description of reality, but rather a support of pastoral practice. We ask how to practice theology, while denying both simplistic solutions and the substance of the horror.

In order to answer this question, we consult relevant authors. We turn to Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) as a founding father and powerful influencer of how the church in Indonesia relates to culture, of which the theologian and modern university research culture are a particular case. The impact of his approach will also be described and evaluated in light of its fruitfulness for the practice of theology in twenty-first century Indonesia. The conclusion here is that both fear and frenetic attack are common fruits.

Then John McClean’s Australian contribution grounds us with a contextualised response to the SSD. He addresses the debate of church’s relation to culture in the United States by adding a temporal dimension which emphasises the church as gathered eschatological community.

Then, we turn to John Webster (1955-2016), who discusses intellectual virtue, particularly intellectual patience, as vital to the Christian theologian plying her trade in the modern research university. This brings together a theological description of the SSD, a temporal aspect to theological practice, and the path of virtue.

Further, Justin Ariel Bailey and Gayle Doornbos of Dordt University provide transformational Neo-Calvinist (Neo-Kuyperian) reflections on theology’s practice in relation to culture in the early twenty-first century United States. They provide a more current Kuyperian perspective, which promotes virtue as the forward path. This is, at least partly, in response to a diagnosed tendency to triumphalism. This allows a contrast of place from a similar

contemporary context.

In light of work such as Tjandra and Deswanto, we finally consider the Indonesian context and the practice here and now of intellectual patience by the Reformed Calvinist theologian. These reflections are offered as a sympathetic and engaged participant in the Indonesian context.¹⁰ The Indonesian theologian is influenced by social and cultural factors that both push toward and pull away from the SSD. Additionally, cultural factors influence her to value the present moment and the status quo, while others drive relentlessly for forward progress. She is therefore well resourced to understand the fruits of a Reformed Calvinist approach to culture, receive the Neo-Kuyperian transformationalist call for virtue, hear the Australian Presbyterian eschatological emphasis, and benefit from the British Anglican churchman-university theologian's reflection on intellectual patience. Now she is called to intellectual patience when facing the SSD in its Indonesian pluralist modern context.

KUYPERIAN FOUNDATIONS CREATE FEAR OR FRENZY

Because of Indonesia's Dutch Reformed heritage, we aptly heed the neo-Calvinist/Kuyperian/Reformational tradition, which continues to bear progeny. In order to navigate the divide, this tradition elevates common grace and an integral relation of nature and grace. I argue that this approach commonly cultivates either a naïve triumphalism or a hostile defensiveness at odds with the religious and cultural plurality of Indonesia.

We turn first to the root of this tradition in Kuyper's own thought and his theology of universities as an example of how he portrays the divide. This is especially relevant because it speaks to how the theologian might position herself within the modern research university.¹¹ At points it appears that Abraham Kuyper accepts the substance of the SSD. He accepts the presence and destructive function of his boogey man named *Modernism*. In terms of our previous metaphor, Kuyper believes in his *Wewe Gombel*.¹² The antithesis rears its ugly hostile head and Kuyper assumes functional dualism. Christ claims all, but another contests His claim. As such, Kuyper practices theology actively combatting "invasion" across the divide.

For Kuyper, the alternate system is that of unbelieving modernity's atheistic humanist worldview and Christian duty must raise a true alternative against this tide. Christians must pursue "science independently on the basis of their own principles."¹³ Every field of the academy can and should be raised anew on an independent Christian basis, because

¹⁰This phrasing is borrowed from missiological work such as that by Michael W. Goheen, who works within the transformational Kuyperian perspective, who affirms integral mission, and who draws on Herman Bavinck as he develops this terminology. Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History and Issues* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 356-358.

¹¹Indonesia's stimulus for higher level research and new accreditation standards over the last 5 years demonstrates the press of a modern research university framework into higher educational theology training centres. The revitalisation of this very journal would be one example.

¹²In one place he writes, we "are facing a gaping crevasse that cannot be bridged. As long as Christianity refuses to accept this duality with full conviction with all its consequences, it will be repeatedly punished with the invasion of her own territory by unbelieving science, with the falsification of its theology, with the undermining of its confession, and with the weakening of its faith." Abraham Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder: Common Grace in Science & Art*, eds. Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2011), 103.

¹³Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder*, 104.

“unbelieving science and the science done by believing Christians are two, and cannot flow alongside each other within one river bed.”¹⁴ Kuyper insists that positioning Christian professors within a university raised on an atheistic basis is insufficient. It remains insufficient, because unbelievers will set the exams, and exams are ultimate in university education.¹⁵ Kuyper demands a frontal assault not subversive infiltration, which promises only harm reduction.¹⁶

The second reason for Christians to raise their own universities is to produce “a cadre of people who were intellectually developed to exercise influence among the populace, people who could enter the field of public discourse.”¹⁷ The antithesis which prompted building alone and now heralds advance. The terms of engagement are now neither within the safety of the Calvinist house nor in the hostile branches of *Wewe Gombel's* dwelling. Kuyper opens a luscious field in which the children can play in safety, indeed a field in which they are to dance and take the lead despite opposition.¹⁸ The Reformed Calvinist must live their faith in public, like a flag flying in the wind, “thrown out boldly to display its glorious colors in the breeze. What one confesses to be the truth, one must also dare to practice in word, deed, and whole manner of life.”¹⁹ On the unified field of common grace, the Reformed Calvinist defends their confession “boldly and bravely against all the world” thus chasing *Wewe Gombel* from the trees and clearing the jungle. This Reformed Calvinist then positively plants a sound seed anew “with generative and irrepressible life.”²⁰

This inheritance from Kuyper manifests two distinct faces. On the one hand, children of Kuyper attack the world's idolatrous modernism with frenetic tense aggression. They build exclusive fortresses to repel hostile forces. The purity of worship and the glory of God must not be contaminated. The SSD promotes fierce action because the danger is real. On the other side, the illusory nature of secularist claims means Kuyper's children triumphally dismiss them. This confident neo-Calvinist embraces all things in science and the arts, education and politics, business and media. Because Christ rules in all of life, our Kuyperian child plays on the field with unparalleled privilege. She does not fear any sphere of the jungle, because the illusory ghosts have long fled. The dispute between the Protestant Reformed Church and the Christian Reformed Church over common grace exemplifies these two approaches respectively.²¹

¹⁴Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder*, 101.

¹⁵Kuyper, 102.

¹⁶Kuyper, 101.

¹⁷Kuyper, 95.

¹⁸Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 194.

¹⁹Kuyper, *Lectures*, 195.

²⁰Kuyper, 195.

²¹Herman Hoeksma fiercely defended against the more comprehensive stance towards common grace taken by the CRC through writing such as the *Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth: A Critical Treatise on the "three Points" Adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1942). The Christian Reformed Church presents their synod findings on their website here, CRC synod 1924: <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/common-grace> Protestant Reformed Church response: <http://www.prca.org/resources/publications/articles/item/291-the-three-points-of-common-grace> Likewise refuting the CRC position is Hermon Hanko quoted here: <https://rfpa.org/pages/protestant-reformed-faith-common-grace> visited 4/12/23

However, both these stances face difficulties if practiced in a twenty-first century Indonesian context. The latter child's approach is inconceivable from a persecuted minority Christian mindset. The fraught and often violent history of the Indonesian archipelago make triumphalism inaccessible to the majority of Christians of any persuasion. A carefree wonder is unliveable and also finally incompatible with Kuyper's approach, given that the victorious Kuyperian field requires clearing the hostile jungle first. Triumphalism in Indonesia meets a swift reality check, where common grace quickly meets the antithesis.

As an alternative to triumphalism, Kuyper himself warns that only the blood of martyrs truly seeds the church.²² His lectures and his participation in public life explicitly stand against "Modernism... this deadly danger."²³ The fierce response to the world and defence of the exclusiveness of saving grace deepens the chasm, as exemplified by Hoeksma and Hanko who rebuff commonality as licence for worldliness. In this way, *Wewe Gombel* cannot be banished, because, without the spectre, the Reformed Calvinist cannot establish her purity. Kuyperian wonder beckons her children into the street, but without removing the fearful spectre.

In an Indonesian context this fierceness cuts deeply across the grain of cultural practices of harmony and cohesion that govern the public square. Such an exclusive stance is possible but isolationist. For example, the Sunda Wiwitan take an exclusive position seeking the purity of their strong monotheistic animist beliefs, which creates a social and cultural island.²⁴ The national principle of unity in diversity brings together separationist beliefs up to a point, but divisions below a peaceful surface can erupt violently like the volcanoes of this idyllic island chain. Christian positions that deepen existing fault lines potentially amplify future earthquakes by compounding vulnerability to social conflict. Because communities are aware of this risk, while defending group purity by deepening the divide is vital to their ongoing identity, this also amplifies fear of devastating consequences should the fragile surface harmony be broken. The children's fear is heightened as they are brought face to face with *Wewe Gombel* across a divide that, while carefully tended and perpetuated, might collapse and release the danger at any moment.

Kuyper does not erase the spectre of modernism, the trees of the jungle cannot all be cleared, because *Wewe Gombel* (modernism) remains to strike fear and make the children run with vigour.²⁵ However, as a consequence, the Kuyperian then spends her time digging impassable canyons and isolating herself from the dangers of the trees in order to protect the sacred space, and as a final result fear destroys playfulness, creativity, joy, and justice.

In this way, in its extremes, a Kuyperian approach to the SSD in Indonesia is either unliveable because of the reality of persecution and suffering or it is destructive because the swing to fear, as the dark twin of wonder, disrupts unity and harmony. Similar dangers of

²²Kuyper, *Lectures*, 187.

²³Kuyper, 190.

²⁴Jry/Fi/Ny, *Menguak Kearifan Lokal Naskah Kuno Sunda Wiwitan Wilayah Kuningan Jawa Barat*, ed. Dewindah (Kementerian Agama RI, 21 June 2019). <https://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id/berita/menguak-kearifan-lokal-naskah-kuno-sunda-wiwitan-wilayah-kuningan-jawa-barat> Sri Melynda, *Mengenal dan Memahami Sunda Wiwitan Cigugur*, ed. M. Rizqy Fauzi, (Jabar NU, 8 July 2022). <https://jabar.nu.or.id/ngalogat/mengenal-dan-memahami-sunda-wiwitan-cigugur-3zjGz>

²⁵*Wisdom and Wonder*, 133.

simplistic and dualistic application of a Reformational Kuyprian approach are identified by Justin Ariel Bailey in *Interpreting Your World*.²⁶ He names intellectualism, triumphalism, and parochialism as characteristic endemic flaws when trying to engage culture from within this tradition.²⁷ Therefore, while these dangers are exacerbated in the Indonesian context, the common challenges of this approach remain in the west.

DEEPENING OUR RESPONSE BY ADDING THE TEMPORAL AXIS

While standing within a Reformed frame, in this section I observe that adding the temporal axis and remembering our eschatological moment, enriches our response to the SSD. To support this conclusion, we turn to a more recent reflection of how the Church and the church best participate in culture. From within a different branch of the tradition, John McClean's 2017 article provides an Australian example, which illuminates how Reformed Calvinists participate in the public square and how this is shaped by their conception of the SSD.²⁸ These two aspects are present, firstly because McClean evaluates two North American positions, Neo-Calvinism and Two-Kingdoms, which have differing perspectives on the SSD, and secondly because in 2017 Australia conducted a postal survey of public opinion concerning same-sex marriage, which saw lively public debate of the topic and this context is evident in the article.²⁹ As an Australian Presbyterian McClean stands squarely within the English speaking Reformed Calvinist tradition, while being outside strong Dutch Reformed influence and the North American debate on which he comments. From this perspective, McClean proposes that a biblical eschatological approach constructively learns from both sides of the debate, which centres on the existence and navigation of the SSD, and that adding this will enable fruitful Christian "engagement" in the public square.

McClean's emphasis on temporal, indeed eschatological, aspects of Christian participation in the public square are his clearest addition to the debate. Indeed, in my metaphor above of mapping the divide, as well as in Wolter's description of a field with structure and direction, there is a heavy emphasis on spatial perspectives and consequently the place, that is the metaphysical and spiritual environment, in which we find ourselves. The SSD answers, "Where am I?" rather than, "When am I?" The same static spatial emphasis is evident when *methexis* (sacramental participation) describes the relation of the physical and spiritual or earth and heaven.³⁰ McClean rightly observes that the unfolding fellowship of God with his people and Christian hope for the return of Christ can fade from view. McClean adds a temporal dimension to the debate presently conducted on a spatial field.

²⁶Justin Ariel Bailey, *Interpreting Your World: Five Lenses for Engaging Theology and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

²⁷Bailey, *Interpreting*, 143.

²⁸John McClean, "Neo-Calvinism versus Two-Kingdoms: an eschatological assessment," *The Reformed Theological Review*, 76 [3] (December 2017), 172-195.

²⁹McClean, "Neo-Calvinism versus Two-Kingdoms," 190, 191, 195.

³⁰This term is favoured by writers of a Radical Orthodox persuasion. See James K.A. Smith for a sympathetic Reformed response to this removal of the antithesis and the sacred-secular divide. *Methexis* fills the canyon with sacramental participation and unity of sacred/secular, heaven/earth, physical/spiritual realms. James K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

McClellan suggests that there is an appropriate dualism of now and not yet in Christian living.³¹ This may be possible in the Australian climate. However, in the North American atmosphere, dualism has more than a hundred-year history as name for a fearsome beast that has served a strong social and group-defining function and, therefore, to reappropriate the name in the North American context is not easy. Or to use an Indonesian image, to rename a folk hero as *Wewe Gombel* is a confusing and even alienating experience for those who have spent generations cowering and protecting themselves from the one who bears that name. As a result, for a North American context or for other places where this debate has been deeply ingrained, I believe that McClellan's approach, while insightful, would require further contextualisation and retaining the term dualism may not be helpful. Otherwise, those defending dualism, in any form, find themselves banished with *Wewe Gombel*, before further explanation can be given.

As his constructive proposal, McClellan focuses on the gathered church as an eschatological community, who have a social agenda.³² At this point, a Two-Kingdoms flavoured spatial distinction between the church gathered and culture re-emerges. While there is no division of holy and unholy, there remains a distinction of the Church dispersed and the church gathered. The gathered eschatological community participates in the present world, where it becomes a site of renewed culture. McClellan argues that the temporal dimension is where "dualism" should rightly be found, but in the end the gathered church seems to present itself as an alternative society to culture. Because McClellan refuses to engage the original terms of the Neo-Calvinism versus Two-Kingdoms debate, the spatial question of "where are we?" remains (deliberately) unanswered. McClellan himself acknowledges that both sides have tools to incorporate his concerns and further work is required to show why his proposal might be a better addition than pursuing the antithesis within a Neo-Calvinist or or that all of life matters within a Two-Kingdoms perspective.³³

McClellan proposes to proclaim to the transformational Neo-Calvinist that the kingdom has not yet arrived, but this does not alter her position. Likewise, from the pew beside her, from within such a community, Jason Lief also writes, "we must work to maintain the proper eschatological tension between the present reality of the kingdom manifested in the world and the hope of future consummation and the complete restoration of creation in Jesus Christ."³⁴ Nonetheless, despite such warnings, this Reformed Calvinist is already acutely aware that not everyone gathers with her to worship on a Sunday, because she has been told stories of her *Wewe Gombel*, of crass hostile secularism and modernity, of dualism, since she was a babe. The antithesis, the SSD, actively sparks fear. However, because this is simultaneously combined with the proclamation of superiority and sure victory, she rushes headlong into the canyon or climbs into the trees. Spurred by her gathering, in contrast to the darkness of night, the transformationalist chooses brash activism, not quietism, nor pietism, in the face of danger. Therefore, more is required than asserting that the kingdom has not yet come, because the antithesis remains active in Neo-Calvinist communities. Already leaders not only map but dig

³¹McClellan, "Neo-Calvinism versus Two-Kingdoms," 183.

³²McClellan, "Neo-Calvinism versus Two-Kingdoms," 194.

³³McClellan, "Neo-Calvinism versus Two-Kingdoms," 175, 189. Richard Mouw provides an example of an eschatological trajectory within a Neo-Calvinist frame. Richard J. Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

³⁴Jason Lief, "Is Neo-Calvinism Calvinist? A Neo-Calvinist Engagement of Calvin's "Two Kingdoms" Doctrine," *Pro Rege* 37 [3] (March, 2009), 9.

deeper the canyon of the SSD, because *Wewe Gombel*'s tale is told with dramatic darkness and increasing ferocity. It remains difficult for this temporal addition to bear fruit.

PRACTICING WEBSTERIAN PATIENCE: VIRTUE ENDURING IN HOPE

We have in hand then both the Reformed tradition's Kuyperian framework with its ingrained social responses to the SSD and also McClean's call to remember the eschatological moment. To this, John Webster adds a call to virtue when facing the SSD and particularly the addition of the temporally oriented virtue of patience. Webster enters the fray almost a century later than Kuyper. He enters across the pond from our transformationalist Neo-Calvinist enclave and half a world away from an Australian postal survey. Webster is no proponent of erecting distinctly Christian fields of enquiry and institutions, but rather, given theology's contemplation of God and thence all things in relation to God, within the modern/post-modern academy, Webster rallies theological theology to intellectual patience.

Similar to Kuyper, Webster explicitly responds to the embattled status of theology within English speaking universities. Two key pieces of evidence for this are his inaugural lecture as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford in 1997, and his reprise of this theme upon moving to Scotland, with "What Makes Theology Theological" being published in 2015.

In "Theological Theology," Webster cites upwards of two hundred years of discomfort for the theologian within the modern research university.³⁵ This is first because modern research universities estrange theology and second because theology imbibes this foreign mode of enquiry and thereby estranges itself from the church.³⁶ Theology has deeply internalised "its conformity to an ideal of disengaged reason" in order to win a place in the modern research university.³⁷ In the terms of our ongoing metaphor, the theologian has climbed into the trees with *Wewe Gombel* so that she can terrify the children.³⁸

Webster was always elegant in his prose and often ruminated at length over a single sentence. Given the precision of his words and the acuteness of his thought, while Kuyper's position on universities is not explicitly addressed in these articles, I suggest that Webster's word choice describing potentially separate "spheres of reality" is not happenstance. Because all things stand in relation to God, at a fundamental level, Webster straightforwardly denies the existence of the SSD but he refuses to flatten the field so considered.³⁹ Rather, his practice of contemplating all things in relation to God enlivens and deepens the conversation, as

³⁵Webster was well aware of John Milbank's Radical Orthodoxy and others working to diagnose the malaise of theology in modern secularism and its origin at this time.

³⁶John Webster, "Theological Theology" in *T&T Clark Reader in John Webster*, ed. Michael Allen (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 25. In this way, John agrees with Abraham Kuyper's judgement that Christian academics will always hold limited influence and impact within modern (secular) research universities.

³⁷Webster, "Theological Theology," 36. In contrast to this, according to Webster, theology is always particular and outward, as this theologian contemplates her God, who is the God and Father of Messiah Jesus, creator, redeemer, and perfecter of all things.

³⁸Webster, "Theological Theology," 33.

³⁹John Webster, "God, Theology, Universities" in *God Without Measure II* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 157.

universities and theology both discover themselves before this God who both lives and knows. Here I quote at length before further comment.

Sequestration of the earthly from the heavenly city may satisfy the desire to make purity visible in present practice, but does so at the price of impatience with the incomplete, mixed character of history. Further, it quickly condemns provisional forms of natural life to secularity, failing to inquire into the ways in which they may anticipate – not simply frustrate – the Kingdom of God. What is needed is a theology of the university, which can serve to differentiate between forms of university life which are conducive to, and those which inhibit, the flourishing of creaturely intelligence and the pursuit of its proper ends as understood by Christian faith. For theology as a work of religion, this entails neither principled belonging to, nor principled withdrawal from, the university. But rather the exercise of prudence, of well-formed discrimination and discernment of occasion and opportunity.⁴⁰

I again note that Webster was precise in his prose and, as a consequence, I suggest that reference to earthly and heavenly city here is no accidental word choice. For those who have ears to hear, Webster addresses debates which are wide and long with swift strokes.⁴¹ The idiom of earthly and heavenly city is a different and earlier tradition's entry to the same issue named lately by the SSD. The intent of separating the cities, here identified by Webster as "the desire to make purity visible in present practice," I have described above as erecting and mapping boundaries of secular and sacred. What I termed the accompanying hasty value judgements Webster describes as quick condemnations. While transposed, Webster's concerns intersect with the Kuyperian.

Translating Webster's advice here into more Reformational language, Wolter's structure and direction describe what Webster names the potential contribution to or inhibition of creaturely intelligence by universities. Webster contemplates created order and structure, because he considers all things in relation to God who is Creator. And because this God is also Redeemer and Perfecter of all things, Webster calls the theologian to pursue her "work of religion" with wisdom where she finds herself, rather than designating this or that as sacred or profane.⁴² The Websterian theologian neither cowers in skirts, nor climbs into boughs. According to Webster, the most significant, most interesting, most defining thing of life, for both her and the university, is that they stand in relation to God.

For Webster, the mapping of the divide is not static, but rather has direction as Wolters would say and, additionally, it has a temporal axis, so McClean. Because God lives, those before him may flourish or find themselves inhibited by present intellectual practice, thus Webster. Webster expounds intellectual virtue, as remedy for children prone to fight, flight, freeze or fawn in the face of *Wewe Gombel*. Our theologian must neither clamber into frenetic battle to win a victory already long won early on a Sunday morning, nor capitulate to terror laying in the cold embrace of death and night saying nothing to no one (Mark 16.1-8).

⁴⁰Webster, "God, Theology, Universities," 162.

⁴¹Unlike McClean, John Webster does not flag Neo-Calvinist and Two-Kingdoms positions in a title, but they are on his horizon.

⁴²John Webster embraces his calling as both university professor installed to a prestigious chair and also chaplain and ordained churchman in a church college.

Webster prescribes virtue in the practice of Christian theology in the early twenty-first century English speaking university. Thus, his inaugural lecture at the University of St Andrews in 2014 on “Intellectual Patience” is programmatic for himself and those who would follow his example. Already this theme is present in “Theological Theology” above, as Webster diagnoses our malaise due to “impatience with the incomplete, mixed character of history.”⁴³ There are other continuities also, such as Webster speaking of theology’s “ambiguous and sometime conflicted relation to the university since the middle of the eighteenth century,” but he focuses on exposition of theology’s store of riches and the source of intellectual life found in “divine benevolence.”⁴⁴

In this way, in mapping the landscape where the theologian finds herself, Webster is not dominated by haunting cries or towering tree lines. God is patient. His patience is “creative and exemplary, making possible and in this way evoking creaturely patience... God moves by love and so does not stifle but bestow life.”⁴⁵ Our attention is enwrapped not by a chasm of gaping paralysis and lack, but rather by the divine fullness of vigour and love. Here Webster addresses the SSD but obliquely, in such a way that it diminishes from view. The theologian is so beloved, enamoured, and at peace that both paralysis and frenzy before the spectre of the night fade.

This is not to say that Webster erases *Wewe Gombel* and the contested context of theology. Instead, with James, he admonishes, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4.7-8). The theologian is to resist, so that the foe will flee. She who is a sinner and double-minded is to cleanse her hands and purify her heart; but this is only after a mutual drawing near with God. The field is conflicted, but this is not calamity.⁴⁶ Clinging to mother and being held close to her heart in a sling of cloth will not yet banish the night; but rather enables willing suffering of *Wewe Gombel* with composure, gentleness, and patience.

With Calvin, Webster finds refuge in divine providence and sovereignty, but, again like Calvin, this does not breed resigned fatalism to a *takdir* decreed by the inscrutable.⁴⁷ Rather, Jesus reigns on the throne. He rules. He speaks. He lives even though he was slain. Therefore, because the swaddled theologian is loved, known, and born anew by the Ever Living One, she loves, she trusts, and she actively resists and endures. She will find rest, without sleeping a sleep of death. She will find courage, without leaping in a frenzy into the forest away from the heart of her hope.

In this way, Webster practices theology as an act of redeemed intelligence within the modern university where he finds himself. With Kuyper, Webster discovers common grace here; because, despite self-absorption, the university too stands in relation to God.⁴⁸ For Webster, the Kuyperian sense of threat and rivalry melts before divine grace, which is indeed common. It is a public state of affairs that all-that-is-not-God is, in fact, not God. By mapping

⁴³Webster, “God, Theology, Universities,” 162.

⁴⁴Webster, “Intellectual Patience,” 198.

⁴⁵Webster, 203.

⁴⁶Webster, 204.

⁴⁷*Takdir* refers to inescapable fate of a creature overruled by the absolute divine.

⁴⁸Webster, “Intellectual Patience,” 206.

the path of virtue, Webster guides Kuyperian wonder away from its endemic vices and guards us from impatience.

The tone of Webster's answer addresses the individual Christian theologian as she finds herself within the modern research university. However, Webster is both a theologian and churchman. Hence, he does not ignore McClean's insistence that the gathered church must manifest its social agenda. Webster answers this concern, "This is first and foremost in fellowship with the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Spirit speaks. However, not insignificantly, it is also within the shared life of creatures who build schools, universities, research organisations, accreditation bodies, and funding networks. Intellectual patience is a social virtue."⁴⁹ The collective and social function of the spectre are as important as knowing its essence, because, for Webster, action follows being.⁵⁰ The nature of creatures and knowing their situation clarifies what should be done. Unlike some ethicists, Webster moves from what is to what ought to be. Hence, the theologian participates in university and church communities, which are collective, public spaces, virtuously.

A consequence from Webster thus mapping the terrain is renewed vitality; because God creates, redeems, and perfects, endurance hopes for fulfilment. When we follow Webster's perspective, Wolter's spatial analogy indeed gains McClean's temporal axis and the drive of the living fellowship of God and his people. Divine patience prompts diligent waiting.⁵¹ Not only is the temporal axis present, but we are also instructed in what manner to proceed.

Another consequence of Websterian amazement, in contrast to Kuyperian fear or frenzy, is peaceful public participation. By lifting our eyes away from the SSD to view this too in relation to God, the consequent virtue of courageous hopeful intellectual patience releases the theologian to live in accordance with the reality of her nature, where she finds herself. Her humility and teachableness mean she is neither fearful nor foolhardy when alternative voices shout loudly. Her longsuffering and endurance mean she is willingly excluded and ridiculed. Her tenacity and focus mean she is undeterred from clinging to the good. Her perseverance and diligence mean she discerns when to speak and when to remain silent. She is not unaware of *Wewe Gombel* amongst the trees, but she refuses to join the self-aggrandising, irritable, and hasty. She embodies not merely tolerance but love for those with her in the night. She knows that she shares their limitations and dependence. She likewise needs cleansing of heart and mind. She too awaits and is awaited by one who accompanies her in perfect patience. She knows the threat but does not fear *Wewe Gombel* in the night, as she awaits the dawn.

THE READINESS OF THE REFORMED TO PURSUE VIRTUE

In light of all this, having heard Kuyper, McClean, and Webster, we consider the ripeness of the Neo-Calvinist tradition to follow the path of virtue as a manner of cultural engagement. James K.A. Smith's work on liturgical formation has paved the way for such developments and Bailey concludes *Interpreting Your World* with three applications structured by the traditional

⁴⁹Webster, "Intellectual Patience," 208.

⁵⁰John Webster, "Introduction: *Agere Sequitur Esse*" in *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology Volume II Virtue and Intellect* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 1-4.

⁵¹See for example 2 Peter 3's application of divine patience to prompt holy living in the present age.

spiritual virtues of faith, hope, and charity.⁵² Bailey counsels us to pursue: “Non-reductive Curiosity: The Fruit of Faith... Non-dismissive Discernment: The Fruit of Love... Non-anxious Presence: The Fruit of Hope.”⁵³ Bailey promotes a path of scholarly engagement with the full scope of human sciences and arts, indeed the entirety of culture, which looks to virtue as a guiding principle. This is a fresh approach to traditional Christian virtues used as a way to engage culture.

For example, this Neo-Calvinist virtue steps closer to present context such that curiosity, which was traditionally considered a vice, is now appropriated as a virtue and key fruit of faith. Similarly to Bailey, Gayle Doornbos counsels for “capacious, conditioned curiosity” at the launch of the Albert M. Wolters Centre for Christian Scholarship.⁵⁴ Neo-Calvinist scholars open the door and themselves walk a path of virtue as an appropriate manner of cultural engagement. As Doornbos herself clarifies, “this vision builds on the work of Bavinck, Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, Wolters, and other great significant neo-Calvinist figures, my primary focus will be on the way the neo-Calvinist tradition creates scholars who show up in the world to their work in a particular way.”⁵⁵

Doornbos builds new things atop the tradition. Conditions and caveats arise not only with respect to dominant cultural expressions of virtues, which are faithless in Bailey’s terminology, conditions and caveats arise also because the current age values (and demands) different virtues than the Christian and Reformed Calvinist tradition. Albert Wolters responds positively to Doornbos’s remarks, however Wolters recalls the Christian tradition’s deeper rejection of curiosity as a virtue.⁵⁶ Likewise John Webster looks to Augustine and Calvin, thence to describe vices of intellectual excess or the corruption of studiousness as curiosity.⁵⁷ Traditionally, curiosity is the fruit and perpetuation of pride, which is why Doornbos adds the caveat ‘conditioned’ and Bailey recalls Anselm to speak of faith seeking understanding, guided by the Spirit through Scripture.⁵⁸ In the present age, curiosity provides a cultural bridge to participation in the public square, but it is bridled by the Reformed Calvinist’s world-and-life-view. Virtue, in this case curiosity, is pursued by the theologian aware of her place within the span of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation in order to then engage culture and participate in the world as a scholar.

⁵²James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016). Bailey, *Interpreting*, 141-147.

⁵³Bailey, *Interpreting* 141-147.

⁵⁴Gayle Doornbos, “Capacious, Conditioned Curiosity: A Neo-Calvinist Vision of Christian Scholarship,” Keynote address delivered: 30/09/2022 <https://www.redeemer.ca/resound/capacious-conditioned-curiosity-a-neo-calvinist-vision-of-christian-scholarship/> Accessed 11/12/2023

⁵⁵Gayle Doornbos, “Capacious, Conditioned Curiosity: A Neo-Calvinist Vision of Christian Scholarship,” Keynote address delivered: 30/09/2022 <https://www.redeemer.ca/resound/capacious-conditioned-curiosity-a-neo-calvinist-vision-of-christian-scholarship/> Accessed 11/12/2023

⁵⁶In his response, Wolters cites the Belgic Confession Article 13 and the Canons of Dort Article I,12. <https://www.redeemer.ca/resound/capacious-conditioned-curiosity-a-neo-calvinist-vision-of-christian-scholarship/> Accessed 11/12/2023

⁵⁷John Webster, ‘On the Theology of the Intellectual Life,’ and ‘God, Theology, Universities,’ *God Without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology, Volume II Virtue and Intellect* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 149, 162.

⁵⁸Bailey, *Interpreting*, 142.

Doornbos and Bailey demonstrate the transformational Neo-Calvinist's readiness to walk the path of virtue in a manner that both looks back to the tradition and pursues *new* virtues apt for where they find themselves. With these tools they divert attention away from the SSD itself and more towards the path through the terrain. Pursuing virtue enables positive pastoral practice, which can navigate a way forward through the impasse of structural denial and experience.

PRACTICING REFORMED THEOLOGY WITH PATIENCE IN INDONESIA

This is well and good, but we must finally consider the opportunities and challenges of the Indonesian context for the Reformed Calvinist theologian as she responds to the SSD. This is important because the SSD is originally a western term to diagnose a western malady.⁵⁹ Whatever the root, the disease is described as rampant and fatal in its crushing anxiety. The sickness is not new to this century and the culture wars of the USA, for example, speak of many and various ongoing responses.⁶⁰ Further, the practice of Christian theology as Christian theology in a secularised public space presents itself afresh in several English language academic theology journals.⁶¹ However, the reality of the worldwide church, the technological age, and the colonial heritage of nations like Indonesia means that such conversations are overheard, with implications for the practice of theology in places where the global ocean laps onto the island shore.

In Indonesia, the SSD looms as a dualist boogey man and a unique transformational tool. Contextual factors push and pull against the SSD and our response. At least six contextual factors are as follows, which each push for or against the reality of the SSD.

First, as mentioned above with reference to *Pancasila*, Indonesia is an explicitly pluralist religious nation that fundamentally denies the existence of an SSD.⁶² Second, Protestant Christianity in Indonesia inherits a strong tradition of Dutch Reformed “whole-world-life-view” that denies the existence of an SSD. However, thus far I have suggested, simplistic

⁵⁹Fittingly, ongoing proposals as to its cause and cure also arise primarily from western scholarship, such as John Milbank's *Radical Orthodoxy* and Charles Taylor's *Secular Age*. John Milbank, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward (Oxford: Routledge, 1998). Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: Belknap Press, 2018).

⁶⁰There the transformational thread of Dutch neo-Calvinism (or neo-Kuyperianism) offers a uniquely contextualised avenue of cultural engagement and public theology. I am thinking of scholars such as Plantinga, Wolterstorff, Mouw, Wolters, James K.A. Smith, and more recently Justin Ariel Bailey.

⁶¹*International Journal of Systematic Theology* Volume 25, Issue 3 (June 2023) dedicates itself to the renewal of theological culture. Editorial by Oliver Dürr and Christophe Chalamet, “Toward a Renewed Theological Culture: Introduction” *IJST* 25 [3] (June 2023), 355-361, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12625>. *Modern Theology* Volume 39, Issue 4 (October 2023) examines the genealogy of western theology in the context of secularisation. Editorial by Darren Sarinsky, “Theological Genealogies of Modernity: An Introduction” *MT* 39 [4] (May 2023), 575-587, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12868>. *Journal of Reformed Theology* Volume 17, Issue 2 (July 2023) presents a special issue engaging theologically with “Our Current Extinction Crisis” as an enacted case of practicing theology engaged in response to an agenda driven by contemporary cultural concerns. Eva van Urk-Coster, “Introduction: Why (Reformed) Theology Needs Reflection on Biodiversity Loss and Extinction,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 17, 2 (2023): 121-123, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697312-01702019>

⁶²Benyamin Fleming Intan, *Public Religion and Pancasila Based State of Indonesia An Ethical and Sociological Analysis*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 43. See also, Yudi Latif, *Negara Paripurna: Historisitas, Rasionalitas, Aktualitas, dan Pancasila* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2021), 47.

dismissal of the SSD fails in an Indonesian context, because it refuses to navigate against the spectre (*Wewe Gombel*) which prompt fear or frenetic aggression.

Other factors then explicitly push for the SSD to loom large in the imaginations of Indonesian Reformed Calvinists. For example, the third factor, which is where cultural pressure from global capitalism and technological advancement pushes to exclude the divine from public spaces. Fourth, Indonesian culture often values harmony above all things, which is especially seen in Javanese and Sundanese society or expressed by Pancasila as “*Kesatuan Indonesia*,” with the result that claims for the distinctive Lordship of Jesus over all things are minimised and curtailed for the sake of harmonious unity.⁶³ Deepening and respecting an SSD allows us to live harmoniously shoulder to shoulder, even when we are not heart to heart. Fifth, the cultural importance of form, structure, and appearance mean that being seen to act is sometimes more important than the intention or consequence of the action. Hence, the marking a boundary creates the reality rather than mapping something pre-existing. Sixth, Christian experience in this nation, as a minority group who wish to honour those around them and not provoke hostility, also incentivises the restriction of Christian claims to within Christian communities and spaces alone. Hence, it is wise and safe to divide church from other spheres and to separate Sunday from Monday.

While the first two factors deny the existence of the SSD, the latter four provide powerful socio-cultural pressures to functionally enforce the divide. Regardless of whether *Wewe Gombel* lurks in the streets or not, the tale and its results are real. As a result of these pressures, the Indonesian theologian must uphold both the societal and theological truth of divine supremacy, while also maintaining the antithesis, her contested existence, and honouring the lived experience of generations in a land of martyrs. The tale is told, and the children run to their mothers’ arms.

My analysis both parallels and stands in contrast to Tjandra and Deswanto.⁶⁴ First, let me briefly outline their argument. They address a broad evangelical issue, which they describe as hostile exclusivism in opposition to a national spirit of inclusivism found both in the soil of Indonesia across millennia and expressed in *Pancasila*. They particularly cite exclusive doctrines of salvation and dualistic division of spiritual from earthly matters as fuelling this problem from the evangelical side.⁶⁵ They describe this in conflict with *Pancasila*, which they explain as a compromise between forming Indonesia as a nation of particular religious affiliation or as a secular nation.⁶⁶ In order to overcome this conflict, they propose the example of neo-modernist Muslims such as Gus Dur for harmonious public participation.⁶⁷

I agree with Tjandra and Deswanto that sections of the church have a reputation for

⁶³Searches for harmony, moderation, and tolerance in articles pertaining to religion in modern pluralist Indonesia produce thousands of results from the last year alone. For example, Tjandra and Deswanto argue that Pancasila is essential to Indonesian harmony and all parties must adhere to it. “The Exclusivism of the Evangelical Church in Indonesia and the Spirit of Pluralism in Pancasila: Can the Two Go Together?,” 106.

⁶⁴Tjandra and Deswanto “The Exclusivism of the Evangelical Church in Indonesia and the Spirit of Pluralism in Pancasila,” *Veritas* 22 [1] (June, 2023): 97-113.

⁶⁵Tjandra and Deswanto, 99, 110.

⁶⁶Tjandra and Deswanto, 106.

⁶⁷Tjandra and Deswanto, 109.

exclusivism and accompanying hostility.⁶⁸ I agree that theological convictions are crucial, particularly dualism, to how the church relates to culture. I agree that in Indonesia the competition between secular and religious agendas is a vital social-cultural element, with respect to which it is the theological resources within a particular tradition that enable it to participate harmoniously and constructively.⁶⁹ Therefore, I additionally propose that in order to address the Reformed Calvinist, we must speak of the SSD as well as its function in Indonesia. Further, within the Reformed Calvinist tradition the antithesis, eschatological hope, and the practice of intellectual virtue resource the Indonesian theologian to practice her craft constructively and harmoniously.

In comparison to her western counterparts, the Indonesian theologian is strongly positioned, because the contextual and contingent nature of her perspective has been constantly impressed upon her as an outsider to dominant western theological conversations. This is evidenced by the proliferation of Asian or African or Latinx theologies through decades, while western traditions freshly acknowledge their locatedness.⁷⁰

She lives her position upon the trembling ground that shakes when the mountains flare. Dirt embeds itself under her nails from digging through the rubble after the building collapses. The antithesis will not recede. She can only deny the contested darkness of night with her eyes closed, but her eyes are open. She sees her community flee or fawn or frenzy in their fear. She prays as one on earth and not yet in heaven.

When Justin Bailey considers his readers aware of their location with respect to culture, he calls for virtue. His third virtue is the practice of non-anxious presence. Knowing our position, virtue consists of ready humility to be present where we are, not worrying for what comes next.⁷¹ Non-anxious presence enters the local situation with harmony, engagement, and participation. It situates itself knowing that work takes time, and its earthly outcome is uncertain. Non-anxious presence accepts that its work may die, fail or be forgotten, because it waits for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Christian non-anxious presence requires entry into the present location with Christian hope for the future. In this practice, awareness of time, when we are, does not lead to despair that the night will be endless, nor to fatalism that our existence is without dignity, nor to complacency that this is as good as it will get. As an aspect of Christian hope, non-anxious presence requires not only a where, but also a when in relation to God.

Therefore, I propose that the Indonesian Reformed Calvinist theologian is well placed to overcome anxiety with patience, because she well considers her time and place. While anxiety

⁶⁸My evidence for this is circumstantial experience of laughing hallway conversations valuing a reputation as simultaneously friendly and Reformed. This is similar to Tjandra and Deswanto's lack of specification in this regard but a general citation of reputation of world evangelicals. However, my conversations pertain more directly to Reformed churches in the Indonesian context.

⁶⁹Tjandra and Deswanto, 111.

⁷⁰An example relevant to Indonesia is *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives*, eds. Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2019), which was subsequently translated and republished as *Teologi Kristen Asia: Sudut Padang Injili*, eds. Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue (Malang: Literatur Saat, 2023). Dürr and Chalamet, "Toward a Renewed Theological Culture: Introduction" *IJST* 25 [3] (June 2023). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12625>

⁷¹Bailey, *Interpreting*, 147.

is an epidemic of our moment, it is more frequently a western cultural ailment than a traditional Indonesian one.⁷² Stereotypically, those of western heritage will stress for the future and worry for the clock.⁷³ In contrast, Indonesian wisdom knows when the sun is too high to rush, the rain too heavy to go out, and if the bridge is passable now then we cross. If there is no problem right now, then there is no problem at all. The present moment dominates this traditional view. Western and technology's influence will breed anxiety for the future, but that is a fresh foreign import, not a fundamental of traditional Indonesian experience. The tropical breeze blows with plenty of time to stop and rest. The temporal urgency fades, because the present reality of night in the forest is all we see. This temporal awareness is punctiliar. The time is now. If it is night, then let the children rest and sleep. It is for someone else to worry after far things of tomorrow.⁷⁴ This traditional world-life-view embraces a kind of time blindness beyond the immanent and therefore prefers patience and lack of temporal anxiety. In my context, this lack of haste is typified by the local proverb, "You should relax, the mountain is not running away." This proclivity for patience, because of the cultural experience of time, is an asset to the Indonesian theologian.

In western contexts, such erasure of the temporal axis likely breeds despair, fatalism, or complacency when time does come into view, because the future is too unfamiliar. In other words, we lack the tools to hope because the future is too foreign and is inconceivably related to the present, which dominates all there is. If "far future" suddenly demands entry to an all-encompassing present, then the rapid change is akin to a foreign invasion, which the local community lack resources to repel. There is little natural immunity to anxiety within the cultural-social group and therefore it more readily sweeps through the population, as another instance of a foreign disease.

Yet, in contrast to such a metaphor, despite Indonesian culture's preference for the present moment in many cases, in other places it displays resilience, depth, and complexity across thousands of years. Indonesia hungers for advancement and progress with an increasingly ravenous appetite. The capacity of culture to adapt and thrive appears endless. *Adat* stands strong and to the beat of *dangdut* Indonesia dances vibrantly into a future of its own making.⁷⁵ The Indonesian theologian finds resources to actively move into the future, while she also grasps tightly to the present.

These phenomena have consequences for the Indonesian theologian as she responds to the SSD. First, both her social-cultural location and her theological tradition as an Indonesian Reformed Calvinist provide the theologian with strong mapping and navigational tools for her location in the forest and where *Wewe Gombel* lurks. Then, when McClean and her north

⁷²Here anxiety can be considered as a capacious concept with threefold reference: first, the biblical anxiety of 1 Peter 5:6-11, where the devil is to be resisted in this 'little while' of suffering, which is a call to virtue distinctly aware of the time; second, the discourse surrounding the term sparked by Auden in an age of industrialisation and secularisation; and third, the mental health crisis of our time.

⁷³This generalisation is supported by data and cultural analysis such as that from Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 219-241.

⁷⁴This present-mindedness recalls the swaddled one who does not lift their eyes too high in Psalm 131. She rests knowing when and where she is.

⁷⁵*Dangdut* is a popular style of Indonesian folk music formed from a fusion of traditional and modern elements.

American Neo-Calvinist peers flag that the time of night and hope must shape her engagement with culture, the theologian feels combatting influences. On one side, she feels a strong value on the present moment and the way things are, the importance of holding fast to the truth as received, loyalty to tradition, and thus the status quo reigns. This fuels her ability to be present in the night unworried for what may come. She rests her head upon her mother's breast and receives an unwavering embrace and security that enfolds her. The hour matters not, because here and now, beneath the trees, she is swaddled tight. The present reality is most significant and that is that the LORD is enthroned in heaven and he laughs (Psalm 2, 102, 103). On the other side, a surging forward current drives her toward the dawn. Innovation and creativity are pressing and paramount. Progress is all that matters. While the night is long, she will be found awake pressing toward the dawn (2 Peter 3).

In light of this, the Indonesian Reformed Calvinist theologian is well served to embrace intellectual patience in her task. Patience tenaciously clings to the promise that calls her forward and tells her that good change will come. Further, patience endures hardship with longsuffering. It refuses to succumb to despair, fatalism or complacency. Therefore, in the midst of the night she actively waits in anticipation of the dawn, because *Wewe Gombel* does not rule the night. The theologian neither accepts nor justifies evil, but rather resists temptation and forgives others as she is forgiven. She continues to pray with perseverance, "Your will be done on earth as in heaven," as she lives as one delivered. Patience is an applicable virtue for her participation in the congregation, in the academy, and in the public square, because it characterises non-anxious hopeful presence. With Christian intellectual patience, she engages fully with her present time and place, twenty-first century Indonesia, while anticipating a redeemed and consummated future.

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