**THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE**

**KINGDOM OF GOD**

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**PHI 923 Contextualization for Social Change**

1. **20-Day Assignment**

In a 3-5 page essay, submit answers to the following questions.

1. Read "The Gospel of the Kingdom" (Ladd, George). Responses should be expressed in well-developed paragraphs (3-5 sentences).

a. How do you answer the fundamental question, "What is the meaning of the

"kingdom"?

b. How is the above question answered based on the modern or current prevailing

culture of the society in your country of origin?

c. How does Matthew 24:14 magnify history with meaning for believers?

2. Read "Culture, Worldview, and Contextualization" (Kraft, Charles). Responses should be expressed in well-developed paragraphs (3-5 sentences).

a. How are culture and worldview defined?

b. Discuss your experience or thoughts regarding Kraft's analogy on worldview and culture change: "Just as anything that affects the roots of a tree influences its fruit, so anything that affects a people's worldview will affect the whole culture and, of course, the people who operate in terms of that culture" (Kraft, 2012, p.6).

c. Why does Kraft state that there are several levels of culture? Why does Kraft argue that there is more diversity at the "higher" levels of culture?

d. Where do we find recordings of the contextualization of Christianity in Scripture?

e. Use Biblical evidence to support Kraft's statement: "Biblical Christianity be

'reincarnated' in every language and culture at every point in history" (Kraft,2012, p. 9).

3. Structure (Assignment 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 assignment on a new page after the copied assignment instructions.

e. Document all sources in APA style, 7th edition (APA 7 Reference Example, APA 7 Quick Guide)

f. Include a separate Works Cited page, formatted according to APA style, 7th edition (not included in page count).

4. Submit through DIAL to the professor.

1. **Read "The Gospel of the Kingdom" (Ladd, George). Responses should be expressed in well-developed paragraphs (3-5 sentences).**

**Overview:** In the book *Gospel of the Kingdom, 1959,*George Ladd tends to paint a striking picture of the evolving trends between three contrasting historical worlds and yet partly relative in his philosophical analysis: i) the Greek poets and philosophers whose goals are focused on the "lost Golden Age, the unrealizable dreams" ii) The "Hebrew Christian Faith, the orthodoxy of Godliness, viz a viz the Theology of God's Kingdom. iii) The leveraging and influence of the central core ideals of appropriate Christianity. The orthodoxy and the orthopraxis of true doctrines are given some fascinating exegetical and hermeneutical interpretations from the Old to the New Testament Christianity. Again, to George, Isaiah 2:4 and 11:6 offer a glimpse of God's judgment and His Promises about the Kingdom in the Old Testament. And Isaiah 11:6 KJV is one of his categorical statements of proof of an inherent transition in the Kingdom to one of divine utopia:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;

and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them":"…. Implying peace, safety,- all, and the promise of a happy future".

Whereas, In Matthew 4:17, and 7:21, the "mighty works of Jesus of Nazareth (and the healing miracles) play the central role of the New Testament: "Repent for the Kingdom of God is here. – And in Matthew 24;14 KJV: "The gospel shall be preached to all nations, and then the end shall come." These scriptures seem to set the tone and interpretation of what the Kingdom shall consist of in its true context. So Pepard, M. (2023) writes:

The foundational teachings of Jesus in the synoptic gospels are the "Kingdom of God," its prediction in prophecy, depiction in a parable, and the enactment in the deed of power. From the opening of Marks to the lines of Acts, the Kingdom of God is the message of Jesus and His followers-But has the Kingdom lost its rhetorical force for contemporary listeners? ( p.263, para. 2) .

Several Christian intellectuals attribute the divide in the Kingdom of God's understanding to the conflict between Christian historical culture, strategic and dogmatic communication. Strategic communication forms the very core of leadership. When you, as a leader, speak, meet, write, or network, you either clarify or confuse, motivate or demoralize, engage or enrage (Booher, 2017, p.3, para. 4). But, Brandt, T., & Wanasika, I. (2020) write, Communication is culturally contingent and - and will help leaders modify their own behavior, and consequently-avoid unnecessary faux pas (Abstract). Booher, Brandt and Wanasika seem to share the commonality of effective communication and the culture of leadership behaviors also relevant in modern Christianity. To the conservative Christians, the power and authority inherent in the Biblical proclamation of the Kingdom of God are genuine in their mental and doctrinal consciousness, observance, and orthodox Christianity (Christ's salvation, miracles and power of healing, speaking in tongues, etc.). Whereas, the liberal Christians, contemporary or even modern Christians tend to water down the efficacy of the word and the contextualization of the Kingdom of God by "translating and sometimes transcribing scriptures" to suit their earthly social perversions in gender and sexual preferences.

**a. How do you answer the fundamental question, "What is the meaning of the**

**"kingdom"?**

           The Kingdom of God has both conventional and modern interpretations and meanings. George refers to Kingdom as "Malkuth" in the Old Testament, and Kingdom in the New Testament, in the Greek word is referred to as -"Basilera." Both refer to "Rank, Authority, and Sovereignty-and people who belong to that realm. The central meaning of the Kingdom is the "Authority to rule, the sovereignty of the King." That is, God's Kingdom reign, His Rule, and the Sovereignty-not the realm or the geography over which he reigns." However, critics will argue that, in any Kingdom, there is a realm and a location, physical or spiritual, and there are people: Psalm 103;19: The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his Kingdom rules over all; Psalm 145:1-13: They shall speak of the glory of your Kingdom and tell of your power". In the Kingdom of God, the synonym is power, might, glory, and authority- It is not a realm or a people but God's reign". The Significant constituents of the Lord's Prayersportray what the core meaning of the Kingdom is: The two scriptures: Matthew 6:10 (The Lord's Prayers) and Psalm 24:1-2 (KJV), reveal the totality and spirituality of the Kingdom of God in its true context.

Psalm 24:1-2 (KJV) states, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof."

1. The scripture unfolds the earth as the Lord's domain, possession, and dominion.
2. Mathew 6:10 KJV expresses the meaning and the divine nature of the Kingdom in heavens and the earth upon asking, seeking, and knocking through prayers and supplication):

"Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallow be thy name, thy Kingdom come as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily Bread".

These scriptures unfold God's Kingdom and reign in Heaven and on earth in the spirituality of His majesty and the power, and the reign over His created humanity. This manifests the "Missio Dei - Everything God does to establish His Kingdom both in and outside the Church."

**b.   How is the above question answered based on the modern or current prevailing**

**culture of the society in your country of origin?**

       The Kingdom of God contextualization in Nigerian Christianity transcends traditional ritualization in Catholic and Anglican denominations. These denominations are strongly aligned to Western-oriented peculiar liturgical, sacramental, and neo-Christian doctrines evident of religious Trans-culturalism. Glover, J., Friedman, H., & van Driel, M. (2016) state, "Transcultural competence involves more than recognizing and respecting cultural differences. It also involves creating new ways for dealing with cultural dilemmas". At stake in the past is, there was Christian "over-westernization," not allowing denominations to adjust to the culture and the environment. But, with the emergence of Pentecostal Christianity in the 70s and 80s in Nigeria, the country has witnessed an infinite or unlimited transformation in Christian inter and intra-cultural diversities, which are God's Kingdom-oriented, and profoundly entrenched in the Day of Pentecost orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Most churches operate with partly conservative and modern pastoral officialdom that embrace core biblical doctrines, speaking in tongues, upholding Christ's Salvation as their core Pentecostal tradition (being born again), baptism by water immersion, sprinkling, Holy Spirit encounter, etc. They believe in divine miracle healings, divine wisdom, and the living Grace of God to generate and create wealth and good living. Adedibu, B. A. (2023) states that: The Nigerian social, public, political, and religious landscapes have changed significantly over time with the emergence and proliferation of Pentecostal megachurches. Most churches are structured and characterized by a peculiar missional focus and ritual, religious and ecclesiastical distinctiveness (Abstract). The additives in Adedibu's statement are "missional focus and ecclesiastical distinctiveness," perhaps that which reflects Pentecostal ritualization, Apostolic service, and the Kingdom of God focus or orientation.

But two American authors, Branson, M. L., & Martinez, J. F. (2023), share partly similar views. "We live in a culturally contingent nation-and many of our cities and neighborhoods exhibit cultural pluralism-and we believe that Church's identity and agency should be characterized by what Paul calls" all things coming together in Christ." (Ephi l:10, CEB).

Based on experience, Nigerian Pentecostalism thrives on highly venerated Kingdom of God contextualization, openly visible in their DNAs and psyche like some bubbling-divine steroids (to say the least). That which propels the Christians' relentless quest to stick doggedly to the word of God evidenced in Old and New Testament doctrines, in all spheres of life, primarily through Praise and Worship (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), Tithing (Malachi 3;10 and Giving (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

**c. How does Matthew 24:14 magnify history with meaning for believers? Apostle**

       The scripture, Matthew 24:14 KJV, can be classified as prophetic. It is a prophecy that manifests Christ's revelational and historical apostolicism (missionary/priesthood) and evangelical missional obligations (Imago Missio) to all Christians irrespective of denomination: "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." The scriptural meaning of Matthew 24:14 for believers is clear. This scripture, like some, is a replica of the scripture Mark 16:15, the Great Commission and its commanding dictum, "Go Yee and preach the gospel to all nations"... But Kling, D. W. (2022) tends to magnify the course of Biblical history as reminders about the relevance of the Old and New Testaments, and still finds them relevant in modern Christianity. Kling states that "the Old Testament contained unforgettable action stories and heroes: Moses and the parting of the sea, David and Goliath-The New Testament, though containing fewer spectacular stories conveyed: instructive parables, feeding of five thousand, resurrection of Lazarus, the day of Pentecost." (Introduction, p. 10, para. 2). These scriptures attest to the non-mutual exclusivity of the Old and New Testament; even when some modern Churches still neglect and discount the Old Testament as the religious history of the past, they better think again. But in Matthew 19:16-26 KJV, Jesus tends to blend the historical Old and the New Testament commandments, "thou shall not murder or commit adultery- thou shalt love thy neighbors as thyself"...The disciples asked who could be saved, and Jesus replied, with men, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible". According to Daliman, M., & Suparti, H. (2021), The God of biblical revelation is everywhere - The parable of the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God is widely stated- many scholars claim that the Gospel of Matthew reveals more about Jesus as a powerful King. (Abstract)

Daliman and Suparti emphasize the Kingdom of God's power in Matthew 13.

Mathew 13 unfolds the Kingdom of God in parables that a few discerning eyes and ears understand.

**2. Read "Culture, Worldview, and Contextualization" (Kraft, Charles). Responses should be expressed in well-developed paragraphs (3-5 sentences).**

**a. How are culture and worldview defined?**

        In its simplest terms, culture refers to people's ways of life, their learned or borrowed or inherent traditions, norms, beliefs, and values that often form their behaviors and attitudes or shape their opinions and worldviews. Culture is inseparable from worldviews. To Kraft H.C:

The term Culture is the label Anthropologists give to structured customs and the underlying worldview assumptions which govern people's lives. It consists of learned, patterned beliefs (worldview), concepts, behavior, and resulting artifacts (material culture). Worldview, the deep level of culture, is the culturally structured set of assumptions (including values and commitment/allegiances) underlying how a people respond to reality". Culture consists of traditions, dogmatic alignment, doctrines, norms, and values that crystalize or form one's Christian or secular worldviews. Culture comes with some forms of standards and traditional education that drive peculiar worldviews held. Shaw, M. (2020) notes that 'religious literacy, 'while contested, is increasingly used-to describe a level of knowledge and understanding about the diverse religion and belief landscape and the skills to engage that diversity positively.

Here, Shaw leverages the significance of religious education to engage multi-cultural diversities in "a positive way." Such cultural education enhances the translation and nurturing of Christianity (that which detests transplanting of a religious culture) amid local traditional & cultural systems. For example, in Nigeria, Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal denominations embrace sermons in traditional dialects, praise, and worship in local languages, which the people are comfortable with.

**b. Discuss your experience or thoughts regarding Kraft's analogy on worldview and culture change: "Just as anything that affects the roots of a tree influences its fruit, so anything that affects a people's worldview will affect the whole culture and, of course, the people who operate in terms of that culture" (Kraft, 2012, p.6).**

Kraft's statements (and the diagram on Kraft, 2012, p.6) indicate that a Christian worldview can be likened to the roots of the tree (metaphor) that represents the core or central values of a prevailing Cultural system or environment. That is, any given culture is made of subsystems like social, economic, religious, technological, and educational subsystems. And they collectively reflect or constitute a central unit system called Worldviews. The Christian worldview includes the foundational tap roots upon which a Culture of subsystems is built, formed, can relate, and be exercised. And it is the worldview that holds the cultural subsystems together. And when there is a change in the held worldview (structured with traditional values, commitment, and allegiances), it does affect or cause a change in any of the subsystems.

Both pluralistic and crossing cultures can create fertile grounds for a worldview that shares and reflects multi-cultural diversities. MM, D. (2019) writes, In plural societies, people of different cultures live together in a common geographic territory with a common social setup. To Ward C. et al. (2020), Crossing cultures can be a stimulating and rewarding adventure. However, it can also be a stressful and bewildering experience. Here, Ward presents a reminder of two contrasting experiences ("stimulating rewards and stressful experiences") and what to expect in multi-cultural diversity). Nevertheless, MM, D, and Ward share the commonality and essence of multi-cultural diversity.

**c. Why does Kraft state that there are several levels of culture? Why does Kraft argue**

**that there is more diversity at the "higher" levels of culture?**

To Kraft, the several levels of culture indicate cultural diversities at the higher level. That is, the higher the level of culture, the more diversity. For example, western culture reflects the French, German, Spanish, and Swedish cultures. Kraft analyzes Cultural systems as consisting of Surface structural systems of culture and the deep culture. And Kraft states that: "Christian witness, however, is to be directed to the worldview of a people so that it influences each of the subsystems from the very core of the Culture.Kraft argues that there is more diversity at the "higher" levels of culture. At the top or surface level structure of culture, peoples' cultural norms, behaviors, actions, and what they do, see, feel, and display are much more visible than the deep culture within them that form their worldview. Their actions reveal their worldview, perhaps writing opinions and values they demonstrate in the open. "Within these cultures, we can speak of community, family, and individual cultures (Kraft, p.4, para. 2). Faith integration and commitment solidify a Christian worldview within a given denominational unit system. Van den Toren, B. (2023) notes that the Christian faith understands faith as a response to the divine initiative of God in Christ and therefore understands commitment as grounded in confidence. Commitment, over time, creates a cultural identity that reflects one's worldview, Christian or secular. Hall, S (2020) states that Cultural identity is a matter of 'becoming' and 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. "Becoming" relates to the development process, and the "Being" is the cultural maturity reflected by the core Christian worldview.

**d. Where do we find recordings of the contextualization of Christianity in Scripture?**

According to Kraft (p. 8, para. 2), The contextualization of Christianity is part and parcel of the New Testament. Kraft is unfolding the fact that, the two most controversial scriptures about Christianity's contextualization, cultural translation, transformation, and syncretism, are Acts 10 and 15. In Acts 10, the Lord used Peter, a Jew, to lead Philip, a Gentile, to Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 15, the council of Jerusalem, made up of Jews, is astounded to know that God's baptism of the Gentiles by the Holy Spirit transcends the Jewish tradition of circumcision ( a precursor to baptism) in early Christianity.

But in modern times, you still find Judeo-Christianity embraced by conservative Christians in the United States. And Jacobs, J. A. (2020) states that Judaism is firmly committed to a pluralistic, dynamic civil society. (Abstract) Whereas, Almond, P.C. (2019) notes, Judeo-Christian traditions" is most often meant to evoke "those religious, ethical, or cultural values or beliefs regarded as being common to both Judaism and Christianity."

**e. Use Biblical evidence to support Kraft's statement: "Biblical Christianity be**

**'reincarnated' in every language and culture at every point in history" (Kraft,2012, p. 9).**

Kraft's "biblical Christianity be "reincarnated" is strategic and reveals translation and cultural transformation, emphasized in Acts 10, and 15. Kraft writes that:

These conservative Jews were the heretics against whom Paul fought for the right of Greek-speaking Christians to have the Gospel expressed in their language and culture. We conclude from such passages as Acts 10 and 15 that God intends that biblical Christianity be "reincarnated" in every language and culture at every point in history-The Gospel is to be planted like a seed that sprouts from within nourished by the rain and nutrients in the cultural soil of the receiving people (p. 9, para 2).

The two scriptures, Acts 10 and 15, are groundbreaking in Christianity's biblical history and culture. Each scripture sets the historical foundation, the tone and instructions of God to the early Christian Jews that God does not condone religious discrimination based on Jewish culture and language. It is glaring that God honors a Christian gospel planted like a seed that grows from within, not one "transplanted ."The seed conceptualization and contextualization unfold the prospects and processes to which the Christian doctrines, the Gospel, and Christ's salvation grow like nurtured seeds into trees of Culture that bear tap roots of the Christian worldview, stems, leaves, and fruits of Christian doctrines contextualized or indigenized (without corrupting). But, such growth must take cognizance of people and community cultural competence, the language, and the culture of the people receiving the Gospel, especially embodying it as earlier mentioned. Garrido, R., García-Ramírez, M., & Balcázar, F. E. (2019) define Community Cultural Competence (CCC): as a multilevel and multidimensional process of personal development that implies the acquisition of critical awareness, responsiveness to diversity, capacity to act within the organization, and capacity to operate within the community. Garrido and fellow authors are precise about the effectiveness of utilizing the CCC model to stimulate culture and worldview.

**Conclusion**

The Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of Heaven) is the centerpiece of modern, neo-conservative, moderate liberal Christianity and the underlying culture and worldview. Kraft attempts to lay out the historical origins of the New Testament Christian cultural trends unraveled in Acts 10 and 15, the initial multi-cultural resentment between the early Christian Jews and the Gentiles, until the Lord's spiritual intervention. The concept of the Kingdom of God may sound like a metaphor in its discourse. However, study shows that it is both a physical and spiritual truth and experience in its doctrinal contextualization. This doctrinal truth is exemplified in the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), the divine tradition of the Salvation of Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and the faith-believer-ship in its nurtured context (Romans 10:17), and their learning integration. These traditional values must be embraced to sustain the culturally held faith beliefs, the Christian worldview, and the cultural change it entails. It is the sermonization and the evangelization of the Gospel upon which the Kingdom of God is preached and spread, believed and lived. The "Gospel is not synonymous with Western culture; it has to be communicated in ways the people understand it to avoid ethnocentrism. Christians in each culture have the right to be free from Western domination. And every church has the right to develop its culture-related theology (OGS, 2023, Matt. 5:21-28). Myers, J. (2017) notes that we are given another chance in God's offer of redemption. Christ provides the grace and opportunities to have our opportunities changed back from takers to givers. Introduction. (Para. 5). And Leslie, L. M. (2019), The purpose of diversity initiatives is to help groups facing societal disadvantages achieve better organizational outcomes. Leslie states that "Groups face disadvantages.” And this is can be overcome by Cultural Inclusion and transformation. And Myers seems to be emphasizing proactive Christianity that "gives" or offers as it receives the enduring word of God, perhaps providing services, assisting, and supporting the Kingdom (Churches or Christian organizations) in their attempt to spread the Gospel about the Kingdom of God.

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