LDR 801-52 – Ethics in Global Society

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Professor

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**Assignment**

***Assignment #1 –*** **Course Essential Elements**

1. **Survey the history and significant development of ethics.**

a. Create a 350-word original discussion paper (with cited sources) during the week of the residency. Be prepared to discuss and engage with other students during the live sessions. Post this document in DIAL.

Ethics, by dictionary definition, is the study of the guiding principles that undergird the conduct of a person, people group, and societies at large. Ethical study produces an acquired awareness of the “why” behind the choices and behaviors that individuals and groups display. Any successful salesman that works in the public sector can attest that once the driver of the “why” is discerned concerning an individual, targeted sales tactics can be utilized to more readily land the sale. This is not manipulation, per se, as it is a developed understanding of that which motivates a person to choose x over y.

The history of religious ethics, with a specific view towards ethical developments in Christianity, displays two primary foci; one legal, predicated on establishing laws to support philosophical claims, and the other relational, promulgating an historical interaction that need be acknowledged and “listened to” to inform present day considerations of right and wrong behavior. (Ellul, 2011).

In the legal formulation of ethics, philosophical categories engendered in the mind are called upon to secure the rationalized principles which, ultimately, can be enforced by a law code, be it legality or social pressures. In this sense, the principle, initially intended to serve the endeavor of humanity, subtly but totally morphs into a principality, demanding allegiance to itself based on behavioral conditions, thus reducing the freedom of the individual or culture. (Stringfellow, 2013).

In the relational formulation of ethics, most notably inaugurated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a historical event establishes the starting point for relationality. It is from the historicity of relatedness that future behavioral choices must be discerned (Ellul, 2011). This ensures the freedom of ethics, to borrow the title of Jacques Ellul’s most notable work, in the present life of both individual and society.

For too long, the history of ethics has rested in the realm of philosophy, resulting in the cyclical societal pattern that moves from ethical adoption to social revolt, leading to revolution, resulting in a new ethical philosophy for temporary adoption until the process cycles again (Hoffer, 2010). The history of relational ethics, however, displays periods of sporadic starts and stops, each time yielding, it seems, to principles instead of the relational dynamic of *God-with-us* free behaviors that best reflect the present situation.

WORKS CITED

*Ellul, J. (2011). The Subversion of Christianity. Wipf and Stock.*

*Hoffer, E. (2010). The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements. Harper*

*Perennial Modern Classics.*

Stringfellow, W. (2013). *William Stringfellow: Essential Writings* (B. Wylie-Kellermann, Ed.).

Orbis Books.