Denise Smith-Lewis

Omega Graduate School

Dr. Curtis McClane

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Prepare a core learning journal for The Influence of Art on Society and Culture.

1. Introduction – Describe the graduate program's expectations and the course's in-person excursion component. 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 related to the following subpoints: (a) how the exhibits at the Museum of the Bible stretched or challenged you; (b) how the museum visit enhanced your appreciation of the Bible in culture; and (c) what new spiritual insights you gained.
3. Reflective Entry - Add a reflective entry that (a) describes the contextualization (or adaptation and relevant application) of new learning in your professional field; (b) how might an added appreciation of art and culture manifest in your professional field; (c) how the exhibits and experience changed or enhanced your worldview in any sphere of your personal life or thinking, and (d) identify specific exhibit(s) at the Museum of the Bible which made an impression on you or caused you to reconsider history and society from a new perspective.
4. Future Expectations - Continue the journal by addressing questions and concerns you now have relating to the graduate program expectations.
5. Conclusion – Synthesize the three body sections of the assignment, evaluating the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals

**Introduction**

Art is everywhere. The earth’s waterfalls, boiling lakes and geysers, mountain ridges, broad valleys, and oceans are breathtakingly beautiful. Although human beings often stand in awe of creation’s wonder and the beauty of the earth, we, human beings, are also makers of art. The skyscrapers, the bridges, the billboards, the houses we live in, the clothes we wear, and the food we eat are evidence of human art and creativity. Humans have made art since our creation; thus, making art is fundamental to human society. God encouraged human creativity when he instructed humans to “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth” and gave human beings dominion over creation.

Human art tells a story and is essential in preserving our history. It shows how humans create cultures and how culture changes over time. Human art expresses our creativity, nourishes our emotions, and plays a critical role in our development. Art can make dingy places look distinguished. It can calm us in times of storm and decrease stress and personal distress in our work. Art can also be considered the language that people use to communicate. And every human being creates art.

The visit to the Bible Museum in Washington, DC, provided the opportunity to view the influence of art on society and culture. It chronicled the creation of human art and deepened my appreciation for the artistry and culture used to create the Bible. It also provided the opportunity to share in the American cultural landscape. I appreciate that the DPhil program of OGS included a course on the influence of art culture on society. This distinctive addition to the Interdisciplinary degree program afforded a unique perspective of how culture and art are interwoven in people’s lives. Culture has formed all of us, and art has influenced culture. Therefore, we should reflect critically on our culture and how art influenced it. Culture and art are at the intersection of human lives, and as scholar-practitioners, it behooves us to study these intersections to understand better our task of co-creating and restoring the Imago Dei in humanity.

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**Personal Growth**

Each new life experience can aid personal development, build human capital, enhance the quality of life, and result in personal growth. The visit to the Bible Museum provided these moments for personal growth. It was inspiring to explore all six floors of the museum. On the first floor, I was enlightened about the relationship between science and religion. Learning how human life began and what makes us distinctively human was powerful. Growing up, I thought that science and religion were mutually exclusive. However, my visit to the Bible Museum made me realize that religion and science are different sides of the same coin and need each other to make complete sense.

Personal growth also happened while exploring the bible using time and technology on the fourth 4th floor. Walking the path of biblical interpretation, from oral traditions, seeing handwritten scrolls, and learning about bible translations into different languages over the centuries was mesmerizing. I became more appreciative of the complexity of the task of translation. I also recognized the need to share this appreciation with those in my sphere of influence, thus enabling those for whom I have pastoral oversight and others to understand that King James is not the only authentic version. I believe this new knowledge would free others to explore other versions of the Bible. Walking this path provided hopeful moments of being able to say Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus. It fostered the hope that the earth could be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters covered the sea.

My interaction with the Hebrew scribe was an awesome one. His knowledge of Hebrew scripture and culture was impressive. Although I studied Hebrew in theological college, I have forgotten many nuances because of the lack of use. This scribe, however, was thoroughly immersed in the language. He wrote my name in Hebrew, which I have kept as a souvenir of my visit to the Museum of the Bible.

I must express my disappointment at the absence of a Greek scribe, and I thought this was a little biased. However, the fusion of technology and the scroll of one’s finger brought the New Testament peoples and places to life and compensated for not having a scribe. This student practitioner believes that having scribes for both the Old and New Testament would promote a greater appreciation of the art and help visitors understand the complexity of biblical translation from the two principal languages used in biblical translations.

**Reflective Entry**

On the second floor of the Bible Museum, the artifacts showed how the Bible impacted music, fashion, movies, and culture worldwide. The Bible is a critical resource used in the British and American contexts to affirm the value of human life and influenced governments to form laws to govern national life in both. The Ten Commandments were foundational to creating the Laws that govern social behavior. In my native Antigua, a former British colony, the Bible’s influence still impacts the citizenry. Selling alcohol on Good Friday was illegal and formed part of our modern historical experience until its recent repeal. Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas remain nationally observed holidays. This reality affirms the tremendous impact the Bible had on National life. It is evident now, however, that Christianity’s influence is currently under the threat of secularism and individualism.

The writer thoroughly enjoyed the virtual tour of Washington DC, which showed the numerous places where scripture was embedded in Federal buildings. The creative experience intrigued the writer, highlighting a culture deeply immersed in Biblical values and providing a greater appreciation for American history and the place of the Bible. The writer mourned what happened in the American context that caused the erosion of the Christian influence and wondered how the Bible could become central to American culture again. Upon reflection, the writer thinks this exhibit could be improved by adding a feature that helps visitors connect their faith journey experience more definitively.

The writer acknowledges that the interdisciplinary degree program provides learning that can address the brokenness of humanity. The faith learning and exegetical tools make the Bible come alive in society, creating the path where the Holy Spirit can do His work in people’s hearts. As a Christ-follower working in the church, the writer believes that the church can do more using scripture. It must innovatively combine scripture with technology as a powerful discipleship tool to create the path for the Holy Spirit to do his work in the hearts and minds of persons.

Sadly, the writer observed inconsistencies in American society that do not reflect Biblical values. America’s racist practices and their treatment of ethnic minorities, from slavery to Jim Crow Laws and the current immigration issues, the killing of George Floyd and many others like him, were painful reflections. Poverty, homelessness, and the economic stratifications that keep persons in poverty present unique challenges. Perhaps these inconsistencies make unbelievers and secularists challenge the relevance of the Bible. As people of faith, we are challenged to live out our faith in a way that makes people see biblical relevance in our broken society.

The Bible Museum afforded the scholar-practitioner new spiritual insights. The fact that the Bible, though thousands of years old, still has the power to affect lives today is a testament to the truth that it is the Holy Spirit’s inspired book for all times. I am inspired to use the tools available to exegete scripture as clearly as possible and allow scripture to speak into people’s situations, knowing that scripture is powerful enough to convict us, enabling us to change our ways. Hebrews 4: 12.

The Bible Museum is a magnificent structure that requires significant resources to maintain annually. Who are the kingdom financiers that make this possible? The kingdom work continues because of these people whose creativity supports creativity—the time in the Bible Museum also reminded the writer of the scripture in Psalm 8. O Lord, our God, how excellent is your name in all the earth! In my pastoral context, we are often mediocre. However, the experience at the Bible Museum challenged me to be excellent, knowing that I serve an awesome God.

**Future Expectations**

Throughout the years, the church has shown appreciation for art and culture. However, much more can be done. Those of us whose work is the Bible must show how the Bible is relevant to the cultural and contextual realities of men and women. If God is a God of the oppressed, we must show God’s concern for the economically disadvantaged by providing for them or ways to provide for themselves. If God is a God of justice, we must be willing to address unjust societal situations. When the church becomes the voice for the voiceless, people will hear the voice of the church and, ultimately, the voice of God.

Over the years, the church has created cultural content that informed society's values. This season, the church must be strategic and ensure it is represented on all cultural mountains. Its members must be in all places, occupying the leadership seats in the marketplace. The church must create cultural content to disciple people in culture. The emphasis cannot simply be on salvation but on the fruits of repentance, faith, and the Spirit’s infilling leading to transformation. Committed Christ followers must be willing to embrace the process to become like Jesus.

The writer believes the church has to place particular emphasis on youth. Youth are skilled and creative and have significantly contributed to art and culture. They also offer the most critical challenge to Christianity. The youth has been inundated with divergent worldviews. And many of these worldviews dismiss faith because the church often cannot explain its beliefs. And faith is not taught but must be caught from living our lives. There is a need for the church to be better witnesses to the message of the Bible. The generation cannot defend a God whom they have never encountered. I am therefore challenged to recalibrate how to be a better witness of scripture that the youth can see. They can use their creativity to encourage the development of specific exhibits that can make the Bible come alive. They can create similar virtual Biblical experiences, such as the tour around Washington, DC, which would be meaningful to other members of the modern generation. The visit to the Museum of the Bible reminded the writer that research must add to the efforts to highlight the biblical narrative. I must also be an agent of healing and restoration through art and creativity. There is much work to do in the dissertation process to arrive at the final leg of the journey.

**Conclusion**

The influence of art and culture on society is an important study. Christian communities need to have critical conversations about what it means to represent the values of the kingdom of God in society. How we represent Christ in a post-Christian era can be effective. This requires new teaching and learning. Additionally, the church must change the approach of expecting people to come to it. The church must go where people are. It must meet people at their social location. Several times in scripture, Jesus practiced this approach. He met Zaccheus in the sycamore tree where Zacheus had climbed. He met the woman at the well, where she had gone. We, too, must meet people where they are with the incarnational gospel. We must be courageous and engage in critical reflection and reinterpret scripture. Many in our communities are unchurched and unfamiliar with the Bible. When we are creative, many will ask questions that can draw them to encounter the Christ of scripture and inspire them to bear God’s image. Admittedly, my Bible Museum visit was a memorable experience; I am a better person because of it.

WORKS CITED