History of the Integration of Religion and Society

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**Assignment #3**

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 (p5)**: 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**.

2. Paper Outline

 a. Begin with an **introductory paragraph** that has a succinct thesis statement.

 b. Address the **topic of the paper** with critical thought.

 c. End with a **conclusion** that reaffirms your thesis. Discuss the impact of the research on your sense of calling to change the world.

 d. Use a minimum of **seven** scholarly research sources (**two books** and the

 remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

 The concept of work goes back to Adam and tending the garden. Unfortunately, society’s (secular/non-Christian) view of work/money and the Christian’s view of work/calling have become commingled resulting in Christians being unequally yoked with working for money instead of serving the Kingdom. As such, it is my belief that churches need to prepare Christians for work (i.e., vocational calling) and teach them to be “faithful to (their) vocation, ultimately… to be true to (themselves), for only then can (they) be true to …God” (Smith, G.T.(2011) p131).

Hegeman (2007) in his discussion of culture warned Christian’s not to become unequally yoked with culture because societal advances and our existence often lead to the love of money and power. Wightman (2023) found “personal fulfillment and a desire to help others are insufficient sources of motivation by themselves” (p.957) for working. People are unhappy, unfulfilled, and stressed out.

 Ioan’s (2023) primary findings “indicate that young workers experience learning and anxiety in the first stage of a moral career at work, self-confidence, and social relationships in the second stage, and routine and self-confidence in the third stage” (p. 1). However, if Ioan’s results are true that 1) young people today are “undecided about what they really want to do in the future”; and 2) they are “going to work just to spend time with friends, or staying employed for only a very short period of time where they work hard for a substantial reward” (p2), perhaps this delays or prohibits reaching the second and third stages of moral career development. This could explain those that have been quietly quitting since 2000, as well as the byproduct of the 2020 pandemic that resulted in young adults not wanting to work.

 These findings indicate we are far from the garden. In contrast, Wightman, et al., (2023) found missionaries and church volunteers associate “their work as akin to worship … and (it) is evidently deeply meaningful and motivating. Their work betters them as persons and makes a tangible contribution to the good of others and their communities” (p.960).

 The solution proposed in this paper is for the church to teach Christians the biblical principles of work and equip them to enter their mission/career field to fulfill Christ’s mandate to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). It is my belief that Christians committed to fulfilling The Great Commission will experience personal fulfillment similar to Wightman’s missional satisfaction evidence.

 Sadly, Christians **“**typically retain the view that distinguishes between a general or primary calling to a relationship with Christ and a life of discipleship, and a specific or secondary calling to serve God within a particular vocational path” (Dik, B. J. (2023) p29-30).

We see church as a place of worship, where the lines of vocation are drawn between a pastoral/missional path and vocation for everyone else. This traditional view of work and becoming a pastor negates the “Call” to The Great Commission!

 In 2021, Presley stated that **“**the church never developed a particular ‘strategy’ or ‘method’ of cultural engagement. Christians weren’t looking for the latest program or innovation to help them cope with or combat the cultural moment. Instead they focused on building the church from within” (p7). For decades, Christians have volunteered at church, building a place for people to come. A place to be with Jesus. Then they leave and return for more the following week.

 The world is using chaos to distract us, but it has gone so far in the wrong direction that we are seeing campus revivals, church growth, and mainstream testimonial movies. Parents are beginning to want a “strategy” to protect their kids from the evils, especially cultural ones that are causing stress and negatively impacting mental health. “If we truly have entered a period where the church is antithetical to the state and culture, Jesus’ teachings and the early church’s response to Greco-Roman culture and government can be a learning lab for postmodern Christians of today” (Humphrey, R.A. (2011) p 14).

 Professionally, my call is to reduce the statistics showing 70-80% of Christians leaving their faith as they step onto college campuses. I believe providing churches this program can change how Christians see vocations (i.e., as one, not split) and expand the Call to fulfill The Great Commission.

 It is time to close the gap that started with the unintentional cultural division of pastor/missionary and vocation. “It is hoped each student will be better prepared theologically, historically, and socially to express Christianity in activities that not only integrate religion in society but do it through the church in ways that transform society” (Humphrey, R.A. (2011) p 6).

 As **“**Christians desire a more comprehensive understanding of the role a sense of calling can play in people’s career decision-making and general approach to work” (p30) the proposed solution will gain traction. Thanks to Larry Burkett, Dr. Neal Johnson, Jim Sullivan, and OGS this proposal will come together for my graduate studies, as well as my new role as CEO of VRG.

 Larry Burkett, created the Christian career assessment used to help people discover their calling. His merger with Howard Dayton to form Crown Ministries, has opened the door for me as a Christian Career Coach and this proposed solution.

 A complimentary component to the career assessment, is BAM (Business As Mission). Dr. Neal Johnson (2022) wrote “If God recognizes the importance of business to human society and survival, He must have standards by which He expects businesses to operate, especially those owned and managed by His followers” (p8). Dr Johnson, is one of the BAM pioneers, who is my mentor and is helping me develop training programs. BAM has been broadly focused on business, specifically entrepreneurship. However, I see the Faith at Work movement as part of BAM because the mission field is business and the players are owners, managers, staff, and customers.

 Jim Sullivan trained me to be a Christian Career Coach, which led me to become the CEO of Vision Resourcing Group (VRG) replacing Jim by receiving the baton to allow the next generation to lead. This opportunity will allow me to implement the proposed solution through VRG, a Christian educational ministry.

 Dr. Stan Dekoven, a VRG Board Member and Faculty Member at OGS recommended OGS when asked about doctoral programs. This led to the opportunity to develop this proposal as a solution for the church that bridges the gap by combining vocation discovery and disciple making to equip the Kingdom.

 This integration of religion in society will further the Faith at Work movement by training Christians to use their spiritual gifts in the workplace. In tandem with being equipped to disciple, there should be an increase in fulfillment and those reached for Christ at work, as well as a decrease in burnout and job dissatisfaction.

 As Christians discover their vocational calling they will be more confident in their career journey and be more successful. They will have a better strategic plan in college, ultimately reducing that 70-80% decline in faith statistic mentioned earlier. Other outcomes include fewer major changes, money saved, and less loan debt.

 The proposed solution is to offer a career ministry program and consulting services to churches to address three populations. First, traditional students (e.g., 11th and 12th graders) who are unsure of their major or vocational calling. Second, transitional adults (i.e., lost job, burnt out, empty nester) who want to discover their vocational calling and get to work! Lastly, retirees with a pension and time to find their spiritual gifting to serve the Kingdom.

“To think vocationally means that we make a self-appraisal. We look at ourselves; we identify, accept and embrace who we are called to be. This focus on ourselves frees us from comparing ourselves to others. And this liberates. When we refuse to compare ourselves to others, when we reject envy and jealousy of others’ gifts and abilities and opportunities, we are freed to be who we are.” (Smith, G.T.(2011) p131). This is imperative if we are to untangle and extinguish Christians being unequally yoked with culture and the chaos of the world as we know it.

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