PHI 923-32 Contextualization for Social Change

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Assignment #3 – Essay

1. Write a 5-page paper using the outline below. Review the Examples of Contextualization

provided in the PHI 923 Course Resources located in DIAL. Provide responses to the

following based on your selected cultural issue or phenomenon:

a. Present Situation of Social Concern – describe the situation requiring a

contextualized Christian response to a cultural situation or phenomenon.

b. Social Analysis: (Family, Church, Society) – Using the Five Spheres of Life,

develop a cultural analysis to comprehensively describe aspects of the situation

or phenomenon.

c. Theological/Moral Evaluation – Identify Biblical areas or Kingdom principles

relevant to the issue.

d. Issues to Address – Identify underlying/related issues that need to be

addressed in the contextualization strategy.

e. Spectrum of Critical Contextualization (address only relevant ones)

i. Condemnation – includes issues condemned by Scripture (i.e., erroneous

doctrine, idolatry, or syncretism)

ii. Correction of Erroneous Emphases – cultural beliefs/practices containing

true insights but are diluted with wrong focus.

iii. Conversion of Themes – beliefs/practices with no significant negative

influence but can be used to point to Christ.

iv. Commendation of Good Belief and/or Practices – beliefs/practices in

culture that are completely consistent with Scripture but exist without

religious warrant are to be commended.

f. Strategy for Contextualized Communication - develop a strategy by thinking

through all the practical considerations below.

i. Stakeholders - Identify the people or groups who have a stake in the

phenomenon or issue.

ii. Venues of Communication - These could be written or spoken, could

involve media, or social or organizational networks.

iii. Resources - Identify available and needed resources.

iv. Timelines - Begin to think through the timeline or logistical issues

involved in implementing a contextualization strategy.

v. Obstacles to Anticipate - Anticipating obstacles can add practical aspects

to a strategy that can help it to succeed.

2. Paper Guidelines:

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.

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

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**Present Situation of Social Concern:**

As described by Kilag, contextualization refers to integrating values education while adopting an interdisciplinary approach to enhance authentic learning experiences, foster holistic development, and empower students to be ethical and responsible (Kilag et al., 2023, p.2). Along with being responsible comes the need for people to resist taking things out of context or bending them to meet their myopic needs, especially the Word of God(Andrews, 2020).

 When it comes to the Bible, although people may have good intentions, at times, it is blatantly apparent that some of the scripture and/or its meaning may be taken out of context(Umaru, 2023). According to various sources, a national movement called Christian nationalism may be knee-deep in misinterpreting or bending the Word of God under the banner of democracy to satisfy its political aspirations (Malka, 2022).

**Social Analysis:**

Viewing the effect of Christian nationalism through a holistic lens, including but not limited to church, family, and work, indicators suggest that we are trending toward a societal crisis due to the premises that the group embraces. According to Miller, Christian nationalist tends to treat other Americans as second-class citizens. If it were fully implemented, it would not respect the full religious liberty of all Americans (miller, 2021). On that note, Christian nationalism is not just rooted in ideology; it is also rooted in identity and the belief that Christians should rule (French,2024).

Treating people overtly differently and disregarding people's rights to worship as they please is a recipe for disaster. In America, what makes us great is the value we have associated with being an American. Along with that value comes the right to choose our religious belief systems without being scrutinized by others. For example, although, as a Christian, I believe that Christianity is the way the truth and life (John 14:6), I can respect those who do not share my beliefs.

**Theological/Moral Evaluation:**

As an ordained minister, looking at the Christian nationalism movement from a theological point of view is troubling, especially knowing that many people involved with this cult-like movement are well-educated people occupying prestigious leadership positions who understand the ethical responsibilities (particularly in the church) affiliated with occupying positions as such (Kilag et al., 2023). Furthermore, as stated by Raj, 2017, the Christian church is a living organism whose activities are organic. (Raj, 2017, p.8). That noted anything that is a living organism changes within its original design. For example, a body will grow within the intended frameworks. However, depending on how the body is treated will determine how healthy it will grow. Bringing this same analogy to the church, which is the body of Christ, depending on how healthy the congregation and leadership are, will determine the social impact that church or group of churches will have on society. Healthy churches will help build a healthy society, but unhealthy churches, such as those under Christian nationalism, tend to divide and impact society negatively.

**Issues to Address:**

The rainbow is a reminder of God’s promise to never destroy the earth again with a flood (Genesis 9:8-16). Today, too many people see the rainbow as a symbol of something else. In 1978, Gilbert Baker, an openly gay artist and activist inspired by the song “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” designed the rainbow flag. The rainbow, which has become well-known as a symbol of pride, diversity, and unity for the LGBTQ+ Community, has been hijacked, confiscated, and taken over by that group. Most people see the rainbow as a symbol that represents Gay people and or Gay Rights; as Christians, we need to see it as more; we need to see it as a covenant between God and humankind. When things are hijacked, mispresented, or convoluted, their meaning becomes obscure or compromised beyond repair. Whereas the LGBTQ+ community has commandeered the rainbow, there is a much deeper sinister movement called Christian nationalism that attempts to distort the word of God by taking things out of context and putting them in a framework to satisfy their ambitions.

**Spectrum of Critical Contextualization:**

Christian nationalism takes the name of Christ for worldly political agenda, proclaiming that its program is the political program for every true believer. Some go as far as to argue that American Christians need to prepare to fight physically to preserve America’s identity, an argument that played into the January 6 riot. (Miller, 2021, & Perry, 2022,).

When people misuse the bible or religion to suit their agenda, that should be unacceptable. Guirguis wrote, “Contextualization in and of itself is not the challenge; the most significant challenge is when contextualization is used to pave the way for Christians to bring about internal variances in their respective contexts” (Guirguis, 2020, p. 177). Taking the quote from Guirguis into consideration, Christian nationalism is a movement that purposefully takes the word of God and bends it to meet its agenda.

 **Strategy for Contextualization Communication:**

Christian nationalism is a political ideology focused on the national identity of the United States. It is a vehicle to empower a particular class of people through political persuasion. The Christian nationalist movement includes a specific yet distorted understanding of American history and the American government that is extrabiblical—an understanding that many historians and political scientists contest. Most importantly, Christian nationalism includes specific policy prescriptions that it claims are biblical but are, at best, extrapolations from biblical principles and, at worst, contradictory to them (Miller, 2021).

Although there has been an uptick in the Christian nationalism movement, according to various sources, including the Baptist News Gospel, it has been around for some time. The article mentions the following, “Until the late 19th century, if you were Black, you were enslaved. If you were native, you were exterminated. As a woman, you had no fundamental rights to own property or vote. If you were Irish or Italian, you were sequestered into urban slums and often taken advantage of by industrialists.

In this way, the Christian nationalist perspective is deeply infused with the belief that a Christian nation is really a white nation” (Lang, 2023). Based on Lang’s comments and other research, The Christian nationalist movement tends to have whites as their significant stakeholders.

**Timeline to address the issue:**

Now is the time to shine a light on Christian nationalism and other subtle and overt methods of racism or white supremacy and its enduring and destructive cultural assumptions (Yacovone, 2022). Developing and implementing change management strategies and starting a movement toward making notable changes usually takes three years. In summary, the first year will be spent conducting an assessment; the second will be spent implementing a strategy/program based on the assessment results. The third year will encompass assessing the program's outcome and making provisions for moving forward.

Dealing with change, especially change that affects people in control, is an uphill battle, as is frequently speaking truth to power. In a publication titled Martin Luther King Jr. on Leadership, Martin said, “This child of no more than eight walked with her mother one day at a demonstration. At that time, a policeman knelt and asked her condescendingly, " What do you want”? The child looked into his eyes unafraid and gave her an answer. Freedom (Philips, 1999, p. 98)!

 Currently, America is living through a moment of positive change toward race, with a large majority of citizens coming to grips with the deeply embedded historical legacy of racist structures and ideas(Lavalley & Johnson, 2022; Churchwell et al., 2020).

However, there is another, more dangerous side to this debate- one that seeks to rehabilitate toxic political notions of racial superiority; these notions, once the preserve of fringe white nationalist groups, have increasingly infiltrated the mainstream of American political and cultural discussions, with poisonous results(Clark, 2020). Today, nonwhites in America may not be fighting for freedom, but indeed, the fight for equality continues. The people who benefit (directly and or indirectly) from Christian nationalism and other sources of white supremacy in the quest for dominance and control will likely continue to build walls to block the progress of implementing methods to address a problem that, from their perspective, does not exist (Cooper-White, 2022). Nonetheless, for those who are impacted by systemic racism, which has now been embedded into religion by way of Christian nationalists, the fight for equality continues.

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**An Examination of Christian Practice Within a Personal or Professional Context**

1. **Event Selected for Reflection**

**1.1. Describe the setting, occasion, or repeated experience, which for you involves a stretch (new learning) or a struggle (problem-solving).**

Several years ago, I felt I was no longer spiritually fed at my church. This had a ripple effect on my perspective regarding a laundry list of things associated with the Apostolic system I was involved in. This situation placed me at a crossroads. I had to determine if I would stay connected with the church I had been attending for ten years or move to another one (Proverbs 3:6).

**1.2. Why did you select this experience? What makes the selected event a stretch (new learning) or a struggle (problem-solving) for you?**

I selected this experience because it was significant in my life, and I am sure other people have found themselves in the same or at least similar situations.

**1.3. How did you react/respond initially**?

My first response to the situation was to pray about it, followed by seeking advice from people who were connected to God. One person who had spoken to me five years before bringing this situation to her again reminded me that she believed I would be there for a season that had come to a close. Other people were on the map, but many told me the same thing: try Destiny Church. The decision was somewhat challenging since I had been approached about teaching at the Bible College at the Apostolic church. I needed to stay and dive deeper or cut bait. I did not trust that I would make the right decision; therefore, I needed to trust the Lord to make it for me (Proverbs 3:5).

1. **Situational Dimensions**

**Roles functions needed:**

I need to be a solid listener and an effective leader. If I was not being adequately fed at the church, I had a responsibility to take advice from the ministerial team and be a leader in approaching the Pastor or Assistant Pastor to let them know my honest thoughts (Proverbs 19:20).

* 1. **Design: (Capabilities used/limitations surfaced; or those of others)**

Speaking up would be difficult because I did not want to offend anyone. Moreover, although, for some reason, many people came to me to share the same thoughts, I did not feel it was my responsibility to convey the message on behalf of a group. I wanted to keep it singular.

* + 1. **Capabilities (God-given abilities)**

God has given me the ability to lead and inspire people to follow. God has also endowed me with the ability to understand and relate to leaders. I know there was a need to inform the Pastor of what was going on in a strategic, respectful, and loving manner. When you lead with love, things seem to fall into place.

* + 1. **Limitations (temperament)**

I wanted to be sure that the Pastor or senior ministerial team knew that I did not mean any harm and that I was not judgmental or critical of the church. This would be a fine line to walk, so I asked God for wisdom(James 1:5).

**1.4. Why does it provoke reflection about God, yourself, and ministry?**

The situation was all about being in the best possible position to be used by God; therefore, it is only natural that it provoked reflection on God regarding my ministerial assignments and aspirations (Psalm 119:105).

* + 1. **Strengths (virtues)**

My strengths are that I have worked as a counselor for years and am in a leadership position in my current profession. Both would impact my approach to the situation. As a counselor, you learn to become an expert listener. As a leader, you know how to approach other leaders.

* + 1. **Weaknesses (vices)**

My weakness during this ordeal was that I wanted to approach it perfectly, which would never happen. I wanted to ensure that it was the perfect time and location and that the verbal, well-thought-out exchange would be ideal. I learned not to strive for perfection but for excellence.

* 1. **(God’s presence or grace in the situation or your response to it)**

Through God’s grace, everything worked out. When you start with prayer and lean into His word, things work out best (Jeremiah 29:11).

* 1. **View of God, Biblical Truths, Principles:**

This answer is like the previous one. God has a plan for us, and when we connect ourselves to His plan, things work out for the better. I did not want to leave my church home, but it was my best move.

 **3. Operational Beliefs**

What implicit Operational Belief is guiding your [or others’] decision-making? Be willing to discover less-than-ideal tendencies. If you were to say in a sentence the belief/s demonstrated by your actions or others’ actions in the situation, how would you state it/them?

I believe God is calling me to work for Him in another format at another location. My role as a minister is to be sensitive enough to hear His call and obedient sufficient to respond to it.

**3.1. How would you distill your operational belief in the event?**

When I was at a crossroads, what was most important was responding with an answer I truly believed was led by God. In Him, I live, move, and exist (Acts 17:28).

**3.2. To the best of your understanding, what are the possible roots of this operational belief? What do you think may have contributed to its development?**

To the best of my understanding, God has a plan for all of us, and our journeys will be custom-made to help us reach our full God-given potential. Although some people have been in the same church, my assignment differed. Being open to change after being comfortable was challenging. Also, as far as other contributors to the situation, I perhaps was growing in another way outside of the masses at the church.

**3.3. What are the consequences of this belief On your relationship with God? On your relationship with others? On your ministry?**

The consequences varied. Some people applauded me for following God’s lead, and others were not open to a long-term church member moving to another location. My ministerial duties expanded in the new church.

**4. Christian Critical Thinking**

**4.1. Scripture (What biblical images speak to your chosen situation/issue? What biblical doctrines, commands, or promises speak to scripture/biblical images? What passages address the situation/issue?)**

I believe Jeremiah 29:11 would be my anchor verse. God’s plans for us are individual; as He reveals it, we should respond with yes and amen. Matthew 9:36-38 comes to mind as well. It was time to go to work on the building of His kingdom.

**4.2. Christian Tradition (Which level of Scripture, tradition, historical church trends still in effect, denomination, or local practice contribute to this event?)**

When it comes to church traditions, there are too many to select from. Each church and denomination has a myriad of traditions. Since I have attended Pentecostal, Apostolic, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, and non-denominational churches, the one tradition that comes to mind is that many people believe that when you join a church, it is for life, or you would be classified as a church hopper. My position is slightly different; I believe God may have you at a church indefinitely or for a particular season.

**4.3. Cultural/Reason (What cultural trends affect the situation? What do resources from [other academic/scientific disciplines or spheres of life/culture] provide here?)**

During this time in my life, trends were that people were changing churches rapidly or deciding not to attend church at all (Smith, 2019). Many people were experiencing “church hurt.” The church leadership was falling short of their attendee's high expectations.

**4.4. Personal Experience (How do your past experiences, temperament, gifts, ideas, feelings, or values contribute to the experience? On reflection, how do you sense God at work?)**

God has his hand on the entire process. Looking back over the year-long process, God brought the right people along my path at the right time. I had several random divine appointments with people. For example, I was out to dinner and felt a pull towards a stranger. I began a conversation regarding the weather and spoke about Jesus and His plan for me. Like many others, she mentioned that I should try Destiny Church (Psalm 37:23).

**5. Theological Significance**

**5.1. Understanding the interaction between the sources of theology, what principles or values emerge that can contribute to your growing philosophy of ministry?**

To begin with, my ministerial philosophy is to stay connected to God and allow myself to be molded and utilized by Him. He is the potter, and I am the clay! Each life lesson is associated with a growth opportunity. I learned to stay sensitive to His calling and be prepared to do what He calls me to do, which frequently extends beyond my comfort zone (Isaiah 64:8).

**5.2. What were the key sources? Why?**

The key sources were the bible and trustworthy spirit-filled ministerial leaders. I wanted to ensure that I was operating with God’s will, which His word can confirm. Also, spirit-filled people can and did confirm the path I should embark upon (Psalm 119:105).

**5.3. Has the authority of Scripture shown itself in any practical ways?**

The authority of scripture is the foundation that sustains me daily, especially 1 Chronicles 4:10, John 10:10, James 1:5, and James 2:17… I constantly ask the Lord to keep His hand in mind and expand my territory.

Expanding my territory is a continuous movement toward reaching my God-ordained potential (1 Chronicles 4:10). Applying this scripture has led to many promotions and financial blessings. John 10:10 has shown me that we need to go through a process to get the things the Lord has for us in abundance. I am in a leadership position, so I need the Lord to give me wisdom so I can effectively guide his people, James 1:5. James 2:17 provides a constant reminder that He has brought me a long way. He continues to open doors to unlimited possibilities.

**6. Contextual Application**

**6.1. What are you going to do/what did you do?**

I joined the ministerial team at Destiny Church, and things are working out exceptionally well. I communicate with many people from the other church and have built more relationships in my new location. God has expanded my territory (1 Chronicles 4:10).

**6.2.** **How do/did you need to trust God to work in the situation or your life?**

I needed God to lead me where He wanted me to go. His Word is lamp upon my feet and light upon my path. Psalm 119:105

**6.3.** **What values drive/drove your mission in the situation?**

The values that drove my mission in this particular situation were living Matthew 6:33. I needed to ensure I was seeking His kingdom assignment first. Everything else would fall into place from there.

**6.4**. **What are/were your goals?**

My goals were to go where I was being led and make myself available for service when I arrived. My goal was accomplished.

**6.5.** **What personal courage issues require faith steps?)**

Leaving your comfort zone takes much faith. Leaving my familiar church and church family was beyond complicated; my heart was aching, but when you have a calling, you should move toward fulfilling it. The process consisted of prayer, seeking advice, and trusting God’s Word, especially Jeremiah 29:11.

**6.6.** **Comments on what happened:**

You will have a great outcome when you move according to His will. Everything worked out exceptionally well, and the movement from the apostolic system to a nondenominational one has proven rewarding in several ways(Deuteronomy 31:6)**.**

**References: Holy Bible**

Acts 17:28

1 Chronicles 4:10

Deuteronomy 31:6

Isaiah 64:8

James 1:5

James 2:17

Jeremiah 29:11

John 10:10

Matthew 6:33

Matthew 9:36-38

Proverbs 3:5

Proverbs 3:16

Proverbs 19:20

Psalm 37:23

Psalm 119:105