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100 Day – Exercise

Write an 8-10 page essay on a contextualization issue for social change. Page count does not include the cover and works cited pages. The essay should demonstrate scholarly work, cover

the subject with sufficient detail to communicate a solid understanding of applying foundational Christian worldviews, and show proper APA 7 style documentation for the resources (works cited). Follow these steps to develop the essay.

1. Develop your essay according to the outline in the Strategy Worksheet found in the

100-Day assignment document.

○ Identify a social issue or phenomenon needing a Christian contextualized

response.

○ Reflect on Stage of 5 of the Interdisciplinary Research Process

○ Consider the Five Spheres of Life as you consider your strategy for

contextualizing a social concern.

○ See sample essays of contextualization in the PHI 923 Course Resources

folder.

2. Structure (Paper Evaluation includes the following structure below).

a. Download the “OGS APA Course Assignments Template 7th Ed 2021” template

from the General Helps folder in the AA-101 The Gathering Place Course on

DIAL. Using the template, create the following pages.

b. Title Page (not included in page count).

c. Copy and paste the assignment instructions from the syllabus starting on a new

page after the title page, adhering to APA 7th edition style (APA 7 Workshop,

Formatting, and Style Guide, APA 7 Quick Guide).

d. Start the introduction on a new page after the copied assignment instructions.

3. Be sure to meet the following expectations.

a. Document all sources in APA style, 7th edition (APA 7 Reference Example, APA

7 Quick Guide)

b. Include a separate Works Cited page, formatted according to APA style, 7th

edition (not included in page count).

 c. Use a minimum of seventeen scholarly research sources (three to four books

and the remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

4. Submit the completed paper to DIAL.

A. Present Situation of Social Concern – describe the situation requiring a contextualized

Christian response to a cultural situation or phenomenon.

B. Social Analysis: (Family, Church, Society) – Using the Five Spheres of Life, develop a cultural analysis to comprehensively describe aspects of the situation or phenomenon.

C. Theological/Moral Evaluation – Identify Biblical areas or Kingdom principles relevant to the issue.

D. Issues to Address – Identify underlying/related issues that need to be addressed in the

contextualization strategy.

E. Spectrum of Critical Contextualization (address only relevant ones)

a. Condemnation – includes issues condemned by Scripture (i.e., erroneous doctrine,

idolatry, or syncretism)

b. Correction of Erroneous Emphases – cultural beliefs/practices containing true

insights but are diluted with wrong focus.

c. Conversion of Themes – beliefs/practices with no significant negative influence but

can be used to point to Christ

d. Commendation of Good Belief and/or Practices – beliefs/practices in culture that

are completely consistent with Scripture but exist without religious warrant are to

be commended

F. Strategy for Contextualized Communication/Action for Social Change - develop a strategy

by thinking through all the practical considerations below.

a. Stakeholders - Identify the people or groups who have a stake in the phenomenon

or issue.

b. Venues of Communication - These could be written or spoken, could involve

media, or social or organizational networks.

c. Resources - Identify available and needed resources.

d. Timelines - Begin to think through the timeline or logistical issues involved in

implementing a contextualization strategy.

e. Obstacles to Anticipate - Anticipating obstacles can add practical aspects to a

strategy that can help it to succeed.

**Assessing Christian Nationalism as a Phenomenon and its**

**Influence on Race Relations in the U.S.**

**A. Presenting a situation for social concern**

 In the last fifteen years, Christian Nationalism has become one of the nation’s most impactful and loudest socio-cultural phenomenon. Mirriam-Webster defines a phenomenon as a “an observable fact or event” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Christian nationalism has been saliently observable in our streets, neighborhoods, on television, on Capitol Hill, in our local government halls, and on print media. My description of Christian nationalism as socio-cultural stems from its influence on the political stage, its contribution towards America’s on-going cultural war and its infiltration into Christian churches. Alexander (2022) categorizes Christian Nationalism as a phenomenon and highlights the growing interest of journalist and leading public figures inside this movement. A phenomenon could be positive, or it could be negative. It could be beneficial to society, or it could be detrimental.

 My thesis is that Christian Nationalism, due to its divisive rhetoric, provocation of violence and idolization of White national identity is socially malignant and deserves a contextualized Christian response. My definition of Christian Nationalism is a staunch devotion to American post-colonialist traditions, an invisible caste structure, and political and social control based on erroneous scriptural interpretation fused with otherwise beneficent Christian principles. Some positive aspects of Christian Nationalism will also be discussed.

 Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, both distinguished sociologists and scholars in theology, seem to be the current prominent scholars on Christian Nationalism. Whitehead and Perry (2020) frame Christian Nationalism as an ideology which combines American civic life with a type of Christian identity and culture.

**B. Social Analysis: (Family, Church, Society)**

 Christian nationalism has infiltrated its way into people’s family dynamics, political debates, the management of education, Christian worship houses and other culture arenas.

It is of value to first describe the main characteristics of a Christian nationalist and the main tenants of this ideology. By in large, when we speak of the phenomenon of Christian nationalism, scholars as well as myself, mean White, Christian nationalism. White Christian nationalists, although not the only ethnicity that hold a commitment to American nationalism, is the main group that possess the most influence and have the loudest voices in our political and cultural sphere.

 In speaking of Christian nationalism, Alexander (2022) believes it is a nationalism where whiteness and Christianity are both the basis of U.S. policy and U.S. citizenship. Alexander (2022) states “it also conflates “Christian identity” with “white identity”, and views nonwhite residents of the United States as less than fully American” (p. 3). For Perry, Whitehead and Grubbs (2020) a Christian nationalist embodies whiteness, being native born, cultural conservatism and identification with the Christian religion.

 My belief is that Christian nationalism has re-erupted its way into dynamics between Whites and non-whites though violence, discrimination or tension in various communities. It certainly has not strengthened race relations. The overt as well as a subtle promulgation of racism (a man-made construct by the way) has filtered through politics and church life. Our political system and Christian religion are two major institutions that affect society. Many scholars believe that prominent White Christian nationalist play a significant role in American politics and the creation of legislation. They assert that White Christian nationalist ideals boosted the Trump presidency. Perry, Whitehead and Grubbs (2022) based on their own quantitative research, found that because of Trump’s appeals to American religious heritage, promises of conservative Supreme court justices, a strong stance against religious freedom and his augmentation of fears against those of a different ethnicity and religion such as Muslims, White Christian nationalist united to make sure Trump was put into office.

 We can all agree that America’s immigration is a hot mess. How we manage our borders and how we structure our immigration laws is a whole other question.

One such legislation was the travel ban instituted in 2017. An executive order was signed by then President Trump to ban travelers from seven predominately Muslim countries from entering the United States. It also prevented refugee resettlement. The ban was eventually overturned due to protests and advocacy but in 2018, the Supreme Court allowed a third version of the executive order to be signed into law. In 2020, the president placed six more countries on the list.

 Citing a few qualitative ethnography studies on attitudes and nativism such as (Willis-Equeda, 2017; Zhirkov, 2021; Nassar, 2020), Alexander (2022) found that the general attitudes surrounding immigrants and refugees were prejudice against religions other than Christianity and felt anxiety over fears of personal and national security. These anxieties towards immigrants produce negative feelings towards Hispanics, Latinos and Muslims. U.S. Economic contributions from immigrants and security are factors that shape these fears, but racial and religious prejudice play a more dominant role.

 Grace and Heins (2020) assert “we find those who sought to eliminate refugee resettlement reconstructed the meaning of a legal status, refugee, to be synonymous with Brown, Muslim, Terrorist, Third World, by presenting these population categories as unified in a legal status in opposition to the white, Christian, civilized, United States” (p. 1). Just recently Florida banned highschoolers from taking an advanced placement course on African American studies. Without setting my eyes on the curriculum and lessons that would be learned in this course, it is difficult to form a hard lined opinion on whether or not the course is appropriate for high school age students. What I do know is that, if accurate, black history is American history and whites and blacks and everyone in between should be required to learn it. This education restriction also sets a dangerous precedent into future banning of educational material that is not favorable towards whiteness.

 My characterization of Christian nationalism as a racist ideology is not solely based on legislation but on sub phenomena that has occurred within the last fifteen years. It feels like the Jim Crow era, where the Klu Klux Klan, and other white supremacy groups, operate proudly and freely. Because of changes in our legal system and divisive rhetoric from political and religious leaders, those who have held stealthily racist or bias attitudes, have in recent years public expressed or acted upon these attitudes. Basically, those who believe that non-whites are inferior, and are to be feared and constrained have come out of the shadows.

 On June 17, 2015, a white male entered a black church in South Carolina and killed nine African Americans. On August 12, 2017, a white man attending a White nationalist rally, drove his car into a crowd of protestors, killing a white activist and injuring several others. On January 6th, 2021, a large mob, made up of white Christian nationalist, white supremacist and protestors to the election of Joe Biden, stormed the Capital of the United States, committing violent acts in order to halt the transfer of the Presidency from Donald Trump to Joe Biden. Recent scholarship links the right-winged elite, many of whom are Christian nationalists to the provocation of the January 6th riots. Armaly, Buckley, & Adam (2022) who are among such scholars, wrote.

 In sum, we argue that perceived victimhood, reinforcing racial and religious identity, and immersion in conspiratorial information networks are each likely to increase individual exposure and/or receptivity to elite rhetoric cueing these identities and views of the world, which in turn strengthen the link between Christian nationalism and violence. (Armaly, Buckley & Adam, 2022, p. 942)

There are more examples of perceived white victimhood, prejudice and fear against non-whites that fueled violence in recent years, but the length of this essay does not permit elaboration.

**C. Theological/Moral Evaluation**

 Christian (white) nationalism uses the constitution, historical tradition and the bible as its grounding. Cooper-White (2023) gives a framework for the religious grounding of Christian nationalism. She states the foundational doctrine behind the ideology is that God established the U.S. as a Christian nation, therefore it should be both a theonomy in that the country should be ruled by divine law, and a theocracy, in that it should be governed by Christian leaders. She further denounces the ideology as one which esteems White, male Christian leaders over females and other ethnicities. Whitehead and Perry (2020) explain the connection between Christian nationalism and the bible due to its belief in biblical covenant. The covenant assures Christian nationalist that God formed the U.S. nation, favors and sustains it. This covenant also mandates that the United States shall lead the world as a central figure in God’s overall plan.

Perry, Cobb & Whitehead, (2022) state “we theorize that conceptions of America’s religio-cultural heritage and identity are racially coded and grounded in White supremacy, but only for those atop the racial hierarchy” (p. 913). Perry et al (2022) characterize white nationalism as a religio-cultural preeminence and a denial of anti-Black injustice. Although Christian nationalist base their ideology on biblical principles and the covenant God made with the nation of Israel, some scholars assert they have a bias not only towards other ethnicities but towards Jews. Whitehead & Perry (2020) cite “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).

Miller (2022) depict Christian Nationalists as those advocating that America should retain cultural norms, inherited perceptions of eighteenth-century Protestant Britain and a country that adheres to White Protestantism. Miller (2022) states nationalist misconstrue Acts 17:26 in the context of determined boundaries and a divine allotment which keep a particular race distinct and sovereign.

 Another view of Christian nationalist is that many are “dominionists” (Gorski, Phillips & Perry (2022). They characterize these dominionists as “premillennialists” who, because of their Christian duty are determined to take dominion in order to accelerate the Second coming of Christ. They assert dominionist would accomplish this acceleration by establishing the U.S. as a Christian theocracy.

 The idea that God (El Berith) is a covenant keeping God is certainly scriptural. The Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:1-3, which does reference Israel becoming a great nation; The Mosaic covenant (the covenant made through Moses) found in Deuteronomy 11 and the Davidic covenant located in 2 Samuel 7:8-16. An everlasting kingdom is established in the Davidic covenant and Jesus stems from this blood line (Luke 1:32-33). What voids the nativist and pre-eminent hubris of Christian (white) nationalist, is that in the New Testament, anyone who accepts Christ is heir to the covenant established in the Old Testament.

 “That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (King James Bible, 1769/2023, Ephesians 3:6). The New Testament is based on grace and humble acceptance of Jesus Christ. “For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (King James Bible, 1769/2023, Mathew 26:28). All individuals must accept Christ as Savior in order to be heirs to the promise of salvation. Assumptions cannot be made based on native origin or skin color. This new covenant (Hebrews 9:15) requires obedience, love, and compassion for others include people from other countries, those who speak different languages, have a different skin tone and even those who practice other religions. Whitehead and Perry (2020) eloquently state:

 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).

**D. Issues to Address**

 Issues to Address and contextualize are the preeminent hubris of Christian nationalist towards those outside of their ethnicity and who practice a different religion. Christian nationalist have usurped biblical text in order to claim superiority over “the other”. The rhetoric used on the national stage provokes violence towards “the other”, fuels antisemitic attacks, police violence against African Americans, and fears of non-whites in neighborhoods and effectuates the re-emergence of white supremacist groups. Because of these attitudes, there is a missed opportunities to draw others to Christ and a danger to even shun existing Christians away from following Christ.

Perry, Cobb & Whitehead, (2022) “thus, for Whites, appeals to America’s “Christian” heritage are racially coded and contribute to an ideological defense of White supremacy, including the denial of blatant anti-Black injustice and a commitment to White victimhood” (p. 913). Carter (2022) divides the ideology down into seven (7) deadly sins as follows:

The lust for omnipotence, entitlement, White supremacy, misogyny, capitalist spirituality, domination of the earth and its creatures. A counter proposal appears later in this essay.

 Globally, outsiders may be viewing Christian nationalism as the face of true Christianity.

While Caucasians are not the only race to adhere to Christian nationalism (Alexander, 2022), they have traditionally been the leaders in America’s educational, political and business spheres.

Christian nationalists are blind to the necessity to contextualize Christ’s story as well as his mission to make salvation available to others in the world. Polinder and J. Buijs (2019) observe “American Christians, politically speaking, often appear to be more nationalistically American than globally Christian” (p. 22).

**E. Spectrum of Critical Contextualization**

**Condemnation**

 Essentially, Christian nationalist idolize country, heritage and the constitution over Christ himself. The bible warns us not to put anyone or anything over God (Exodus 20:3-6). This same pericope also highlights God’s love for “anyone” who keeps his commandments, not one particular race. There are many Asian, African American, Hispanic and Messianic Jews who love Christ and are keeping his commandments. One group is not favored over another. Miller (2022) is against using the nation of Israel as a template for sovereignty and isolationism. He suggests the bible does not support world government. He states the bible does present humanity as existing in different political, linguistic, and cultural groups but no particular group organization is framed as normative.

**Correction of Erroneous Emphases**

 An effort to make America Christian, a nation which believes in an allegiance to Christ, prayer in schools as well as prayer in public debate is a positive aspect of Christian nationalism. It is only the exclusion of “the other” and the lack of empathy and love for humanity that is missing. The focus should be on drawing others into our country (legally) so that they experience redemption, safety, opportunity and the love of Christ through others that are either native to this land or have come before them.

**Commendation of Good Belief and/or Practices**

 Many aspects of Christian nationalism are commendable and worth noting. Their conservative views when it comes to family and socio-cultural practices in my view need no condemnation.

 **Commending Public and Legislative Christian Prayers**

 In citing the Establishment Clause (forms the constitutional basis for the right to freedom of religion and the U.S. shall not establish a single, particular religion), Corbin (2019) adamantly objects to Christian prayers on a national stage. Corbin asserts these prayers provoke Christian nationalism and the idea that true Americans are Christian Americans. Furthermore, he argues that legislative prayers should cease entirely, (Corbin, 2019).

 Legislative prayers can be a good thing. Christ should be the pulse of the nation’s heartbeat. Christ centered prayers on a national platform can reach so many people and impact so many lives. Imagine if legislative prayers and prayers on the public stage began with repentance. Repentance of racism, repentance of vanity, repentance of misuse and abuse and misrepresentation. Repentance of falling short of God’s precepts. The context of the prayers should be that everyone feels welcome, that everyone’s needs are met, that children have quality education, that neighborhoods support each other, that love, and unity reside in our marriages and that our nation stands out as a beacon of hope, exhibiting the character of Christ. Through prayer, the power and resurrection of Christ could be felt in every nation and every tongue. Imagine the revival that could take place.

**Commending Biblical Social Values**

 The further we head away from God’s principles, the further this nation head towards damnation. The fight for marriage between a man and woman, the fight for prayer in schools, the fight for keeping babies alive in the womb are fundamentally biblical principles. Of course, there are scholars that repudiate Christian conservativism and its advocacy for such laws as making any form of abortion illegal. Cooper-White (2023) asserts Christian nationalist have distorted Christian theology in order to maintain political power and promulgate the prohibition of abortion. Christian or not, there will always be liberal attitudes that come against holiness and biblical truth. Currently the “woke divide” is gearing America toward another civil war in the ideological sense. What deserves to be condemned is Christian nationalist’s repudiation of justice and democracy for black lives and people of color. What is commendable is the renunciation of transgender surgery amongst our youth and the renunciation of drag shows for children.

**F. Strategy for Contextualized Communication/Action for Social Change**

 Christians cannot give up on communicating with each other, no matter the divergent theologies and ideologies**.** Our main mission is to reach the unsaved and contextualize the story of the Messiah to a bleeding world. We also, however, have to contextualize the story of Jesus to other Christians who have strayed from biblical truth and perhaps not had a true encounter with the Holy Spirit. This contextualization approach and outreach would be at least two-tiered. Christian leaders (Pastors, Christian Academics, Christian Senators, Christian businessmen and women, and Activists) have a responsibility to reach out to reach out to Christian nationalist in their particular milieu. Senators can have lunch together and discuss policy without making promises. Casual conversations breed rapport and connections.

 Pastors can invite other Pastors who hold extremist views to attend small group meetings and intimate conferences, and retreats. These host Pastors should purposely make sure that there are other Pastors of various ethnicities and socioeconomic status to attend the meetings. Conversations should be centered around addressing the fears, anxieties and concerns of Christian nationalist and rebutting with reasonable solutions. These meetings should include prayer and worship. The Holy Spirit must be present and active.

To be clear, there have been Pastors and other institutional leaders who publicly denounce discrimination, nativism and isolation by Chrisitan nationalist.

 The next tier would be Christian community workers, Christian lay men and women, and Christian neighbors casually but intentionally talking with one another in the front yard, at the neighborhood civic meetings, at barbeques and at church dinners finding common ground. Both must be vulnerable to the other and allow an atmosphere of safety and transparency. One must get to know the other without judgment and without expectations.

 Alexander (2022) prescribes an appeal to the economic concerns of Christian nationalist over immigration as well as a call towards hospitality and non-discrimination. In this, Alexander states leaders in conversation would be able to (1) communicate a vision of care and cooperation among people from all backgrounds, (2) enable communities to conceptualize immigrants not only as guests, but as contributors toward economic life, (3) exploring the role of racism in attitudes toward immigrants more deeply by going beyond arguments about economic life, and (4) demonstrate that hospitality to immigrants benefits us all.

 In contrast to his seven deadly sins presented earlier, Carter (2022) suggests a Call to action to include: empowering one another, embody humility, approach the blackness of God, empower women, celebrate sexuality, affirm gender diversity, transform capitalism, belonging with earth and animals and break the spiral of violence. Carter (2022) “invites readers, who are mostly white Americans, to begin to experience Blackness as a resource for our continuing education, personal transformation, and social change” (p. 166).

 Daryl Davis, an accomplished jazz musician and world traveler, happened to meet up with a Klansman in a club one night while he was on tour. The two men talked about Mr. Davis’s performance and chatted about other casual topics. Over the course of a few years, they became friends and eventually this Klansmen renounced his membership and closed the Klan chapter in his area. This began a trajectory of similar connections, and several more Klansmen gave up their hoods after befriending Mr. Davis. The initiation of the heart circumcision of all of these Klansmen was chuckle and laughs over beers with a common liking of music. If a musician can do this unintentionally, how much can the Christian community do intentionally.

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