History of the Integration of Religion and Society

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Assignment #3 – Essay

1. Write a 5-page essay that analyzes the following items:

a. Introduction of the Present Issue: Begin with a contemporary social issue that

has a (probably unappreciated) history of positive Judeo-Christian response to it.

b. Body Sections:

i. Biblical Worldview Perspective: Locate the issue in the progress of

Biblical revelation and explain the foundations of a Judeo-Christian

perspective. What is a biblical/theological position on this issue based on

sound biblical interpretation?

ii. History of the Issue: Trace the development of the selected issue

alongside the history of Christianity's social impact on it. Summarize the

historical trend at different points in history with an eye to identifying

significant causes of the social problem, identifiable processes at work,

and enduring patterns that emerged. How did the problem/issue originate

and develop? What were the causes of the social problem? What

identifiable sociological or theological processes were at work? What

enduring patterns emerged that recur?

iii. Exemplars of Religion and Society Integration: Present a specific

example (e.g. key leader(s) or movement(s) of socially and intellectually

active Christians) of religion and society integration. If known, discuss

how God raised up the leader or movement.

iv. Applicable Principles: Distill the timeless principles of truth or leadership

derived from the historical examples above. (Develop these based on the

Body Sections #1-#3). Pose possible contemporary applications for the

integration of religion and society in your field of influence.

c. Conclusion: End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis. Discuss what

impact this research had on your sense of calling to change your world.

Abortion and the History of the Integration of Religion and Society

Abortion remains one of the most contentious global social issues of our time. Should it be a legal right to destroy human life in the womb, or should life be legally protected and preserved? However, abortion is not a new phenomenon and has existed throughout the ages. In response to the culture of death (abortion), Christians have played a significant role in establishing a culture of life based on biblical principles that are still influencing culture and society today (Schmidt, 2004). Unfortunately, over the last 50 years, the sanctity of human life has been under severe attack with the legalization of abortion in the United States, and the negative consequences are daunting. Christians continue to influence present-day culture positively, but the challenges remain, and the differing worldviews divide the country into two distinct groups. That is, whether one is pro-life or pro-choice, and the great chasm between the two continues.

Considering the Biblical worldview perspective regarding the sanctity of human life and abortion, the Bible reveals many passages regarding life that are foundational to the Judeo-Christian faith, serving as a guide to their beliefs and biblical/theological positions. Genesis 1:27, Exodus 20: 13, and Psalms 139:13-16 are three foundational examples that shape their life-affirming worldview.

The first foundational biblical reference is found in Genesis 1:27, which states, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (NIV, 2003, pp. 3-4). Christians believe God created man in His image and likeness, separate and distinct from animals. And, as image-bearers, behold intrinsic worth and value, thus believing all life should be protected, cared for, and cherished – from the moment of conception in the womb to dying a natural death (Schmidt, 2004).

Next, in Exodus 20:13, the verse, “You shall not murder” (NIV, 2003, p. 107), is among nine other God-given commandments representing His values, mandates, and character (Schmidt, 2004). Believing abortion kills a human life and is against God’s perfect will for mankind, Christians have historically viewed abortion as a sin against God and, therefore, a reprehensible act.

Lastly, Psalms 139:13-16 is foundational in affirming a pro-life worldview -- valuing all life, created and ordained by God.

For you created my inmost being you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (NIV, 2003, pp. 886-887).

Historically, abortion has been around for centuries, dating back prior to the birth of Christ. In the Greco-Roman culture, the practice of abortion was used to cover up sexual indiscretions, and citizens desiring to remain childless was a cultural norm (Schmidt, 2004). Early Christians were strongly opposed to abortion and have served as change agents to protect and honor life from conception to natural death. Social reforms successfully created a culture of life through laws forbidding the practice of what they considered murderous acts (Schmidt, 2004).

More recently, over the last 50 years, there has been a resurgence in the devaluation of human life, especially within the womb. Three significant causes are 1) the 1973 legalization of abortion within the United States, 2) a my body, my choice women’s social movement, and 3) the dehumanization of life in the womb. When abortion became legalized, the practice was promoted as a safe, simple, and rare procedure. Today, however, abortion is a common practice, and the terminology of rarity has been removed. Abortion is now known as safe and simple. And, as the women’s rights movement advanced, so did the fervor for abortion rights. Life in the womb became less important than a woman’s right to choose, and the consequences have been devastating. Christians have openly opposed abortion and remain steadfast in protecting the sanctity of human life. Although there exists a multitude of Christian influencers to choose from, one exemplary example of a socially and intellectually active Christian key leader that God has raised up as a change agent is Dr. Priscilla Coleman. As a developmental psychologist and retired Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Bowling Green State University, she has published over 60 peer-reviewed journal articles, the majority of which relate to the detrimental effects of abortion. She has spoken in numerous countries (Australia, Canada, Chili, Ecuador, England, Germany, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Poland, Portugal, and Scotland) to wide-ranging audiences, most notably in Parliament Houses (Great Britain, Northern Ireland, New South Wales, and Queensland) to medical and government personnel evaluating current and/or future laws regulating abortion. Dr. Coleman has also testified before state legislative bodies and before a U.S. congressional committee and continues to serve as an expert witness in U.S. civil cases involving abortion.

As a college student, Dr. Coleman had a friend who suffered greatly after having had an abortion. As a result, this piqued her interest in researching if and how abortion can impact a woman’s overall well-being, as well as what effect, if any, abortion can have on families and society. As one can clearly attest, Colemans’s extensive work has been cited worldwide, and she is considered a lead scholar and expert in area of study. The timeless principles of truth, shown through her research results and leadership, serve as an example for future scholars of how God’s work is still active within the field of science and academia.

Not to discount Coleman’s other significant peer-reviewed journal articles in any way, three articles have been particularly useful to this author’s contemporary application for integrating religion and society within the social work field of practice: 1) Abortion and Mental Health: A Quantitative Synthesis and Analysis of Research published from 1995-2009, (2011), 2) The Turnaway Study: A Case of Self-Correction in Science Upended by Political Motivation and Unvetted Findings (2022), and 3) Women who suffered emotionally from abortion: A qualitative synthesis of their experiences (2017). These studies, coupled with other contemporary discipline contributions made since “the post-World War II interdisciplinary studies movement” (Ward, 2014, p.29), have significantly influenced what truths can be gleaned from “specialized domains of knowledge that give focused understanding of various dimensions of realty” (Ward, p. 29, 2014).

In doing so, the following scholarly journal articles have contributed to recognizing and applying contemporary language to the crushing demise of one’s soul following transgressions made that are “contrary to the way God intends for us to act” (Hegeman, 2007, p. 42). That is the construct of moral injury (MI) first recognized by Johnathan Shay in veterans of war (Litz et al., 2022). When applied to the lived experiences of women after abortion (MI-A) has already begun to be identified in several peer-reviewed journal articles (Congdon, 2015; Dumbo et al., 2003; Koenig & Zaben, 2021). And, as each discipline has a domain-related vocabulary (Ward, 2014), what religion views as sin – missing the mark (Koenig & Zaben, 2021), and the consequences that follow, post-modern disciplines refer to as moral injury.

Most excitingly, this author can further apply the contemporary MI-A construct to integrate religion and society within the social work field of influence. This will be accomplished through continued research at Omega Graduate School and working alongside Dr. Priscilla Coleman in a newly formed non-profit organization called the International Institute for Reproductive Loss, which this author will launch during the first week of January 2024. Also, within a few months, two scholarly journal articles, co-written by Dr. Priscilla Coleman and this author, on the construct and correlation of MI-A and the ensuing trauma will soon be available for publication. This, in part, is due to the Omega Graduate School’s faith learning integration program offering a safe place to think and to allow students the freedom to research in an area that is unique, distinct, and in union with one’s personal God-given interest and calling.

In conclusion, it is abundantly clear that Christians still greatly impact the sanctity of human life. The History of the Integration of Religion and Society class has affirmed my calling for such a time as this – present day. From the great scholars of the past that have moved us to the here and now and into the future, may the MI-A construct significantly influence the hearts and minds of others toward a worldview where mankind flourishes due to honoring life versus destroying it.

To arrive at such a point in history, there is much work to be done, and Christians all have roles to serve and “to share in [God’s] grand redemptive story” (Hegeman, 2007, p. 40). As Os Hillman (2017) states in *The Joseph Calling*, as lives are transformed, “we can then become his messengers as he births a message through our oftentimes painful life experience” (p. 24). Indeed. May it be so.

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