

Attention as ascesis: Digital acedia and the formation of attention in Christian religious education in the era of deep learning policy

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Abstract: Indonesia's deep learning policy, enacted through Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education 13 of 2025, requires mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning, yet supplies no anthropology explaining why human beings are able—or fail—to become deep. This article argues that attention is the precondition for depth, and that the erosion of attention in the classroom is not a disciplinary problem but a formative one, named by the early Christian tradition as acedia. Using constructive practical theology structured by Osmer's four tasks, the study describes the digital ecology of attention, interprets it through Evagrius Ponticus, John Cassian, and Thomas Aquinas, constructs a norm of attention as ascesis through Simone Weil, and formulates a pedagogy of attention for Christian religious education. It concludes that Christian religious education can supply the anthropological content the word "deep" currently lacks in national policy: depth is not merely integrated conceptual mastery but the relational capacity to remain, to wait, and to love.

Keywords: acedia, ascesis, attention economy, Christian religious education, deep learning policy, pedagogy of attention

Introduction

Teachers of Christian religious education today face a new form of absence. Students are physically present, recorded on the attendance list, seated in the correct chairs, and yet not in the room. They have learned to read by scanning, to listen by waiting for a pause, and to answer by producing a response. Teachers' complaints are ordinarily framed as problems of discipline: phones that are not put away, short spans of concentration, noisy classrooms, and are therefore handled with the instruments of discipline: phone-storage rules, sanctions, and a variety of methods intended to keep the lesson from being "boring." This article proceeds from the suspicion that such a diagnosis is mistaken at the level of category. What is collapsing is not compliance but the capacity to be formed.

That diagnostic error has become more urgent because the state has just taken a policy step that, inadvertently, places the issue at the very heart of the national curriculum. Through Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education No. 13 of 2025, the government established the deep learning approach (*pembelajaran mendalam*), a pedagogical rather than a computational category as its principal strategy for improving the quality of learning, requiring students not merely to memorize but to understand integrally and to

connect concepts across differing contexts.¹ The policy is articulated through three principles—mindful, meaningful, and joyful—together with eight dimensions of the graduate profile that replace the former designation *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, and through processes encompassing the cultivation of thought, heart, feeling, and body (*olah pikir, olah hati, olah rasa, and olah raga*).² At the same time, and within the same series of regulations, Coding and Artificial Intelligence was introduced as an elective subject from grade five through grade twelve.³

Here a structural irony takes shape. The state demands depth while accelerating the digitization of the space of learning; it asks for mindfulness while widening exposure to an architecture economically designed to fragment awareness. The more fundamental problem, however, is not the contradiction within the policy but its anthropological vacancy. The policy stipulates that learning must be deep, yet it does not explain what makes a human being able—or unable—to be deep. The word “deep” is given pedagogical form and competency indicators but no anthropological content. The question the policy leaves unanswered is precisely the question that has long been the classical expertise of theology: what capacity in the human person makes depth possible, and what is the name of the disorder that ruins it?

The literature on Christian religious education in Indonesia is not yet positioned to answer it. The dominant register of research on Christian religious education and digitalization remains instrumental and formulaic: technology is treated as a tool, its effects are mapped as opportunities and challenges, and the recommendations halt at digital literacy and policies of use. The study by Telaumbanua et al., for instance, concludes that digitalization eases access and interaction but risks diminishing spirituality and provoking distraction, and therefore advises teachers to integrate technology wisely and to strengthen digital literacy.⁴ Formulations of this kind are not wrong, but they describe symptoms without naming the condition and offer management without formation. Their method, moreover, is often described as no more than “qualitative library research,” with no explicit inclusion protocol, making it difficult to replicate.⁵

¹ Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 13 of 2025 on the amendment to Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 12 of 2024 on the curriculum for early childhood, primary, and secondary education. For the official summary, see Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, “Permendikdasmen Nomor 13 Tahun 2025, Menguatkan Arah Kebijakan melalui Pembelajaran Mendalam,” press release, July 23, 2025, <https://www.kemendikdasmen.go.id/siaran-pers/13278-permendikdasmen-nomor-13-tahun-2025-menguatkan-arrah-kebijakan-melalui-pembelajaran-mendalam>.

² Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, “Permendikdasmen Nomor 13 Tahun 2025.” Ministerial Regulation No. 13 of 2025 forms one series together with Ministerial Regulation No. 10 of 2025 on Graduate Competency Standards and Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2025 on Content Standards.

³ Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, “Permendikdasmen Nomor 13 Tahun 2025.” The elective subject Coding and Artificial Intelligence is being implemented in stages from the 2025/2026 academic year onward, beginning with grades 5, 7, and 10.

⁴ Sozawato Telaumbanua, Anita Telaumbanua, and Imelda Fau, “Inovasi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Kristen di Era Digital”, *Edukris: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 1, no. 2 (2025): 225–40, <https://doi.org/10.54793/edukris.v1i02.233>.

⁵ See also a comparable theme in Yeremia Hia and Jonius Halawa, “Cyberspace Missionaries: A Profile of Dynamic Digital Age Evangelism,” *TELEIOS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 5, no. 1 (2025): 47–58, <https://doi.org/10.53674/teleios.v5i1.176>, which constructs a theoretical framework for strengthening religious moderation among digital natives.

The global literature has moved beyond that stage, yet it halts at a different point. Mediatization theory has shown that media are not merely channels but a logic that permeates institutions and alters the working of authority,⁶ and that media have themselves become sites where religious meaning-making takes place.⁷ Scholarship on digital religion has long insisted on the reciprocal relation between religious communities and technology.⁸ Recent research comes remarkably close to the question at issue here: Wayne Choong, drawing on four years of ethnographic fieldwork in a Pentecostal megachurch in Singapore, shows how young people assemble theological meaning through algorithmic exposure, relational discretion, and institutional boundary work.⁹ Choong explicitly names the phenomenon of the “TikTokification” of theology and acknowledges that algorithmic curation is driven by an attention-economic logic designed to commodify attention rather than to nurture spiritual depth.¹⁰ His analysis, however, stops at sociological description; it points to attention as what is at stake without developing either a theology of attention or a pedagogy that would follow from it. The current conversation in religious education likewise remains at the level of thematic mapping.¹¹

This article fills that gap with a single thesis: the precondition of depth is attention, and the erosion of attention is not a technical problem but a theological one that already bears a name within the Christian tradition, namely *acedia*. Three aims follow from that thesis. The first is to show that the crisis of attention in the classroom of Christian religious education is a formative crisis rather than a crisis of discipline. The second is to reconstruct *acedia* from the patristic and scholastic traditions as a diagnostic category more precise than the popular psychological vocabulary of distraction. The third is to construct attention as ascesis, a capacity that is trained rather than commanded, and to translate it into a pedagogy of attention for Christian religious education that simultaneously fills the anthropological vacancy in the deep learning policy.

This study employs constructive practical theology, with Osmer’s four tasks as its backbone: the descriptive-empirical task, which asks what is going on; the interpretive task, which asks why it is going on; the normative task, which asks what ought to be going on; and the pragmatic task, which asks how one might respond.¹² It should be stated at the outset that the descriptive-empirical task is pursued here indirectly: not through primary fieldwork but through a critical reading of empirical data already available, particularly Choong’s ethnography and research on the attention economy, treated as the closest available analog to the Indonesian context. This choice is an acknowledged methodological limit rather than a

⁶ Stig Hjarvard, “The Mediatization of Society: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change,” *Nordicom Review* 29, no. 2 (2008): 105–34, <https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0181>.

⁷ Stewart M. Hoover, *Religion in the Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1–3.

⁸ Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, eds., *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2022), 1–3.

⁹ Wayne Choong, “Tinkering with Theology: Liquid Faith and Digital Theological Adaptation among Pentecostal Youth in Singapore,” *Religions* 17, no. 1 (2026): 23, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel17010023>.

¹⁰ Choong, “Tinkering with Theology.” The expression *TikTokification of theology* originates with one of Choong’s respondents and designates sermon fragments that are short, emotive, and detached from the context of Scripture.

¹¹ Hosffman Ospino, “Religious Education Scholarship in a Digital Age,” *Religious Education* 121, no. 1 (2026), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2026.2629137>. This issue is the conference issue of the 2025 annual meeting of the *Religious Education Association*, held under the theme “Navigating Humanity.”

¹² Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4–29.

claim to empirical representativeness; the study is therefore best understood as a source-driven constructive theological argument rather than as a systematic review of the literature, and its findings call for further testing through empirical research in Indonesian classrooms of Christian religious education. The primary sources, patristic and scholastic texts on *acedia* together with Simone Weil's essay on attention, are read historically and textually, then placed in critical correlation with the literature of mediatization, scholarship on digital religion, and Indonesian education policy documents. The discussion unfolds in four parts corresponding to those four tasks: the ecology of attention as a formative crisis, *acedia* as a theological name, attention as ascesis, and a pedagogy of attention in Christian religious education.

The Ecology of Attention and the Formative Crisis in the Classroom

Attention has changed status. Throughout most of the history of education, attention was treated as a background condition, something assumed to be present and occasionally in need of direction. Within the digital economy, attention has become a commodity traded directly. Crystal Abidin shows how visibility on platforms such as TikTok is the outcome of organized labor, in which the worthiness to appear is manufactured through calculated strategies that compete within an attention economy.¹³ Student attention, accordingly, is no longer merely something easily diverted; it is an object contested deliberately, systematically, and with resources far exceeding those of any school.

That contest proceeds through architecture rather than through persuasion. Shoshana Zuboff shows how human experience is treated as free raw material translated into behavioral data used to predict and to steer action.¹⁴ The consequences for education are structural: infinite feeds, personalization that removes friction, and recommendation systems that privilege novelty all operate without requiring users' conscious consent. A student does not decide to lose attention; the student enters an environment in which, by design, losing it is the path of least resistance.

The cognitive effects have long been documented. Nicholas Carr argues that the habits of reading on screens train scanning and switching rather than sustained, linear reading.¹⁵ What matters for Christian religious education is not the neurological claim but its hermeneutical implication: long texts, winding arguments, and narratives that demand patience become increasingly difficult to reach. Yet Scripture is precisely a literature that demands those qualities. Faith formation resting on narrative reading now encounters students whose reading habitus has been trained to cut.

Ethnographic data from the nearest region display the religious consequences directly. Choong finds that for Pentecostal youth in Singapore, the smartphone functions as both a theological library and a space of worship, so that sermons, devotions, entertainment, and consumer pressure flow within a single stream.¹⁶ He also notes a polarization of biblical

¹³ Crystal Abidin, "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours," *Cultural Science Journal* 12, no. 1 (2021): 77–103, <https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.140>.

¹⁴ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019), 8–10.

¹⁵ Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 115–17.

¹⁶ Choong, "Tinkering with Theology." Choong formulates this shift as a catechesis no longer conducted by clergy but by code.

literacy: some students use digital access to deepen their study, while others read almost nothing at all and are formed instead by popular culture. This finding matters because it refutes both techno-optimism and techno-pessimism: what the digital environment produces is not a uniform decline but a widening gap between those trained to attend and those who are not. The relatively affluent context of a Singaporean Pentecostal megachurch, of course, differs from the plural and infrastructurally uneven classroom of Indonesian Christian religious education, and this finding is therefore used as a proximate analog rather than as representative evidence, pending comparable Indonesian empirical data.

To understand why that gap widens, the category of speed explains more than the category of content. Hartmut Rosa shows that modernity is characterized by a systemic acceleration encompassing technological speed, social change, and the tempo of everyday life.¹⁷ In Rosa's later framework, the relationships that give life—what he calls resonance—require waiting time, openness to being touched, and a willingness not to master; without these conditions, alienation emerges: a relationship without relation.¹⁸ Translated into the classroom, a lesson may proceed flawlessly in administrative terms yet fail formatively, producing what Rosa calls a relationship without relation, because there is never a pause long enough for anything genuinely to touch the student.

Byung-Chul Han adds an important correction to this vocabulary. He argues that multitasking is not an advance of civilization but a regression: a pattern of attention resembling the vigilance of wild animals, continuously divided and never absorbed.¹⁹ The implication is sharp. The capacity to handle many stimuli at once, often praised as a twenty-first-century competency, is in fact the opposite of depth. If national policy demands deep learning while presupposing students adept at moving between screens, it demands two things that are anthropologically mutually exclusive.

This shift also unsettles the teacher's position. The authority of the religious educator now competes with authority validated by metrics of visibility, in which credibility circulates through relational networks and affective resonance rather than through institutional office.²⁰ More recent developments show that religious authority is increasingly mediated by human-machine communication, so that algorithms do not merely distribute content, but help structure the theological possibilities available.²¹ The teacher of Christian religious education is therefore not facing empty students but students already formed, and formed by parties who were never present in the classroom.

From this whole picture a conclusion follows that changes the category of the problem. What is threatened is not the mastery of content, for content is accessible at any time and is in fact abundant. What is threatened is the capacity to be formed: the ability to remain with one

¹⁷ Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, trans. Jonathan Trejo-Mathys (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 71–73.

¹⁸ Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*, trans. James C. Wagner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 174–76.

¹⁹ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 12–13.

²⁰ Pauline Hope Cheong, "The Vitality of New Media and Religion: Communicative Perspectives, Practices, and Changing Authority in Spiritual Organization," *New Media & Society* 19, no. 1 (2016): 25–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816649913>.

²¹ Pauline Hope Cheong and Heidi A. Campbell, "Digital Religion Futures: Propositions and Complexities in the Now and Not Yet," in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell and Pauline Hope Cheong (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 630–38.

thing long enough for that thing to change us. Religious education that responds to this situation by multiplying its methods and shortening its presentations offers an answer aligned with the disease. A different diagnostic category is therefore required—and the Christian tradition supplied one long before the first screen was lit.

Acedia: A theological name for the inability to remain

Evagrius Ponticus, a fourth-century monk in the Egyptian desert, ranked *acedia* as the heaviest of the eight *logismoi*, the troubling thoughts, and called it the noonday demon.²² The name is not a loose figure of speech; it alludes to Psalm 90:6 in the Septuagint, which speaks of a destruction that rages at midday.²³ What is striking for present purposes is Evagrius's phenomenological precision. He defines *acedia* not through theory but through the description of observable behavior.

That description deserves rereading with a teacher's eyes. According to Evagrius, *acedia* makes the sun appear to stand still so that the day feels interminable; it drives the monk to look repeatedly out of his cell to check the hour and to see whether a brother is coming; it implants a hatred of the place, of the manner of life, and of the manual work at hand.²⁴ That pattern, checking again and again, hoping for an arrival that never comes, hating the place in which one finds oneself, is an almost literal description of someone refreshing a screen every few minutes in the middle of unfinished work.

John Cassian carried the teaching of Evagrius to the West and developed it in the *Institutes*, Book X, devoted to the spirit of *acedia*.²⁵ Cassian emphasizes that its principal symptom is instability: the impulse to move, to seek another place, and to justify flight with reasons that appear spiritual. His remedy is thoroughly undramatic: perseverance in work and a refusal to leave one's place.²⁶ The therapy for the inability to remain is remaining.

Thomas Aquinas then supplied the most systematically rigorous definition. He formulates *acedia* as *tristitia de bono divino*, sorrow over the divine good, not ignorance of the good but weariness toward it.²⁷ This definition explains something the vocabulary of distraction cannot: why students who know that a lesson matters are nonetheless unable to remain within it. The problem lies in desire, not in information.

Most surprising is the list of the daughters of *acedia* that Aquinas compiles following Gregory the Great. Among them stands *evagatio mentis*, the wandering of the mind, which in turn gives birth to *verbositas* or excessive talk, *curiositas* or undirected curiosity, *importunitas*,

²² Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, trans. John Eudes Bamberger, Cistercian Studies Series 4 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1972), *Praktikos* 12.

²³ *Praktikos* 12. The reference to the "noonday demon" derives from Psalm 90:6 LXX (Ps 91:6 in the Hebrew numbering).

²⁴ Ponticus, *Praktikos* 12. Evagrius supplies this description of behavior—the sun that seems not to move, the repeated impulse to look outside the cell, and the hatred of the place and of the manual work at hand—within the same chapter.

²⁵ John Cassian, *The Institutes*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers 58 (New York: Newman Press, 2000), 10.1–10.3.

²⁶ Cassian, *The Institutes*, 10.7–10.25. Cassian connects the remedy for *acedia* with perseverance in manual work and a refusal to change one's place.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 35, a. 1.

inquietudo corporis or bodily restlessness, and *instabilitas loci*, the inability to stay put.²⁸ When this thirteenth-century list is read alongside the behavior of users of the infinite scroll, moving without pause, talking excessively, curious without direction, bodies unable to be still, the correspondence is difficult to regard as coincidence.

Augustine supplies one important complementary term. In *Confessiones*, Book X, he treats *curiositas* as the lust of the eyes: a desire to see and to know driven not by love for its object but by the pleasure of experiencing what is new.²⁹ Augustine observes that this desire is most easily recognized precisely when one stops to watch something one does not actually wish to watch. The consumption of content undertaken without desire and even accompanied by regret was named accurately sixteen centuries ago.

From all these sources a decisive correction emerges for modern usage. *Acedia* is not laziness, though it is often translated that way. Kathleen Norris insists that *acedia* can, in fact, appear as hyperactive busyness: a restlessness outwardly productive yet inwardly empty.³⁰ This correction is crucial: the student who cannot attend is not a lazy student. Such a student is often extremely active, extremely quick, and extremely responsive, but unable to endure. Calling that student 'lazy' is not merely unjust; it is diagnostically wrong and therefore yields mistaken therapy.

It must be stated with care that the claim advanced in this article is not a claim of technological determinism. *Acedia* precedes the internet by roughly sixteen centuries; it is a condition of the human heart, not a product of devices. What is new is not the disease but its infrastructure. Albert Borgmann explains how modern technology works through a device paradigm that supplies commodities while concealing machinery and eliminating engagement,³¹ while Jacques Ellul had far earlier warned of the autonomy of technique, which pursues efficiency as a self-regulating value.³² What has occurred in our own time is that the ancient tendency to flee our place has acquired an architecture designed expressly for that purpose, available without friction and—this has never existed before in history—economically profitable for third parties. Empirical research shows that internet use correlates with patterns of religiosity that are more self-assembled and less bound to institutions,³³ which reveals that what has changed is not behavior alone but the mode of transmitting faith itself. If that is so, the answer cannot be classroom management. It must be formation.

Attention as ascesis: A normative construction

In 1942 Simone Weil wrote a short essay to Father Joseph-Marie Perrin which, though seldom read in the scholarship of Christian religious education, stands among the densest theological

²⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 35, a. 4, ad 2–3. Aquinas follows the list of Gregory the Great and places *evagatio mentis* among the daughters of *acedia*, which in turn gives birth to *verbositas*, *curiositas*, *importunitas*, *inquietudo corporis*, and *instabilitas loci*.

²⁹ Augustine, *Confessiones* X.35.54–57.

³⁰ Kathleen Norris, *Acedia & Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 3–5.

³¹ Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 40–42.

³² Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 79–80.

³³ Paul K. McClure, "Tinkering with Technology and Religion in the Digital Age: The Effects of Internet Use on Religious Belief, Behavior, and Belonging," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 56, no. 3 (2017): 481–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12365>.

statements on education. This article attaches itself to a single strand of Weil's thought—attention as the heart of prayer—for constructive purposes, in awareness that Weil's theology as a whole is idiosyncratic (among other things her refusal of baptism, her Platonizing tendencies, and the notion of decreation), so that she is appropriated selectively rather than adopted wholesale. Her thesis is simple and radical: the key to a Christian understanding of study is the awareness that prayer consists of attention.³⁴ School exercises, on Weil's account, develop attention only at a lower level, yet precisely for that reason they are highly effective at training the faculty of attention that will later be available in prayer.³⁵

The pedagogical consequence of this thesis inverts the logic of assessment. Weil requires students to work without the desire to obtain good grades, pass examinations, or achieve scholastic success, and to apply themselves equally to all tasks, aware that each forms the habit of attention that is the substance of prayer.³⁶ What is judged valuable here is not the result but the quality of the attention poured out, including—and this is the most counterintuitive part—in work that has been done wrongly. Morgan notes that for Weil the education of attention also becomes the ground of authentic dialogue with others, and not only with teachers and schoolmates.³⁷

Weil further distinguishes attention from muscular tension, and this distinction matters if ascetic misunderstanding is to be avoided. Attention is not a furrowing of the brow and a forcing of oneself; it is a readiness to wait, a passive-active condition in which the mind restrains itself from rushing to possess its object. From here Weil draws the line that connects the classroom to love: the capacity to give full attention to someone who is suffering is rare and difficult, and the exercise of study prepares a person to develop that capacity.³⁸ Attention, in other words, is the most basic form of love, for it means allowing the other to be present in their own right rather than as our projection.

Parker Palmer develops the same intuition from the side of epistemology. He argues that the way we know shapes who we are, and that true knowledge grows out of a love that honors rather than out of a will to master; truth, for him, lies closer to troth, a faithful promise, than to the possession of an object.³⁹ Within this frame, attention is not merely a cognitive precondition of learning; it is the moral form of learning itself. A classroom of Christian religious education that trains attention is training a way of loving, and a classroom that allows attention to remain perpetually fragmented is training a way of treating everything as material for consumption.

The pneumatological dimension must be stated so that this construction does not collapse into a moralism of achievement. Attention in the Christian sense is not an accomplishment that produces the presence of God; it is a response to the Spirit who attends first. Amos Yong

³⁴ Simone Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," in *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 57–65.

³⁵ Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies," 57–58.

³⁶ Weil, 60–62.

³⁷ William J. Morgan, "Simone Weil's 'Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God': A Comment," *RUDN Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (2020): 398–409, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2302-2020-24-3-398-409>.

³⁸ Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies," 64–65.

³⁹ Parker J. Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 31–33.

reminds us that theological education that is genuinely and characteristically Pentecostal must be shaped by the work of the Spirit rather than being a mere transfer of information.⁴⁰ This formulation preserves a delicate balance: attention is trained but not produced; it is prepared but not compelled. Asceticism in the Christian sense is always a matter of preparing the soil, never of growing the seed.

The biblical witness supports this construction at several mutually reinforcing points. Moses turned aside to look at the burning bush, and only after God saw that he had turned aside to look did God speak to him (Ex. 3:3–4); the encounter was preceded by a willingness to stop. Mary is commended not for passivity but for choosing the one thing needful, while Martha is portrayed as troubling herself over many things (Lk. 10:41–42). The psalmist is commanded to be still and to know (Ps. 46:10), a sequence that makes silence the condition of knowledge rather than the reverse. The pedagogy of the *Shema* presupposes teaching that is repeated, ambient, and bound to the rhythms of daily life (Deu. 6:6–9): an architecture of attention that stands as the counter-model to the architecture of the digital feed.

Attention, therefore, cannot be entrusted to good intentions. It requires practice. Here Borgmann's category of focal practice becomes productive: over against the device paradigm, which delivers outcomes without engagement, focal practice demands bodily presence, skill, time, and community, and it is precisely because of those demands that it forms.⁴¹ James K. A. Smith formulates a parallel point from the liturgical side: human beings are formed primarily not by what they think but by the practices that shape their desires.⁴² If that is so, the infinite feed is not merely a distraction; it is a counter-liturgy that trains desire daily, far more consistently than two hours of Christian religious education per week.

From all of this, the normative contribution of this article to policy may be formulated. Depth as national policy formulates it is cognitive: understanding integrally and connecting concepts across differing contexts. Depth in the theological sense is relational: the capacity to remain, to wait, and to love. The two are not opposed, but the first cannot stand without the second, since there is no integral mastery of a concept without a willingness to dwell long enough on one thing. The principle of mindfulness likewise requires sharpening rather than rejection. The policy formulation itself already contains a relational seed when it requires learning that attends to the whole existence of every student and provides equal space for participation;⁴³ what it has not yet supplied is the anthropology and the pedagogy that explain how the capacity to attend is formed. This is where Christian religious education can contribute: deepening mindfulness from a subject-centered self-awareness into an attention directed toward the other, and from attention into love.

A pedagogy of attention: The curricular repositioning of Christian religious education

The first principle of a pedagogy of attention is that attention can be trained, not commanded. The instruction "pay attention" presupposes precisely the capacity that is absent; it is the

⁴⁰ Amos Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 3–5.

⁴¹ Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*, 196–98.

⁴² James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 25–27.

⁴³ See Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, "Permendikdasmen Nomor 13 Tahun 2025."

equivalent of telling an untrained person to lift a heavy weight. Attention must therefore be treated as a formative competency possessing a training curve, and not as a behavioral norm that need only be demanded. The practical consequence is that Christian religious education requires a planned progression of duration: structured silence beginning at two or three minutes and lengthening gradually across the semester, with its purpose stated explicitly to students so that the exercise is not experienced as punishment.

The second principle is that attention is trained across the whole form of the curriculum rather than within a discrete unit. Maria Harris reminds us that the curriculum of the church is not a document but the entire life of the community as it takes shape in *koinonia*, *leiturgia*, *didache*, *kerygma*, and *diakonia*.⁴⁴ Applied to a pedagogy of attention, this means attention is trained not only in sessions of reflection but also in how the fellowship of the class is conducted, how worship begins, how doctrine is taught, and how service is performed. Diaconal service, for instance, is a highly effective exercise of attention precisely because it requires students to attend to people who cannot repay them with visibility.

The third principle concerns method. Thomas Groome's shared praxis model moves from the naming of present action, through critical reflection and the making present of the Christian Story and Vision, to dialectical appropriation and a decision to act.⁴⁵ What is rarely recognized is that its first step is impossible without attention: students cannot name their own action and experience if they have never dwelt long enough to observe them. A pedagogy of attention is therefore not an alternative to shared praxis but the precondition that the model has quietly presupposed all along.

At the level of concrete practice, three exercises may be proposed as the core. The first is the slow and integral reading of long texts, including narrative pericopes read without being cut into proof texts, together with an adaptation of *lectio divina* for a plural school context. The second is reflective writing by hand, which slows production to the speed of thought. The third is the practice of media fasting framed ascetically rather than punitively, declared as an exercise chosen together, limited in duration, and followed by conversation about what was experienced during the absence. This framing is decisive: a fast imposed as a sanction teaches hatred of discipline, whereas a chosen fast teaches freedom. These three exercises are offered as theologically and pedagogically reasoned proposals rather than as tested prescriptions; each demands trial and refinement in actual classroom practice, ideally in conversation with the broader literature of contemplative pedagogy.

Add one hermeneutical note specific to the reading of Scripture. John Dyer shows how the digital Bible, with its keyword search, its verse of the day, and interfaces that facilitate jumping, helps shape the evangelical reading of Scripture.⁴⁶ The implication for Christian religious education is not a prohibition of Bible applications but a curricular awareness that the interface forms the interpreter. Teachers need to train canonical and narrative reading explicitly as a counterweight to the fragmentary habitus that the interface trains, and to make the comparison between these two modes of reading a subject of instruction in its own right.

⁴⁴ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 16–18.

⁴⁵ Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 207–9.

⁴⁶ John Dyer, *People of the Screen: How Evangelicals Created the Digital Bible and How It Shapes Their Reading of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 5–7.

The teacher's role shifts fundamentally within this framework. The teacher of Christian religious education is not called to become a producer of content competing with creators of spiritual content in the domain of visibility, a competition structurally impossible to win. The teacher is called instead to be a model of attention. A teacher who checks a phone in the interstices of a lesson is teaching a hidden curriculum that cancels the entire lesson. Conversely, a teacher able to listen to a single student all the way through without interrupting is performing a catechesis that no material can replace. This also opens a critical partnership with the elective subject Coding and Artificial Intelligence: teaching how recommendation systems work belongs to the formation of attention rather than standing opposed to it, because a student who understands the mechanics by which attention is captured has a footing from which to choose.

The argument must be guarded against sliding into a rejection of technology, and several counter-voices deserve serious attention. Deanna Thompson shows that digital networks can become a real embodiment of the body of Christ for the sick and the isolated who cannot be physically present.⁴⁷ Katherine Schmidt argues that the internet may be read within the framework of the sacramental imagination rather than as a threat to it.⁴⁸ Noreen Herzfeld reminds us that the theological question concerning intelligent technology is a question of relationship and not merely of danger.⁴⁹ Choong himself interprets the theological assembling undertaken by young people as a form of resilience rather than doctrinal decline.⁵⁰ A pedagogy of attention therefore does not demand a screen-free classroom; it demands a classroom possessing rhythm, in which connection and disconnection are alike consciously chosen.

One clarification of scope is needed so that this contribution is not misunderstood. When this article states that Christian religious education can fill an anthropological vacancy in policy, it does not mean that Christian anthropology should become the anthropology of the state, but that Christian religious education can contribute one thick content for the word “deep” and offer it into a conversation that is plural from the outset. The policy framework, notably, already rests on a cross-traditional Indonesian philosophical foundation: its pedagogical basis attaches itself, among other things, to Ki Hajar Dewantara’s *among* system (*asah, asih, asuh, and tut wuri handayani*) and to the legacy of educators from diverse religious backgrounds.⁵¹ The *among* system, with its emphasis on guiding and accompanying rather than compelling, is itself a pedagogy of attention in an Indonesian idiom. Attention as asceticism is thus not a foreign idea affixed to the national curriculum but one articulation—from the standpoint of Christian faith—of a sensibility long alive within the Indonesian tradition of education. Other traditions hold parallel resources: the concepts of *murāqaba* (inward vigilance before God) and *khushū‘* (reverent absorption) in Islam, for instance, furnish a rich grammar of attention, and the very spirit of religious moderation invites such resources into mutual

⁴⁷ Deanna A. Thompson, *The Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 9–11.

⁴⁸ Katherine G. Schmidt, *Virtual Communion: Theology of the Internet and the Catholic Sacramental Imagination* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 2–4.

⁴⁹ Noreen Herzfeld, *The Artifice of Intelligence: Divine and Human Relationship in a Robotic Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023), 1–3.

⁵⁰ Choong, “Tinkering with Theology.”

⁵¹ The philosophical foundation of this curricular framework is set out in Appendix I of Ministerial Regulation No. 13 of 2025 (Kerangka Dasar Kurikulum), which refers, among others, to Ki Hajar Dewantara, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, K.H. Hasyim Asy’ari, Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, and Y.B. Mangunwijaya.

address. Developing that cross-traditional dialogue lies beyond the reach of this article, but marking it matters, so that the Christian contribution offered here may be read as a voice within the chorus rather than a voice that replaces it.

Finally, four limits must be stated honestly. First, there is the risk of contemplative elitism: the exercise of attention presupposes a leisure that not every student possesses, particularly those who work to support their families. Second, there is the risk of burdening teachers who already carry heavy administrative loads and cannot simultaneously be required to serve as spiritual directors without structural support. Third, an infrastructural gap renders the digital experience in Indonesia's disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost regions fundamentally different from that of Jakarta, so generalization must be restrained and local context read with the seriousness that the Indonesian contextual-theological approach requires.⁵² Fourth, there is the risk of a moralization that blames students for structural conditions they did not create. Aware of these four limits, the policy recommendation advanced here is measured: to position attention as a formative outcome stated explicitly within the learning instruments of Christian religious education, rather than as a presupposed prerequisite of discipline.

Conclusion

The deep learning policy has placed the right word at the center of the national curriculum without supplying the anthropology that would sustain it, and that vacancy is precisely the space most fittingly filled by Christian religious education. This article has shown that the erosion of attention in the classroom is not a problem of discipline but a formative one; that the Christian tradition named that condition *acedia* with a phenomenological precision that remains startlingly accurate after sixteen centuries; that attention must therefore be understood as a trained ascesis rather than a norm that need only be demanded; and that Christian religious education can translate this understanding into a pedagogy of attention operating across the whole form of the curriculum, with the teacher as model rather than as producer of content. As a constructive argument, these claims call for further empirical testing in Indonesian classrooms of Christian religious education, an agenda that this article opens rather than closes. Its central contribution may be stated in a single sentence: the depth demanded by the state is cognitive, the depth offered by faith is relational, and the first will never be attained without the second, for no one can integrally understand what one has never had time to attend to, and no one can love what one has never allowed to be present.

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Credit authorship contribution

Alfons Renaldo Tampenawas proposed the initial idea to Mieke Nova Sendow, and together they developed the initial draft concept. Mieke then wrote the full manuscript and gave it to

⁵² Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere, Sudin Hura, and Ican Benedictus Bonde, "Ethnotheology Studies concerning the Substance of Folk Religion as Local Theology of the Tugutil Ethnic in Halmahera towards Contextual Ministry," *Jurnal Jaffray* 20, no. 2 (2022): 118–43, <https://doi.org/10.25278/jj.v20i2.694>.

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