Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis

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Professor

Dr. David Ward

***Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal***

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course. The Learning Journal integrates the essential elements of the course within your professional field of interest. The objective of the course journal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor insights gained as a result of the course. **The course learning journal should be 3-5 pages** in length and should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction** –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.

2. **Personal Growth** - Describe your personal growth–*how the course stretched or challenged you*– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the week and through subsequent readings – *what new insights or skills you gained.*

3. **Reflective Entry** - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or *adaptation and relevant application*) of new learning in your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?

4. **Conclusion** – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

**Jared, I am very impressed with your Course Learning Journal for PHI 943-32!**

**What a pleasure to read. Your reflections on what you learned in this course are deep and meaningful as you reflected on how your understanding and appreciation of orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathy have increased. I especially appreciate your ability to integrate concepts across courses and make connections between ideas in ways that advance your own academic and professional goals. I could see in this course how you were forging ideas for your Action Research Project. Fantastic.**

**Keep up the great work! -- Prof. David Ward**

**Grade: A**

 PHI 943 Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis is distinguished amongst the core curriculum of OGS as the most “Christian” of the course work towards degree completion. It is most “Christian” due to the demand to find right belief (orthodoxy), right practice (orthopraxis), and right motivation (orthopathy) from within the confines of a God-centered, biblical worldview. The intent is to be able to focus all subsequent sociological research emanating from a biblical worldview, keeping within Christian orthodoxy, praxis, and -pathy, for the overt or subversive advancement of the Kingdom of God. The underlying assumption within Christian education contends that all truth, whether deemed religious or secular, originates in God. God is the starting point…and, as Christian theology is apt to claim, God is the endpoint as well. All scholarly work, in order to be true, good, and real, must begin and end in God.

 As previously discussed within the Scholar’s Porch directive assignment, this is my second time to integrate the material of this seminar into my current thinking and studies. God must think that I need a second dose. Both my Bachelors and Masters degrees are in Theology and Biblical Studies, so I feel right at home in the literature which takes all the “ortho’s” seriously. I feel I have been able to bring resources forward from past studies while acquiring new founts of inspiration within current scholarship that attempt to view the scholastic world through God-tinted lenses.

At the beginning of 2023, and prior to reconnecting with Dr. Ward and subsequently re-entering OGS, I wrote a letter to close friends articulating some of the transitions of my thinking (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxis) of my role in Jesus’ church. What I mean to say is that over the past 12months I have had a growing *burning* inside of me to “preach.” That is the best way I know to describe it. I can’t say that I have ever considered myself a “preacher”…always more of a teacher within Jesus’ church. And, I’m aware that the term “preacher” carries significant baggage.

However, I now feel a key distinction in my spirit that this day and hour requires a more forceful preaching (according to the Spirit, of course) …as directed to the heart of men and women, since it is the heart of mankind that is failing this hour (orthopathy). The head, inspired by teaching, can follow should the heart be shocked into beating again. I would contend that people have “lost their minds” because our hearts have failed, no longer supplying the head with anchored reason.

However, it is the heart which can hear the tones of life resident within powerful gospel preaching like the shock from the defibrillator paddles on the pale, cold chest of a man…Or so the flame in my own chest seems to be flickering with illumination in this regard. I desire to be a man WITH a chest in light of CS Lewis’ brilliant articulation of the danger of men without them.

I am not one who desires to stand in front of a crowd for the purpose of hearing myself talk. In fact, my accompanying prayer all these years of ministry has been, “Lord, I have no desire to stand up to speak if You are not intending to stand with me and speak for Yourself.” This is true today. I am not seeking opportunities to build a following, or “brand” a ministry, or sell anything, or scratch some hidden itch to be an influencer (that I’m aware of), or find another income stream to support my family at the expense of church resources. When I left church ministry in 2009, I asked the Lord to resource me in another way. I believe He is and has done this.

I see from the scriptures that the illumination of truth, when it occurs, is a direct action and “unction” of the Spirit. In fact, I am learning to take Jesus at His word when He declared that it is the Spirit who will “lead into all truth.” This must also be the case in ongoing sociological research and action as well.

I am reminded of Jesus and Pilate’s recorded conversation near the end of Jesus’ life in John 18. Jesus tells Pilate that He has come into the world to testify to the truth and that those who are “of the truth” will hear His voice. To this, Pilate sneers, “What is truth?” At the heart of all scholastic research is the reverberation of Pilate’s question; a search for truth. And yet, Jesus’ prodding can so easily go unheeded. The only access to truth that we will ever get is to be found in Jesus. The Christian practitioner of any academic discipline must wrestle here.

Which worldview will prevail? The replacement of “scientism” as the religious schema influencing all thought, behavior, and passion is now deeply entrenched in the scholastic machinery. Many men with brilliant minds lay lifeless on the table of post-enlightenment because their heart, their empathic connection to God, does not beat. It does not percuss the rhythmic sound to supply the head nor the hands. It does not deliver sound orthodoxy nor orthopraxis because there is no life-source to cause the heart to beat. This is the Christian scholar’s advantage and dilemma. For we stand in the room with Jesus hearing the words of truth, all the while bombarded with the intense pressure of our own sneering Pilate-mind clapping back questions not founded in faith.

I desire to be a man with a chest; *faith-full*, to the end. I choose the orthodoxy of faith, the practice of hope, and the passion of truthful love to fuel my academic endeavors. For this reason, Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis, PHI 943, occurs right in the middle of the OGS Core system. It is the pivot point, the reminder, the axis around which all successful sociological research is to be done. We will never graduate from its import. May it ever create the orthopathy needed for faithful, full-chested scholarship.