Contextualization for Social Change

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Assignment

### *60 Day Developmental Readings*

Review 100-day assignment, course essential elements, assigned readings, and recommended readings to identify selections of books and scholarly articles to identify and select developmental reading sources and entries.

Each OGS program and Core has specific grading criteria for Developmental Readings. Follow the **Developmental Reading Rubrics** for the **required number of sources, comments, and quality criteria**.

See the **General Helps** in **AA-101 The Gathering Place in DIAL**for the following resources:

* Refer to the “NEW Student Guide to Developmental Readings” for updated information on sample comments, rubrics, and key definitions related to developmental readings.
* Download the “NEW Developmental Reading Assignment Template” Word document to begin writing your developmental reading assignment.
* For **grading criteria**, go to the “NEW Developmental Reading Rubrics” document.
* Document all sources in APA style, 7th edition ([APA 7 Reference Example](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MOW2xmjS9fBRboojA-ADFQBlpahm2iFM/view?usp=sharing), [APA 7 Quick Guide](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/documents/APA%20Poster%2010.22.12.png)) for in-text citations and for Works Cited. Include page numbers.
* Include a separate **Works Cited** page, formatted according to APA style, 7th edition.
* Submit through **DIAL** to the professor.

**Source One:** Verwoerd, W. J. (2020). Black Christ and cross-roads Jesus for white south African Christians.*Hervormde Teologiese Studies, 76*(3) https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i3.5836

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

As was the case with my 1997 encounter with Black Christ, my initial reaction to Louw’s series of contextualized crucifixion paintings was mixed. I was deeply grateful that at last someone from within the white DRC circle brought the historical Crucifixion unambiguously into our South African context. But I also felt a surprisingly strong urge to look away, especially from the above painting with the Matthew 27:45 subscript (p.2).

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The author’s analysis of the contextualization of Christ and its intrapersonal challenges, is the first time I have heard of a painting of Jesus interpreted in such a fashion and expands my knowledge of the use of contextualization.

**Contextualization:**

As Christians we can use contextualization to reach those from different backgrounds, different cultures and those from different religions. We can contextualize through words, through bible stories, through cultural practices and the author has shown that we can contextualize through art. Not only can Christians utilize contextualization to reach others but, in this instance, contextualization was used to challenge and incite conviction into those who suffer from “white fragility” or complacency. The use of contextualization was a means to a different end other than bringing people to Christ. As a bible teacher, I could see using a piece of art that portrays a cultural practice and pairing it with a coinciding bible verse so that whoever observes the piece of art will see Christ as relatable and come to the realization that Christ died for them.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“For Harrison’s visual comparison between the apartheid era suppression of ‘non-Whites’ and the crucifixion of Jesus enabled his prophetic critique to transcend political and moral denunciation, to bring perhaps the deepest wounding of those represented by the Luthuli figure to the surface” (p. 5)

**Essential Element:**

Biblical contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis**

The use of two very graphic paintings of Jesus Christ put into the context of apartheid, extends my vision and perspective of a suffering Christ.

**Contextualization:**

In seminary, we studied scholars such as James Cone and Cornell West. “Black Theology” was a resounding discipline. The use of a black Christ, reminded the majority of black students that Christ was not solely for the white man and reminded us that Christ on the cross, was synonymous with our suffering as a people. I never thought of how a white person would receive such a figure, if they chose to even look at it. Such a portrayal of Christ, may best be received in an all-white setting, if introduced by a white person.

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“liturgical marginalization of Psalms of lamentation (p. 7)

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The subjugation of the book of Psalms is an addition to my knowledge and vocabulary and at the same time variant to my understanding of its content.

**Contextualization:**

Perhaps it is not hard to believe that students of the book of Psalms may see some chapters in the book as sad. I’m not sure if the author was referring to only certain chapters or the whole book. For the most part, Psalms for me, is a book of triumph, victory and decrees. If the book of Psalms is marginalized, then that means, the wisdom, the uplifting, the encouragement of the book is underutilized or looked over.

**Source Two:** Cooper-White, P. (2023). “God, guns, and guts”: Christian nationalism from a psychoanalytic perspective.*Religions, 14*(3), 292. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030292

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

The main tenets of Christian nationalism are that God established the United States as a Christian nation, and, therefore, the country should essentially be a theonomy (= rule of laws) shaped by Christian values (as interpreted by an alliance of conservative Christian leaders and right-wing political activists) and a theocracy (= rule by religious leadership) characterized by the headship of men over their households and white male leadership in the public sphere (p. 2).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The word “theonomy” is an addition to my vocabulary.

**Contextualization:**

The author’s adversity towards a theonomy and theocracy may be well founded because of the construct that both are traditionally placed in the Unites States. If in the hands of an all-white, misogynistic, biased government, then yes, a theonomy would be poisonous to society. If the theonomy was in the hands of an egalitarian governmental body, then perhaps it would be more beneficial or tolerable. In theory, we would want a government comprising of white, black, brown people who all served Jesus in spirit and in truth; a praying government, a government who set aside part of their agenda to worship.

A theonomy in this manner, that was based on a theocracy (God as head) would be optimal. A theocracy once existed. Before King Saul, God ruled the land using prophets and judges. God warned us of what a monarchy would do and because of sin, selfishness, and greed, a theocracy will not happen again until Jesus’ kingdom is fully established. Therefore, a theonomy is not possible.

**Comment 5:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

A vast publishing empire, and online Christian family content such as James Dobson’s decades-old Focus on the Family, also promotes Christian-nationalist ideas as part of a campaign to promote the traditional patriarchal family and to indoctrinate children into a melding of religion, right-wing patriotism, and a conservative “God-honoring” definition of Christian family life (p. 3).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The promotion of Christian-nationalism by, what I now consider an uplifting, inspiring radio broadcast, is an enlightening and thought-provoking statement.

**Contextualization:**

Many mornings, on the way to work, I listen to either of two Christian radio broadcasts. One of them is often Focus on the Family. They discuss ways to have a healthy marriage, testimonies of reconciliation and forgiveness and ways to stay close to God. It is hard to view Focus on the Family as a promoter of Christian-nationalism. To my knowledge, when the program first began, it promoted racist ideals, and the opinion of women were not as esteemed and valued as they are now.

For me, the traditional patriarchal family structure is not a bad thing if the patriarch reflects the love Christ which, in the past, many have not. I do not equate conservatism and God-fearing with nationalism or with right-wing patriotism. Unfortunately, these days, these ideals can easily be conflated. Although a conservative, I do not consider myself right winged or even patriotic. My political identification is Independent. My love for God exceeds the love I have for my country. “The earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof, and they that dwell therein”, (King James Bible, 1769/2023, Psalm 24:1). The pool is so muddy, you must get to know each person as they are and not make assumptions.

The author is, no doubt, liberal. Perhaps if one of the leading Christian radio shows were more inclusive of different ethnicities, and cultures, more people may be attracted to the program and be drawn to Christ. My Pastor always tells us to eat the fish and spit out the bones. If I were to hear something I do not agree with, I simply throw it out and walk away with all the godly wisdom left behind.

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Two unconscious motivations come into play when group members begin not only to admire or like their leaders, but to idolize them—identification and idealization—in psychoanalytic terms, unconsciously adopting another person’s characteristics, beliefs, or ways of being as a form of psychic internalization (p. 4).

**Essential Element:**

Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The author’s hermeneutics of a cult like leadership is an addition to my knowledge that expands my understanding of identification and idealization.

**Contextualization:**

This is the danger of narcissism. A leader who does not seek to transform, uplift or elevate but draws attention to himself or herself. The follower is merely a tool to power and self-aggrandizement. Even a Christian leader can fall into this category. To internalize another’s essence and adopt their character instead of being led to adopt the character of Christ is opposite the goal of a true Christian leader, whether it be in the arena of politics, religion or elsewhere.

It is my opinion that Donald Trump has contextualized himself in that he has embodied Christian ideals even though he does not truly embrace Christian values.

He speaks the right words, speaks against the right policies and demeans the right kind of people, to hold on to his Christian nationalist base. This is not the kind of tone a revival should hold. It may alienate instead of drawing others to the true King, Jesus Christ. And by the way, when a conservative leader that truly loves God more than country and power and does not use Christianity as a façade, then perhaps, I’ll be on board.

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“Revival-style worship further reinforces a pervasive sense of fear and doom among evangelical Christians, and a concomitant need to arm oneself (both spiritually and physically)” (p. 6).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This characterization of revival-style worship is variant to my understanding and experience of revivals.

**Contextualization:**

So apparently, the author has never been a holy, spirit-filled atmosphere where the focus of the worship was on Jesus the Saviour. A true revival, refreshes the soul, exhorts the participants and uplifts Christ culminating in redemption and transformation. This is travesty. In the year 2022, my spirit longed for a holy ghost filled revival where the participants would be from all walks of life, truly representing the Kingdom of God. My spirit also had a need to travel to another state, which Covid had prevented me from doing for over two years. In the earlier months of that year, I had been enjoying the teachings of Dr. Francis Myles. Great biblical orator was Dr. Myles. He had begun to promote his annual Christian summit; this time being held in downtown Atlanta. Most of the speakers for the event sounded exciting and the music artists were sure to induce fiery worship.

The conference was to be held the last week of October, culminating in a communion service on Halloween, led by Benny Hinn. This was the one, this was the gathering I had been longing for. Not having been a follower of Benny Hinn, nor his wife, I was intrigued none-the-less. A part of the conference agenda was also set aside to honor Dr. Hinn. Dr. Myles had promised in his promotions that it would not be a political conference. It was all about Jesus. In my spirit, I knew there would be people there who did not hold the same ideologies as myself. There would be democrats, many republicans and some independents like me. The conference was all I had hoped it would be. The audience was full of black, brown, white and maybe some red. Some hill billies, some wealthy elite, well known Christian leaders also.

The worship was so high, the atmosphere filled with God’s presence. We were free to be vulnerable and fall prostrate at any time. Each morning, at 6:00am, Susan Hinn led intercessory prayer. It was no question that I would participate. The sacrifice was minimal. Prayers each morning were wonderful and anointed. Trusting her character and anointing, I allowed her to lay hands on me at one of the sessions. All was well, until one morning towards the end of the prayer, Lady Hinn made a statement that disturbed me to my core. We had been walking around the ball room prayer, decreeing and declaring and speaking in our heavenly language.

Susan Hinn began to exhort and declare blessings for our nation. No problem until she shouted in a militaristic tone that “we’ve got to get our President back”. She was referring to Donald Trump. Again, as I have stated, I am an Independent. When a republican candidate that I trust and has a platform that I embrace, comes along, I will vote for him or her, but Donald Trump is not the one. However, to each her or his own. My issue with Susan Hinn was that number one, she embraced this narcissistic, hedonistic, cult-like leader and number two, she assumed that everyone attending did the same.

**Source Three:** Corbin, C. M. (2019). Christian legislative prayers and Christian nationalism.*Washington and Lee Law Review, 76*(1), 453-483. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/christian-legislative-prayers-nationalism/docview/2234975593/se-2

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Part IV contends that to help curb Christian nationalism and its ill effects, legislative prayers ought to cease entirely. Such a result is most in keeping with the Establishment Clause goal of avoiding a caste system based on religious belief “ (p. 458).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

Not being familiar with the Establishment Clause, equating legislative prayers with Christian nationalism is variant to my understanding and use of prayer.

**Contextualization:**

Donald Trump was elected, there were some well known evangelists and Pastor’s, whom I respected and listened to, that stood by his side during the inauguration or openly voiced their support for the new President. Unfortunately, I began to develop a distaste for some of these Christian leaders I was held in esteem. Not knowing if they truly embraced the Donald Trump the person or only embraced his conservative policies. Some of his policies were worth noting and some I reviled. Some of these same Pastor’s led many of the legislative prayers that the author is referring to.

Suspecting that the author is not limiting his critique towards republican prayers but Christian legislative prayers in general, I would have to disagree with his sentiment. Yes, Christian prayers promote one religion and may turn off non-Christians, but I am of course bias towards the Christian faith. My stance is that it depends on the words in the prayer. A prayer that elevates a leader, kingdom or group of people over Jesus is nationalistic and bias in tone. If the legislative prayers do not invoke love, a commitment to God and a holy nation, I too would reject it. In this instance, we would have to agree to disagree. If we remove prayer from our legislative sessions or public forums, it is a nation doomed.

**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Many have argued, including the Sixth Circuit, that Christian prayers cause no harm, only offense” (p. 467).

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The argument presented, extends my knowledge of the biblical meaning of prayer.

**Contextualization:**

“And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (King James Bible, 1769/2023, 1 Peter 2:8). Some prayers may in fact do harm. Words carry weight. The words of the prayer must make sure to cover the needs of humanity but at the same time they may offend those who do not follow Christ. The name of Christ alone, invokes offense. For those who are engulfed in profligacy and hedonism, rejecting the truth of Christ, yes, they will be offended. Quite frankly, Christ knew he would offend some whose heart was hardened. I remember when asked to be the Chaplain of my local Howard University Alumni club. I would be the first. I’ll never forget the first time I was asked to pray at one of our monthly meetings.

Being a true Pentecostal, I began with boldness and fervor like a race horse straight out of the gate. It was fiery to say the least. Perhaps I could have toned it down a bit, but I was doing what I normally did. The audience was in literal shock. Days after, a few members expressed concern of having a chaplain and beginning the meetings with prayer. Most of the members are Christian but there are some atheist and Muslims as well. The Muslim was the biggest dissenter. At a leadership meeting, it was asked if I would mind leaving out the name “Jesus” in my prayers.

Immediately I stated no and that if they wanted another Chaplain, I would not be offended. It will be at the name of Jesus, that every knee will eventually bow, and every tongue will eventually confess that Jesus is Lord. We finally agreed that at the beginning of the meetings, I would give inspirational words of encouragement. Poems and such were allowed but no praying. Eventually, an opportunity would come along for me to pray, and my ending did not change. Tone and words make a difference but praying in the name of Jesus should never be a compromise.

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Even if not specifically motivated by Christian nationalism, Christian legislative prayers nonetheless advance the Christian nationalist ideal that true Americans are Christian Americans. Everyone else is simply not accorded the same respect, benefits, or rights (p. 482).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The author’s characterization of Christian legislative prayers is variant to my understanding of such an exercise.

**Contextualization:**

The author may very well be on to something. A Christian based, legislative prayer that covers the needs, benefits of all humanity, in my opinion does not advance Christian nationalist ideal. A prayer in the name of Jesus, can contextualize the needs of the hearer. It can be a prayer for all who are sick, it can be a prayer that expresses the need for a better environment and for all who want to have a better quality of life. As a former Chaplain, I would make sure my prayers covered the topics that my audience cared about. The needs of current Howard University students, the strengthening of the school’s leadership, the need to heal the world of dissention and violence were certainly embraced.

**Source Four:** Resane, K. T. (2021). White fragility, white supremacy and white normativity make theological dialogue on race difficult.*In Die Skriflig, 55*(1) <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v55i1.2661>

**Comment 11:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“One way in which some white South Africans are seeking to redefine themselves is through describing themselves as Africans. However, claims by white South Africans that they, too, are Africans have been met with mixed responses from black South Africans” (p. 2).

**Essential Element:**

Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The racialized tension in South Africa is an addition to my knowledge of the post-apartheid cultural dynamic and also extends my understanding of contextualization.

**Contextualization:**

It does seem a little odd to call a white person born in South Africa, an African. Technically those that are born in Africa are in fact African despite their skin color. Perhaps in an attempt to connect with the black skinned, fellow native, they embrace the ethnicity of being African at the offense of others. Because I have not experienced apartheid, I cannot begin to know the hurt, pain and offense of a white South African portraying themselves as someone who understands the struggles of non-white.

By calling ourselves African Americans, we are embracing our heritage and ancestors but do not really understand the cultural practices, and traditions of an African born and bred citizen. There may even be some Africans who are offended when black Americans identify with being African. At least as a Christian, I call a fellow Christian my brother or sister, no matter if you look like me or engage in the same cultural practices as I do. The kingdom of God will reflect, with one Father and one King, a citizenship with many colors, shapes and sizes and our native tongues, nor our customs or ethnology will matter.

**Comment 12:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“By building racial stamina, white people may be able to manage racial stressors rather than ignoring or silencing them.” (p. 4).

**Essential Element:**

Interdisciplinary Research

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The term racial stamina is an addition to my vocabulary.

**Contextualization:**

Having never heard the word stamina placed in the above context, it introduces a thought-provoking concept. Assuming it means a greater tolerance for conversations surrounding race and discrimination and a willingness to learn of the challenges of non-whites, I believe the term can be made to fit another shoe. Do black people also need racial stamina. Sometime ago, a young, black female, expressed her dismay at a white person asking about her hair. The white person was intrigued by the texture, style and color.

There are some conversations that are just necessary in order to foster understanding, tolerance and respect. When I have had a chance to discuss my ethnicity and my culture, I have embraced it. Before I purchased my condominium, I rented in a somewhat affluent neighborhood for years close to the DC waterfront. My apartment building was part of a three-building complex with three story townhomes in between. In my cul-de-sac the row of townhomes stretched on both the right and left sides of my apartment building. One day a white lady standing in front of her home engaged in conversation with me. Not remembering what provoked the conversation, she ended up asking me if the building was for section 8 or conventional rent dwellers.

The building was not the prettiest and had been there for years. To my memory, she broached the subject with ease. Because the ice had already been broken, I had no problem explaining to her that the building was not for section 8, although the management may have at the time accepted vouchers. It was to my delight that I explained to her that we were all hardworking rent dwellers. The apartments were decent, mostly comprised of an African American demographic and she would agree that the community was pretty much a safe and peaceful one. Sensing the tone and underlying motive, I am not usually offended when someone asks me about my ethnicity. If there is no dialogue, there can be no understanding nor bridge building.

**Comment 13:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Theologians and Christian workers can overcome racial inhibitions by incarnational exercises in the public spaces” (p. 6).

**Essential Element:**

Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The term “incarnational exercises” enhances my understanding of contextualization**.**

**Contextualization:**

Using “incarnational exercises” to foster positive race relations is a new one and I’m not totally sure I understand what it means. Perhaps it means having conversations where one can envision oneself in the other’s shoes. By Christian workers, he may mean civic spaces or advocacy projects. The spaces for these incarnational exercises must be safe and allow one to be vulnerable. The non-profits in my city are led by both whites and non-whites alike. As a church leader, I think it would be a great idea to have a symposium where we share and ask questions that are normally uncomfortable. We could ask questions such as what you would do if a person of another race accidentally knocked on your door or pulled over in front of your house to look up directions on his or her phone.

As adults, we are tempted to embrace cute little children or embrace them in some form or fashion. We may want to grab their little toes, shake their hand or even pick them up. For my family and I, we have encouraged my older brother not to embrace or show affection towards a white child whom he does not know. We believe another white person could get away with such an action. We have the belief that a white person would be uncomfortable and even create a false narrative of force and aggression. We have created this safe barrier to protect my brother from an false accusations based on all of our experiences. It sounds harsh and stereotypical but it’s a precaution none-the-less.

**Source Five:** Perry, S. L., Whitehead, A. L., & Grubbs, J. B. (2020). Culconductsrs and COVID‐19 conduct: Christian nationalism, religiosity, and Americans’ behavior during the coronavirus pandemic.*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,*https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12677

**Comment 14:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“polarization is powerfully shaped by Americans’ desire to see “Christian” (read: white, native-born, culturally conservative, Christian-identifying) values institutionalized in American civic life and policy” (p. 10.)

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This definition of Chrisitan identification is variant to my understanding of the term.

**Contextualization:**

What the author is saying is basically true. The skewed interpretation of Christian values and conservatism has polarized the country of the Unites States. Many are indeed on opposite ends of the spectrum. To identify as Christian should mean Christlike, loving, caring and at the same time challenging. At one point, I thought should not all Christians identify as evangelical. Unfortunately, I have not interacted with enough evangelicals and my perception skewed. It does seem as if all evangelicals are white centered with nationalistic ideals. Being culturally conservative does not bother me.

It’s the “otherness” that worries me. It’s the tone that implies that anyone that is non-white is not truly an American. What many evangelicals have refused to do, is contextualize their lives so that people from other cultures, those of a darker skin, will have no doubt in knowing that they too are contributors to the success of this great nation we call America. We cannot make it without each other. If you have control of policy, control of resources and benefits why ever bother to embrace “the other”?

**Source Six:** Ward, H. R., & Josephson, P. B. (2020). Donald trump, white evangelicals, and 2020: A challenge for american pluralism.*Society, 57*(5), 540-546. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-020-00525-z>

**Comment 15:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“Sorcha Brophy has argued that religious communities that place a high value on orthodoxy have issues in dealing with change over time” (p. 543).

**Essential Element:**

Biblical contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This characterization of orthodoxy expands my knowledge of the term**.**

**Contextualization:**

The author makes a point. Culture, traditions, and society change over time. The bible does not. We are in a post-modern era of relativism. Anything goes. Do whatever makes you happy regardless of what grieves God. Perhaps contextualization is a tool that we use so that we do not water down our theology or orthodoxy but make it relatable to others.

**Source Seven:** Markofski, W., Fulton, B. R., & Wood, R. L. (2020). Secular evangelicals: Faith-based organizing and four modes of public religion.*Sociology of Religion, 81*(2), 158-184. https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srz045

**Comment 16:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

However, the generalist mode typically entails various – and often shifting – expectations that religious actors will welcome views from other faith traditions”. “When different religions or non-religious people are present, each actor is expected to “tone down” their more particularistic religious language and generalize their symbolism by using more accessible or abstract references: for example, “God” rather than “Christ” ( p. 160).

**Essential Element:**

Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The concepts of generalist and particularist religious modes are new concepts and an addition to my vocabulary.

**Contextualization:**

I gave the perfect example earlier of my particularist views. Although I respect other faiths or perhaps tolerate, leaving out the name of Jesus in my prayers are non-negotiable. In an interfaith setting, everyone should be free to express their faith how they see fit. A generalist may, when trying to draw others to the Christian faith, may even be tempted to embrace syncretism. The name of Jesus has the power to break yolks, destroy strongholds, transform and deliver. Why would I want to leave the power in my prayers.

**Comment 17:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“By fostering the expression of particularist religious language in a diverse multicultural setting marked by secular and religious plurality, the Neighborhood Solidarity movement was able to mobilize quickly and energetically against the casino project” (p. 169)

**Essential Element:**

Community

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The use of religious expression in this context is an addition to my knowledge of interfaith practices.

**Contextualization:**

In the author’s example, people of various faiths and beliefs were able to come together for a common goal that would ensure safety and peace for their community. This should not be hard on a larger scale. When I have attended, neighborhood civic meetings, where people of various faiths come together to solve issues on a local level, it has not been unheard of for leaders of different religions to lead prayer in their own faith language. One may pray to Allah, one may pray to Jesus, one may pray to Buddha. We were able to civilly discuss the issues of the neighborhood and work together with mutual respect in regards to zoning issues, affordable housing and other topics on the table.

**Comment 18:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“When white evangelicals participate in multifaith contexts that emphasize religious expression, we find they tend to favor the particularist over generalist mode of public religion; however, they are even more likely to participate in the secularist mode” (p. 171).

**Essential Element:**

Faith Integration

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The characterization of the evangelical as a secularist adds knowledge to my understanding of the term evangelical.

**Contextualization:**

The secularist mode as described in this article does not water down its religious language nor stand along others in its individualistic expression of one’s faith. It simply avoids religious expression and remains voiceless. It is disappointing, that in a multi-faith setting where one has a chance to express one’s faith without limit, one chooses to not express one’s faith at all while other faiths perhaps remain bold and out-front.

**Source Eight:** Yang, Z., & Li, L. (2021). Positioning religion in international relations: The performative, discursive, and relational dimension of religious soft power.*Religions, 12*(11), 940. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110940

**Comment 19**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

The finding suggests that conservative evangelical groups’ manufactured reality of the clash of religion and civilization, infiltration into political systems, and localization and politicization of top-down religious messages correspond to the discursive, performative, and relational dimension of the religious soft power obtained by the evangelicals, who seized the Grotian moment to inject their identity, ideology, and interests into US foreign policies on international human rights and the Global War on Terror (p. 3).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The author’s characterization of evangelicals is both an addition to my knowledge of the sect as well as variant to my opinion of what the sect believes in.

**Contextualization:**

To my understanding, the author has first insinuated that evangelicals are promoting a false ideology that religion and civilization are at odds. To this I dissent. There is definitely a clash between orthodox Christian beliefs and mainstream civilization which is clearly secular and at odds with basic Christian values. From how we should educate our kids to how we implement policies on health, there is a vast difference in opinion. Religious soft power is a new concept. If it means that through policy, rhetoric and news media, evangelicals have subtly sought to take control of international policy, then yes, I agree. The war on terror has not been implemented with total veracity, so perhaps this soft power was a unethical means to a unsuccessful end. To protect our country from anyone and anything who wishes to destroy it, by all means, attack the enemy from the root, as long as the enemy is not fabricated and as long as this effort does not create unrighteous bias or xenophobia.

**Comment 20**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

Ensuring that the state would not hunker down and remain reluctant to put the boots down in the Middle East, evangelical groups exploited the textualist reading of the Bible, emphasizing that the Land of Israel was promised to Jewish people by God (p. 15)

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The correlation between the war in the Middle East and the use of biblical contextualization is an addition to my knowledge.

**Contextualization:**

He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:32, 33). Did the soft power of evangelicals and their influence into politics get it wrong. Should we not partner with and protect Israel, as well as our own land from violence. Are we misusing scripture for control. Although I disagreed with many of President Donald Trump’s policies, there were a few that I supported. His foreign policy also disappointed me, except when in 2017 the American embassy was moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

God can use anyone he so desires to fulfill his will. The person he uses may even be an unsuspecting actor in the whole scheme of things. It was for such a time, that Jerusalem was recognized as the capital of Israel. This does not mean that God favored Trump or was even pleased with him. He was a tool none-the-less. If Christians are to take dominion (not using violence on the innocent) then just like the other six mountains of society, politics must be influenced by Christian theology.

**Source Nine:** Smith, J., & Adler, G. J. (2022). What Isn’t christian nationalism? A call for conceptual and empirical splitting.*Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 8* https://doi.org/10.1177/237802312211244

**Comment 21:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

Furthermore, QCN research ignores the possibility of diversity or multidimensionality of perspectives on the social role of religion, instead treating *any* endorsement of public religious expression as evidence of Christian nationalism (p. 4).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The above characterization of Christian nationalism has expanded my knowledge of the term.

**Contextualization:**

It is dangerous to attach any form of public religious expression to Christian nationalism. This is of course on the basis that Christian nationalism is analogous to the detriment of society, which I believe it is. My belief is that Christians should be bold and fervent about our faith. It is our tone and choice of words or actions that give us a bad reputation and could be characterized as Christian nationalism. To declare Jesus as Lord, to declare Jesus as “the way”, and to declare him King of Kings is not Christian nationalism. To pray in Jesus name and to uphold holiness and sanctification, abhorring evil is not Christian nationalism. A love for Jesus cannot be confused with an idolatry of one’s country.

**Source Ten:** Haynes, N. (2023). Presidents, priests, and prophets: Covenantal Christian nationalism and the challenge of biblical analogy.*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 29*(1), 85-102. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13866

**Comment 22:**

**Quote/Variant**

“This is because Pentecostal internationalism ‘charges certain nations with uniquely Christian responsibilities” (p. 88)

**Essential Element:**

Vocational Mission

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

Pentecostal internationalism is a new term and addition to my vocabulary.

**Contextualization:**

What an intriguing concept. Pentecostal internationalism. Because I am Pentecostal, this assessment piqued my interest. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.  He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. King James Bible, 1769/2023, Mark 16:15, 16). Yes, as born-again believers, it is our command and charge to spread the gospel, to preach Christ and to teach the Word. Our mandate is not restricted to our local municipality, or to our own ethnicity. We do have a responsibility. This internationalism should not only be held by to Pentecostals but to Baptists, Methodists, Evangelicals, and any group that confesses Christ as Lord and Saviour.

**Comment 23:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

While scholars have sometimes questioned the link between nationalism and universalist religions like Christianity, a host of historical and contemporary examples indicate an elective affinity between the two. As we have seen, one of the central motifs in this affinity is the covenant. Framed in covenantal terms, ‘the Christian God formed, favors, and sustains’ the nation and has decreed that it play ‘a central role in God’s plan for the world’ (Whitehead & Perry 2020: 164) (p. 97).

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The correlation of Christian nationalism and covenant extends my knowledge of Christian nationalism.

**Contextualization:**

Well, yes. Yahweh is a covenant keeping God. He never fails. As Christians, we can own this covenantal relationship and have confidence in it without arrogance or high mindedness. When I meet others that are not in relationship with Christ and are lost, I think, this person is lost. My heart wants to share the blessings of the covenant so that they too can be a part of it. We are not to think of non-believers as less than. There is no way, however, (that those who have hardened their hearts, disobeyed God and fallen into reprobate, will receive the same blessings as those who have lived according to his will. (See King James Bible, 1769/2023, 2 Corinthians 6:17). There is a certain protection for the righteous. A certain covering. As someone who is tempted but does not indulge, as a Christian who gets frustrated but refuses to walk away from God, God’s covenant is my strength and assurance policy.

**Comment 24:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

As long as the president or the ruling party can claim to play a role in Zambia’s covenantal destiny, it is very difficult to disentangle specific actions or policies from the long arc of God’s plan for the nation, and even more difficult to call them into question (p. 98)

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This characterization of the Zambian government is an addition to my knowledge and understanding of a Christian, political party.

**Contextualization:**

Again, a group of people or government who has declared itself in covenant with God and who has declared Christianity as its official religion, cannot ignore the “other” or force its faith on citizens who choose differently. In or around 2004, I had the pleasure of visiting Greece and Egypt. One of our hotels was a very old palace. It was beautiful and grand but reeked of mold. The very first night and therefore after, will forever be etched in my memory. Around 5:00am, I woke up to a melodic call to prayer. This sound was not just for hotel guests who wanted to participate but for the whole city. The problem is that the call was to rally a prayer to a false god. I had never heard anything like it. Imagine if, every morning, a call would come from the U.S. capital through a megaphone.

Wow! Pretty much every citizen in Egypt was on one accord and those who did not want to pray did not have to but the laws, policies and customs were according to the Quran. If I were to move to Egypt, I would not have to become Muslim but would have to tolerate their customs and govern myself according as far as day-to-day life. My prayer is that all Zambian citizens are treated with respect and have a voice in their education, economic and social policies. They may however, not get everything they want.

**Source Eleven**: Gorski, Phillips, S., Perry, Samuel, L. (2022*). The flag and the cross: White Christian nationalism and the threat to American democracy*. Oxford University Press.

**Comment 25:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“But today, calling oneself a Christian or even an evangelical” is sometimes just a way of claiming membership in an ideological or pollical tribe or defending a certain “way of life”. Roger Brubaker has called this “civilizationist” religion”, (p. 107).

**Essential Element:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis**

The term civilizationist religion is an addition to my vocabulary but variant to my understanding of Christian nationalism.

**Contextualization:**

The term civilization to me means all people across all lands who have the ability to work with one another sophisticatedly and use the resources land to manage their everyday affairs. A civilizationist just does not make sense therefore a civilizationist religion does not either. A nationalist, Christian or otherwise, takes pride in and identifies by their native land, traditions and customs and shuns outsiders.

Having been born in the United States, I do love many of America’s traditions and customs and I feel most comfortable living in the Unites States. My belief is that through order and structure, others should have the right to enter into the country and that by ordered steps I could live comfortably in another county. This land is our land and its God’s land.

**Source Twelve:** White, P.C. (2022). *The Psychology of Christian nationalism. Why people are drawn in and how to talk across the divide*. Fortress Press.

**Comment 26:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Dominionists, on the other hand, are “premillennialists”, who believe fervently that is their Christian duty to “take dominion” in order bring about this second coming of Christ – essentially by establishing the Unites States as a Christian theocracy” (p. 18)

**Essential Elements:**

Culture

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The concept of a dominionists and its correlation to the second advent is an addition to my knowledge and understanding of the end times.

**Contextualization:**

The tone of the author’s interpretation of dominionist is contrary to my understanding of Genesis 1:28. It is however an accurate description of some Christian believers. How we bring about Christ’s second coming and take dominion of the nation and world is given in scripture. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (King James Bible, 1769/2023, Mathew 24:14). Each time I witness to someone of Jesus’s Christ’s work on the cross, each time I lead someone to Christ, I am taking dominion. Force, coercion nor intimidation is necessary. When I connect with someone to establish a rapport and have an opportunity to share my faith, I fell empowered and I am operating with godly authority.

**Source Thirteen:** Polinder, S., Govert, J.B. (2019). *Christian faith, philosophy & international relations: The lamb and the wolf.* BRILL Publishing.

**Comment 27:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“American Christians, politically speaking, often appear to be more nationalistically American than globally Christian” (p. 22).

**Essential Element:**

Vocation Mission

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This description of American Christians in general is variant to my experience with the Christian population.

**Contextualization:**

By traveling as well as belonging to a popular church in Washington, D.C., I have been privileged to meet Christians from all across the world. Just recently on Easter Sunday, one hundred and twenty students form Belgium visited our church. We may be a mostly African American demographic, but we welcome all ethnicities and cultures to come and worship with us. The diversity represents God’s kingdom. At conferences all over the Unites States, a love for God’s people is represented. When talking to other Christians, I have found that we are globally minded and not only want to share our faith in other lands, get to know other customs but believe it is our mission and duty to enlarge God’s territory. There may be a core of Christians in American that are not globally minded and desire to maintain the traditional identity of their nation.

**Source Fourteen:** Whitehead, A.L., Peery, S. (2020). *Taking America back for God: Christian nationalism in the Unites States.* Oxford University Press.

**Comment 28:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“Her reference to Thomas Aquinas comes from his summa Theologica in which he argues that the people of Israel were selective about the foreigners they let within their community on the grounds that God did not view other nations equally and some were more quickly assimilated into community life than others” (p. 108)

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The reference to Thomas Aquinas and its correlation to the Old Testament is an addition to my understanding of Christian nationalism.

**Contextualization**

To think that God was to only preserve a specific nation and maintain one particular ethnicity is biblically incorrect. God makes it clear in the New Testament of grace that gentiles have been grafted into the family of God, as long as they have surrendered to Christ. How this translates into the twenty first century, is that Christ died for all. All includes people from other nations and tongues. Black, brown, white, once having accepted the grace and salvation of Christ will become part of God’s family. If we do not welcome others in out nation (again with order) then how can we share our faith.

It is also presumptuous to think that those who do not look like us or speak our language, do not already know Christ. We too can learn from others. Our faith can be enhanced by fellowship with those from another land. God has representatives everywhere. To vet a foreigner by checking their criminal history is understandable. We have to remember that we too were once considered gentiles before we accepted Christ. It has been a privilege to teach students and get to know people from other cultures who are on fire for God. They came to this country for a better quality of life but they already had a relationship with God

**Comment 29:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Interestingly, while Jews are much less likely to be viewed as threatening across the board, the more someone adheres to Christian nationalism the more likely they are to view Jews as a threat to their values, freedom and safety (p. 112).

**Essential Element:**

Faith Integration

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This perspective of Christian nationalism towards Jews is an addition to my knowledge of Christian nationalism.

**Contextualization:**

For a Christian nationalist to hold the view that Jews are a threat to their nation is absurd. Some years ago, I signed up to be apart of the email list for Jerusalem Council II. This is an organization that unites Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus Christ. It was around that time that I realized I need to pray for Jews and have a concern for the nation of Israel. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee (Kings James Bible, 1769/2023, Psalm 120:6).

One of my most treasured friendships is with an older Jewish woman. Once my supervisor, after she retired, we retained our friendship. For years we would meet once or twice a year for lunch, and she even came to hear me preach a couple of times. There was no doubt that my relationship with her was God ordained.

**Comment 30:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“The desperate quest for power inherent in Christian nationalist ideology is antithetical to Jesus’ message. At its core, Christian nationalism is a hollow and deceptive philosophy that depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ” (p. 163).

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization:

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The author’s description of the Christian nationalist is an addition to my knowledge of the Christian nationalism ideology.

**Contextualization:**

What I understand the author is saying, is that Christian nationalism is fleshly and not an ideology guided by scripture. The flesh is deceiving. The flesh wants power, gratification and satisfaction. What the flesh wants usually does not line up with the character of Christ. In addition, human tradition, especially those of white patriarchy, has always sought to exclude, dominate and usurp. This also does not line up with the character of Christ.

Christian nationalism has contextualized Christ to be a white, elite, savior for white people. This is totally opposite to black liberation theology where Christ is portrayed as a black, suffering Christ. For me personally, Christ is a spirit and is therefore many colors. Christ is a savior and redeemer for all who rode to Jerusalem on a donkey. Christ was a humanitarian, humble and favors no ethnicity or nationality over another.

**Source Fifteen:** Resane, K. T. (2021). Black consciousness, black nationalism and black theology: Is there a possibility for theology of dialogue?*Hervormde Teologiese Studies, 77*(3) <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i3.6418>

**Comment 31:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“For black nationalists, once white domination is overthrown and the white man is no longer ‘supremacist’ or a ‘normativist’ but is an individual member of society, there will be no reason to hate him and he will not be hated even by the masses” (p. 4).

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The above description of black nationalists is an addition to my knowledge of the ideology.

**Contextualization:**

When comparing the ideology of black nationalism to Christian nationalism there are a few considerations. Upon hearing the two terms, one may assume that the ideologies use the same premise, but they do not. One uses erroneously uses Christ or the religion of Christianity to retain power and exclude the “other”. The other ideology (black nationalism) is not based on religion and seeks to regain identity and equality in lieu as traditionally been treated as “the other”. Black nationalism is understood and deserves a sense of respect and praise. For black South Africans to be marginalized, politically enslaved and controlled for so long a movement to regain independence, self-worth, and agency is applauded.

The question is are both Christian nationalism (supposedly rooted in Christ) and black nationalism, rooted in idolatry and humanism. Many organizations, movements, ideologies and philosophies seek to better communities and elevate society and the individuals within them. But what are these ideologies and movements if not rooted in Christ. Truly rooted in the love of Christ. As Christians it is our job to contextualize Christ for the fearful and prideful Christian nationalist as well as the passionate and marginalized black nationalist.

**Source Sixteen:** Phillips, R. (2022). Christianity versus black nationalism: Jamaica’s national identity.*The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society, 12*(2), 223-235. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v12i02/223-235>

**Comment 32:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“In brief, Christianity is the salient component of the cultural identity of Black Jamaicans. “Christianity had revolutionary implications.” It (a) ended slavery, (b) initiated post-slavery integration, and (c) separated politically, Jamaica from Britain” (p. 233).

**Essential Element:**

Biblical Contextualization

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The correlation between Christianity and black nationalism in Jamaica is an addition to my knowledge and expands my understanding of the nationalist ideology.

**Contextualization:**

In this article, Christianity and black nationalism are intertwined and overlap. In Jamaica, identity is rooted in one’s relationship with Jesus Christ as well as its birthplace. Jesus is contextualized as the liberator, the authority giver, and the giver of empowerment. One’s Christian faith means to take grassroots action and galvanize the nation to elevate black Jamaicans. Christ has always been and is indeed a revolutionary, and radical who liberated not only the Jews but the Gentiles, women, the poor and the infirmed.

This, I believe is different than Christian nationalism in the Unites States, where liberation was never necessary, but a retaining of the traditional hierarchal structure is crucial and immigrants, blacks, Jews are meant to stay in their place. Christian nationalism in the United States is not a movement to correct social ills but to restore the chains of racism.

**Source Seventeen:** Niemandt, C. J. P. (2019). Rooted in Christ, grounded in neighborhoods – A theology of place.*Verbum Et Ecclesia, 40*(1) <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1997>

**Comment 33:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“A theology of place recognises the importance of travel. As much as place defines a person’s identity and formed worldview, travel can liberate a person and deepen faith. It liberates a person from the claustrophobic effects of a limited place and limited ways of expressing faith” (p. 6).

“Places are important from a theological and spiritual perspective because it is part of our reality. Reality and contextuality demands a theology of place, which can be defined as an appreciation for the theological significance of specific geographic locations (p. 2).

**Essential Element:**

Faith Integration:

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

A “theology of place, is a new terminology and expands my knowledge and understanding of theology.

**Contextualization:**

Niemandt’s piece on the theology of place, was one of the most beautiful articles I have ever read. This quote is not related to Christian nationalism but is relevant to contextualization. It is also intentional that this quote is last. My first thought when reading this article, is how I feel in my own home. My adequately sized, two-bedroom condominium is my own personal haven. It is a safe haven and refuge. It where the Holy Spirit and I connect and where God and I commune. My home is filled with God’s love and presences. My home is a sanctified place where rules are unspoken but exist. No trash talk, no ungodly activities and no turmoil, only peace.

In this article, Niemandt also talks about the theology of the ugly place. Many have homes where their theology of place is skewed. Whether in a low-income, subsidized apartment building or wealthy estate in Georgetown, the place people call home, can be soothing or can be destructive. How people contextualize their home and neighborhood, depends on the people who live in it, the conditions of the home and whether the presence of God is felt. For some, a place called home is to be avoided and for some it is to be embraced where constant celebration takes place.

In my condominium, I feel accomplished and successful. It is because of hard work, determination and favor that I am able to own a piece of D.C. real estate which helps to secure my future. My home is designed uniquely for me, to include furniture bought with the government bonds my dear Father invested in many, many years ago. My scent and personality are in my home. My home is where I communicate my love language of cooking to share with friends and family and is where I am loved because the presence of the Lord is here.

It is here where I reconcile, the sick days, the challenging days, and the lonely days.

I am able to think in home and pray. I am able to laugh and cry in my home without judgment. It is here at home, in this place, that my faith is strengthened and fortified.

My prayer is that everyone can attain and experience a home, a neighborhood, a community where they are loved, respected and appreciated and where they feel joy. It is my prayer that everyone receive a theology of place in a deeply spiritual and healthy way.

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