PHI 815, History of Integration of Religion and Society

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Omega Graduate School

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Assignment 2

### *Developmental Readings*

Create Developmental Readings from seminal sources and scholarly peer-reviewed

journal articles. Review instructions for Assignment #3, the course essential elements,

and course readings to identify selections of books and journals to create entries.

* Refer to the “[Student Guide to Developmental Readings](https://drive.google.com/file/d/161V_FaYR2BnNGCSFUlWPjUSIQzcH04Hq/view?usp=share_link)” for updated information on sample comments, rubrics, and key definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:** Ward, D. C. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies,* 26(1/2). 29-56

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “A commonplace postmodern insight is that the way everyone sees the world is affected by many cultural and personal factors, not to be denied behind a pose of objectivity, but acknowledged to separate bias from legitimate questions in the pursuit of truth (Jacobsen 2004: 18). Christian interdisciplinary research can arise from a researcher's response to God's calling in any of the spheres of life that Scripture addresses: family, religion, government, work, or culture. Such a call in service to God and man should lead to truth, not bias. When the process works, it helps to minimize bias.” pp. 34

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, Social Reforms.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of

legitimized research in relation to God’s calling to world change. The statement legitimizes this call within a cultural context of truth and truth finding that is unbiased but grounded in reality though complex. Hence the need for interdisciplinary research that includes Judeo-Christian and theological research principles alongside sociological constructs. Oftentimes, researchers come to a particular inquiry through their own personal experiences. The positivist notion of objectivity, free from researcher ‘bias’ is often unattainable. Encouraging researchers not to prejudice their personal and cultural experiences in conducting the research can be liberating. The use of the term bias often suggests a negative connotation in research. Qualitative research has encouraged researchers to acknowledge bias then ‘bracket’ them but also encouraged to share your story in methods such as auto-ethnographies when you belong to the group being researched. “Shared humanity and common challenges” often present the researcher as real to participants which can enhance disclosure. I am encouraged by the faith sensibilities approach to changing the world’ changing my world. The paragraph emphasizes God’s calling to all aspects of humanist problematic that plagues the postmodern world.

**Contextualization:** In my own research practice, establishing my positionality and sharing my story is a method that has been used to center the research and in a way, share how I come to the type of inquiry and calling. The researcher’s own inquiry into work and the nuances of work and life, around the context of gender inequality is an effort to change the world, looking at changing the structure of work and thinking around paid work, reframing how we perceive and experience work and the conception of sabbatical rest.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “A Judeo-Christian worldview provides two fundamental theological premises that also ground learning and problem-solving: the ontological concepts of Creation and Fall (Evans 2003: 37; Wolters 2005: 13). The creational premise provides what is called the cultural mandate (Gen I :28), which embraces all progress in knowledge as expressions of cultivating the garden of this world and having dominion over it as God's stewards. The cultural mandate relates to the theological concept of common grace (Acts 17:24-25). This means worthy research may include anything that advances some new understanding of Creation or human flourishing in general and is therefore in the interest of all mankind, regardless of race, class, ideology, or religion. Believing scholars stand with all others through the cultural mandate on issues of common grace, advancing culture and addressing human needs.” pp. 35

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, Religion and Society Integration models.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of Creation, the Fall and redemption. The cultural mandate of creation is an expression of God’s will for our lives and having dominion over the Earth as God’s workers. It explains human advancement in history in relation to God's image. Though not discussed in the paragraph, the Fall and ultimate redemptive perspective presents God’s saving grace and return/Kingdom plans for a Fallen and renewed people. The paragraph highlights a Judeo- Christian view of God’s calling to address human needs and transformation.

**Contextualization:** The original purpose for our lives as God’s stewards is clear in my own mandate as a Christian social worker. My own concerns have always been around women and their advancement and lack thereof. Woman as man’s “help meet” is clear in the context of the bible and in the creation story. The postmodern ideation of this story is prolific in today’s world and has been presented and contextualized as gender inequality and subjugation of women. This is an area of research that is needed to examine the contention between biblical theological teachings and sociological milieu through interdisciplinary research.

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Practical theology is a field that deals with how faith is lived within the church as well as all of society (Ballard & Pritchard 2006). Theological interpretation can be applied to situations and culture/social trends in order to address problems or opportunities (Vanhoozer 2007: 15-60). The results of interdisciplinary research may apply to any aspect of life and culture. The theological dimension of such application means that there is no secular­ sacred divide between spheres of life where moral and religious truth do not contribute respectfully to public life, countering the process of secularization. It also involves issues of respect and cooperation with those of different faiths or no faith in the common causes of justice and human flourishing.

” pp.51

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, Christianity’s Influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of practical theology, which is a new concept but the passage is clear. This refers to the applicability of theological and biblical teachings to human problems and needs.It promotes a moral and religious expansion to the challenges of modern day life and social challenges. The common cause of “justice and human flourishing.”

**Contextualization:** As an interdisciplinary scholar with background in social work, leadership and on the cusp of faith influenced integration, I can attest to the importance of interdisciplinary approach to society’s problems. In my interest in work life balance for human progress and justice for women in their subjugated roles, practical theological can be utilized to enhance sociological understanding.

**Source Two:** Hillman, O. (2017). *The Joseph Calling: 6 Stages to Discover, Navigate, and Fulfill Your Purpose*. BroadStreet Publishing Group LLC.

**Comment 4**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “The Bible says you were created and set apart by God: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart” (Jeremiah 1:5). Not only that, but God created you and set you apart for a specific purpose: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (29:11). God has preordained the works you are to do while you live on the earth.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ

Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” If you are

going to discover how God wants to use your life and work, then you must know

why you were created in the first place. If you start trying to determine your

purpose in life before discovering why you were created, then you will

inevitably get hung up on the things you do as the basis for fulfillment in your

life, which will only lead to frustration and disappointment.” pp 26-27

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, social reforms.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of discovering God’s purpose for our lives as it relates to biblical teachings. The paragraph sets forth biblical context for God’s purpose for all, establishing a sense of ownership, uniqueness and planning for each of us. It clarifies that our purpose here on earth is only through discovering why we were created first, dispelling any notion of accidental existence that can be presented by other ontological and epistemological musing.

**Contextualization:** From a personal context, this paragraph resonates as it highlights that even in moments when I am unsure, God is clear about my world changing purpose and mission. And this is powerful. I was particularly drawn to this paragraph due to the reflection on Jeremiah in particular Jeremiah 29: 11; my favourite text. In my spiritual journey, purpose is key and knowing why I was created and the legacy I will leave behind to make the world a better place for generations to come until His return.

**Comment 5**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**While you may not fulfill the purpose for which you were made, you still have a purpose that God intends for you to fulfill. This is your blueprint from God. In the same way that he had a specific purpose in mind for Jesus when he sent him to the earth, so the Father has a specific purpose in mind for your life too. This doesn’t mean, however, that there is one highly specific niche for you to fill and that if you miss it then too bad. You can achieve your purpose in many different and creative ways. This should take the pressure off you in trying to find out what that one specific thing is that God wants you to do. You won’t throw your entire life off course by choosing the wrong college, job, or mate. God is much bigger than any miscalculation or disobedience on your part. Isn’t that comforting to know? But defining your purpose will help you to determine the activities in which you should be involved. Jesus did not involve himself in activities that contradicted his purpose. His purpose was to do the will of the Father, and he never did anything contrary to that purpose. Jesus’ specific assignment that was derived from his purpose was to defeat the work of the devil (1 John 3:8), to be the payment for the sins of humanity (John 3:16), to bring glory to his Father and do his will (5:30), and to bear witness to the truth (18:37).” pp. 28-29.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, social reform.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of

Life purpose. It is comforting to know that God has a single purpose for our lives but other mandates can be aligned and does not take us off course as long as it is within his will. The paragraph highlights a multiplicity of purpose that shows humankind as multifaceted and multi-talented for God’s mission in this world to be fulfilled.

**Contextualization:** This paragraph was reassuring given my own anxiety around ‘what if my work and perceived mission is not what I was born to do?’ In my work as a social worker and social work educator, I consider that my good deeds are of God and that any work that I do in this sector is helping to advance his cause. Hillman presents a compelling argument for a non-anxious Christian life.

The approach utilized by Omega Graduate School is in alignment with this method. In particular for the developmental readings we focus on the social problem that we would like to change and how as faith scholars we can change the world; this passion approach is in line with the understanding that we use the principles to engage with a concern of our own interests as a calling from God.

**Source Three:** Hegeman, D. B. (2007). Plowing in hope- Toward a biblical theology of culture,

2nd. Ed. Canon Press. <https://www.exodusbooks.com/samples/Canon/30623sample.pdf>

**Comment 6**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “As Christians, we must never assume that culture “just happens” (the evolutionary view). Rather, as believers of God’s holy Word, we

must assert that since “the lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19), “there is a time for every purpose and for every work” (Eccl. 3:17; cf. 3:1) which is determined and controlled by God (Is. 46:9–10; Dan. 4:35). Human beings are a part of God’s creation and are therefore under His divine rule. Made deliberately in God’s image (Gen. 1:27), men and women are inescapably intelligent, verbal, moral, and creative beings.” pp 12.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, Religion and Society integration models.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of

God’s cultural mandate. God changes the world through the cultural mandate of creation and through purpose and guide over our lives. Our progress throughout life is based on his divine intervention as Ruler of all. The paragraph illustrates that we are made in God's image and are therefore intelligent, moral and ethical beings.

**Contextualization:** As a Christian scholar knowing that I am made in God’s image helps to strengthen my purpose given our cultural mandate. My calling to help women and families is therefore divine and efforts to change the world through the cultural mandate of why I was created is in alignment.

**Comment 7**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “I have found it helpful to see culture operating within two broad strands of history which are decreed and ruled by God: Acculturative history (the history of the process of culture) and redemptive history (the history of human salvation wrought by God). I should stress at the outset that these two strands of history are not unconnected from one another, but since the Fall, they have been closely intertwined and in some instances (i.e., the building of the tabernacle and the Temple) have been identical. Nevertheless these two historical strands must be considered separately for at least two reasons. First, man’s “cultural mandate”—the call to rule, fill, and transform the earth—was established before the Fall and exists independently of man’s need for redemption. God clearly had an initial, basic plan for the development of the newly created earth, which included mankind’s cultural involvement. Since this plan was instituted prior to the fall of man into sin, we may properly call culture (along with the other “pre-redemptive” institutions of marriage and worship) normative for mankind. Second, it becomes clear both in the pages of Scripture and by historical observation (for example the Byodo-in temple discussed at the opening of this introduction) that it has pleased God to allow a significant portion of the cultural development of the earth to be effectuated by those outside the covenant. Although the better of these works are destined by God to be taken away from

unbelievers and given to the elect for their godly use, nevertheless it seems

best to say that these cultural efforts stand outside of (separate from) redemptive history.” pp. 21-22.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, religion and society integration models.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of

Culture based on biblical teachings. According to Hegeman, The cultural mandate and history of the redemptive movement are connected but should be thought of as separate based on God’s instructions to man as being stewards (transformers, creators and developers) over the earth before the Fall and after the fall a separate call for redemption through grace to receive salvation. This passage is in alignment with biblical teachings through creation as seen in Genesis 1: 26-31 and redemption process as shown in John 10:10 and Colossians 1: 12-14.

**Contextualization:** This a new worldview and learning for me, within the context of sociological secularization of culture as a way of life. I have never perceived it from a historical creation mandate and redemptive mandate; which as a Christian scholar practitioner is aligned with theological perspectives. My own efforts to change the world through women’s empowerment and family promotion is aligned with God’s cultural and historical mandate for my life. My role in redeeming families through work-life balance and sabbatical rest is important work for the redemptive movement.

**Comment 8**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “In a brief concluding postscript, “Culture and the Sabbath,” I try to demonstrate how the Sabbath is a holy day of worship and feasting and an emblem of the eternal rest from sin and toil we will enjoy on the New Earth; the Sabbath was instituted by God as a constant reminder of the goodness of creation and work (Ex. 20:11) and of man’s need for liberation from his slavery to sin and misery in this present fallen world (Deut. 5:15). The Sabbath serves as a vital means of contrast between man’s calling to work (culture) and man’s calling to worship (cultus). Even in this distinction of days, we see that, ideally, our work is to be done in a worshipful manner and that our worship is enhanced by cultural products. I propose that this twofold distinction was not present before the Fall: Man’s cultural work was to be perfect, utterly transparent worship directed to the Creator. At the Fall, this transparency was broken. But it will be restored again when we are ushered into the glorious New Jerusalem, to serve God once again in Paradise—perfectly free from sin and toil—as kings and priests and culture-makers, to the everlasting glory of God.” pp. 22.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the culture and sabbatical rest. Hegeman (2007), in this paragraph presents an often overlooked part of the cultural mandate that of the Sabbath to rest from toil and to worship. The two branches work as previously mentioned in the cultural mandate and redemptive process and sabbatical rest (cultus). Hegeman clearly reminds readers that the Sabbath was created by God as restoration and liberation in this fallen world and even existed before the Fall.

**Contextualization:** Sabbatical rest is for me a divine concept that is precious. The secularized concept of rest illustrates Christianity’s influence on society that is unacknowledged. This secularized rest stems from a psychological and sociological conception of rest from stressors and need for leisure, but the concept existed from the beginning of time when God instructed us to rest on the seventh day even before the Fall. My whole existence is inculcated in that history. As a Seventh-Day Adventist Christian, it is even more prominent. As I got older, the importance of Sabbath in alignment with God’s will for our life to pause, give thanks and rest are even more pronounced. Additionally, God knew we would need rest as a purely physical need of humans and that too is divine for my own life.

**Source Four:** Umoh. (2021). The Socio-Cultural Church: A Determinant of Women's Rights in Nigeria. *African Journal of Gender, Society & Development*, *10*(4), 99–119. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3622/2021/v10n4a5>

**Comment 9**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Debates about women’s rights and the challenges of social exclusivity, gender inequality and human insecurity, are front-burner issues in discourses on the sociopolitical and socioeconomic landscapes in Nigeria. Despite constituting about fifty percent (50%) of the population of most modern societies, women are traditionally shortchanged at negotiation tables. This premise is fundamental to evaluating the threats posed to viable debates on the rights of women as ‘minority’ groups in society. Unfortunately, the church under the influence of the socio-culture, inadvertently establishes their pared positions through the misinterpretation of some doctrinal bases of Christianity, which allow rationality give way to ‘more superior’ extrapolations that hamper in-depth introspections on reasons for biblical positions and consequences of actions.”

pp. 99.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of socio-cultural and biblical teachings of women’s inequality. The paragraph presents a picture of Nigeria as not in favour of women’s equal rights and justice even though 50% of the population is made up of women. It also highlights the misgivings of incorrect interpretation of the bible as promoting women inequality and how this misinterpretation has taken out of context the socio-cultural and socio-structural situation back then.

**Contextualization:** My research interest has been around women and empowerment through work and family policies. The sociological context around women has been in light of inequality/inequity, subjugation to men and powerlessness and this continues to this day. In examining the bible, it can be easily misconstrued as promotion and acceptance of the subjugation of women. However, this needs further exploration given that roles and norms in society are a reflection of structural functionalism and culture and cannot be taken out of theological context.

**Source Five:** Frimpong. (2022). The Role of Religion in Gender Inequality in Ghana: The Christian Perspective. *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies (Online)*, *8*(9), 269–278. <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2022892>

**Comment 10**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “ Religious teachings and beliefs play an important role in

either promoting or hindering gender equality. Defining ‘‘religion’’ with a common definition has become a major enterprise for theologians. From the biblical perspective, the impact of females is rarely felt, due to the socio-cultural injunctions purported to have come from the Graeco-Roman world. The subjugation of women is still common in all spheres of life including Ghana and religion has a role to play in this phenomenon…It was observed that despite its influence on social development, Religion has not promoted the needed gender equality in Ghana. The church and society, therefore, need to confront the issue of gender inequality and sanction women’s equality with their male counterparts.” pp. 269.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of religion and gender inequality. The author provides an explanation for scriptural and religious subjugation of women. Religion has however influenced social development in Ghana but not gender equality. Frimpong (2022) calls for a unifying of forces both sociological and religious to combat systematic gender inequality and influence parity with women and men. This call to action is aligned with feminist scholars and activists across the world.

**Contextualization:** In my research on work-life balance and women’s inequality, the discourse is consistent with how the intersectionality of women has provided an unequal context for women across various races and classes. The religious subjugation of women is also something to be explored along this messaging.

**Source Six:**. Yee. (2020). Thinking Intersectionally: Gender, Race, Class, and the Etceteras of Our Discipline. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *139*(1), 7–26. <https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1391.2020.1b>

**Comment 11**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “ Poverty and inequality are not the same thing. While poverty focuses on the condition of the poor, inequality focuses on both the rich and the poor. Inequality is embedded in power relations, forcing us to confront a question that is often avoided: How can the ways in which the rich obtain their wealth generate poverty, as evidenced in the biblical text and in today’s world? Poverty is primarily the result of the unequal distribution of society’s goods and resources and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. Inequality asks us to focus on particular relations of power, whether it be economic, legal, social, ideological, et cetera—on how wealth is distributed. Power relations are secured and maintained not only among the classes (rich and poor), but also among genders, races, and the etceteras. In what specific ways do power relations among these diverse categories create poverty among the marginalized.”pp. 8.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, social reforms

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of poverty and inequality. The question asked by the author, (“How can the ways in which the rich obtain their wealth generate poverty, as evidenced in the biblical text and in today’s world?”) brings to bear the multifaceted nature of inequality and draws attention to scriptural reference of this inequality based on structural nuances. It emphasizes power relations as an important discourse in the intersectionality debate. This leads to anthropological and epistemological questions around the gender inequality discourse. Intersectional analyses around biblical texts can influence the way we conduct this type of feminist research.

**Contextualization:** As a social worker, this debate around poverty and inequality is consistent with the work we do daily. The analysis is not based on a welfare model but on grounds of equity and equality and structural inequality and structural functionalism. As a Christian scholar, my thoughts also rest with biblical principles of care and your brother’s keeper.

**Source Seven:** Kgatla, S. T., & Kamukwamba, D. G. (2019). Mission as the creation of a God-ward culture: A critical missiological analysis. Verbum Et Ecclesia, 40(1)<http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1911>

**Comment 12**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “The traditional understanding of mission has always carried

with it the idea of the geographical expansion of the Christian faith. This involves the planting of the church and the conversion of non-Christians to the Christian

faith. This understanding leads to the division of the world and life itself into two spheres: the Christian world and non-Christian world; the Christian culture and non-Christian culture; Christian names and non-Christian names. It is from this understanding that the concept of Christendom drew its strength for dominance over cultures that were not the cultures of the developed world. Unlike the concept of Christendom, the concept of a God-ward culture accepts and acknowledges culture as a gift from God, potentially given for the well-being and identity of every community. It also acknowledges that every culture is potentially good and that there can be no community without culture.” pp. 8.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, religion and society integration model.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of

missionary culture, Christian and non-Christian culture. The author explores Christendom and God-ward culture which originally I had not thought of as separate. Christian world and non-Christian world have their own identity and distinction.

**Contextualization:** As Christians and Christian scholars missionary work is essential. As I work daily, the expression of love and care that I exhibit is a profession of my faith and God-ward culture.

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