History of the Integration of Religion and Society

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Professor

Dr. David Ward

Assignment

### *Developmental Readings*

Review Assignment #3, the course essential elements, assigned readings, and recommended readings to identify selections of books and scholarly articles to identify and select developmental reading sources and 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.

**Antwan, great job on your developmental reading log for PHI 815-22! I could tell you were prapring to write on the controversial topic of immigration from the point of view of the integration of religion and society.**

**Your sources and Quote/Paraphrases are well chosen.**

**You did a good job identifying the Essential Elements (Social Reforms , Religion & Society Integration Models , Christianity’s Influence on Society, Historical Methodologies) that each reading related to-- which was excellent.**

**Your Work Cited APA Form was excellent, except for the extra unneeded spaces all the way through. Nice work! -- Dr. David Ward**

**Source One:** Banks, A. M. (2020). Three church coalitions in Deep South partner to urge racial reconciliation and justice. The Christian Century, 137, 18. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2579414972/D05B6A8349AC4CD5PQ/12?accountid=40162>

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Leaders of multiracial church coalitions in three southern cities have confessed to being too “comfortable” and have committed to anew to “work for justice to right past wrongs” and seek racial unity. “As a group of racially, ethnically, and politically diverse church leaders in the Deep South areas of Charleston, SC, Montgomery, AL, and Mobile, AL, we recognize and lament how the historic nature of our cities and region contributed to racial oppression and division in our country,” they said in a statement. “We believe that the good news of Jesus mandates Christians to pursue a reconciliation that is centered on his redemptive work for humanity.”

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

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the discussion around social reforms. This article draws attention to how those who subscribe to Christian ideology and are professed believers and followers of Christ can help shift the culture, write new chapters in the racial narrative, and initiate change within their communities when they are committed to biblical teachings.

**Contextualization:** As I read this article and thought about how growing up in rural Deep South Georgia has often influenced how I’ve related to persons of another race, specifically Caucasians, it accentuated how I’ve often had notions or made decisions about them before even engaging them. This article brought to light that I must be intentional about seeing beyond their physical and seeing them as God sees them. It is necessary to do so because it will take Christians of every hue to work together to bring racism to the brink of elimination.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Ed Litton, a White Southern Baptist minister in Mobile, said the three groups, each from “notorious slave-trading cities in the past,” learned about each other and decided to put the statement out together to encourage churches in other cities to take similar actions toward unity. “We agree that this is a major hindrance to us communicating the gospel in our communities,” he said. “It’s a divided church.”

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

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to the discussion of how Christianity has the ability to influence society and shift cultural norms. As Christians seek to personify the words of Jesus spoken in the Sermon on the Mount, “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14), the light of Christianity must first be turned on and illuminate our communities.

**Contextualization:** It is difficult to draw people to Christ who died for the sins of humanity and has called us to be ambassadors proclaiming the message of reconciliation towards God if we who have been reconciled to God haven’t reconciled the differences that separate us. It is often said that 11 AM on Sunday is “the most segregated hour” in our nation. In order for Christians to influence society and our communities towards racial reconciliation, it must begin with the community of believers.

**Source Two:** Curtis, J. (2021). Myth of colorblind Christians. New York : New York University Press.

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** This book argues that white evangelicals’ turn to a theology of colorblindness enabled them to create an evangelical brand of whiteness that occupied the center of American evangelicalism and shaped the American racial order from the 1960s to the 1990s. While black evangelicals pressed for practical changes, white evangelicals found that colorblind theology enabled their movement to thrive and become nominally multiethnic without making substantial changes to power relations. At the outset of the civil rights era, overt associations of whiteness with godliness were commonplace. By the end of the century, such assumptions had been irrevocably shattered, but new forms of evangelical whiteness had taken their place.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of historical methodologies.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to the discussion of secular approaches to historical methodologies. Instead of confronting the racial injustice that endured during the civil rights era and beyond, many white evangelicals sought to overlook or look past it through a new method of colorblindness. They attempted to use religion as a scapegoat to cover their guise of not seeing color or race, while this new method pushed racism to another level.

**Contextualization:** About three churches ago, I was called to pastor a predominantly white church in a rural community outside of New Orleans. It was during one conversation that the idea of race came up, and one of the members stated, “Well, I don’t see race.” I could have readily agreed or allowed the comment to go by, but it wouldn’t have served either of us well nor the entirety of the church community. So it was at that moment that I explained to the parishioner that to not see race or be colorblind was to deny that God in His divine wisdom sought to place us in these different skins and that even in our difference of skin color were all the Imago Dei. Further, to not recognize the color of another’s skin was to subliminally erase the culture and heritage that came along with the person’s race. It was to act as if their history was of no consequence or never happened.

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** In the second half of the twentieth century, black evangelicals in the United States made unprecedented demands of inclusion and reform in white evangelical institutions. In response to these demands and upheavals of the civil rights movement, white evangelicals discarded theologies of white supremacy and embraced a new theology of racial colorblindness. But instead of deploying this colorblind theology for antiracist purposes, white evangelicals used it to protect and shape new investments in whiteness as they attempted to grow the evangelical movement.

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

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the discussion in relation to religion and society integration models. The author puts forth the idea that many white evangelicals, in response to the growing cries around racism, decided to not confront it but rather devise a new strategy to feign action. Their new strategy was heavily tied to how they understood biblical unity and their hermeneutical process to understanding scripture.

**Contextualization:** Far too many of my Caucasian counterparts have approached racial reconciliation with good intentions. While the intentions are good, they are often misplaced and misdirected and emanate from a poor understanding of scripture. As many of them turn to scripture to define biblical unity through an Americanized lens and from that worldview, it becomes necessary to remind them that it was this same flawed hermeneutical process and understanding that lead many of their forefathers to use scriptures to justify slavery, the catalyst and progenitor to our issue of racial injustice and disunity.

**Source Three:** Henry, D., & Soal, D. (2021). Mystery and multiculturalism: Should the musterion of Ephesians 3 encourage multiculturalism in South African churches? Verbum et Ecclesia, 42(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2191>

**Comment 5:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** A theology of unity means that Gentile Christians belong and benefit the same as Jewish Christians. ‘This unity finds its centre in being in Christ Jesus’ (Soal 2020:73). By definition, if geography is identity, then being in Christ makes Jews and Gentiles one. ‘In a multicultural community our geographical proximity with one another and in Christ, should unite us’ (Soal 2020:73). The kerygma includes highlighting our unity as part of the message. ‘Our divisions are no longer as much between Greek and Jew’, but contemporary divisions between cultures and divisive individualism are questioned ‘by the theology of unity’ (Soal 2020:73). ‘To be in Christ is to be made one with all who are in him’ (Snodgrass 1996:168)

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of historical methodologies.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is at variance with my understanding of the discussion in relation to historical methodologies, specifically from a Christian worldview framework. The author of the article seems to suggest that the answer to the problem of race that plagues South African churches and the universal church can be solved or at least mitigated to some degree if Christians would recognize that the atoning work accomplished by Christ on the cross made us all one in Him. What sin separated the blood of Jesus brought together.

**Contextualization:** I greatly appreciate the author’s work within the overall article, but this particular paragraph caused me to raise my eyebrows. The author suggests, and I believe rightly, that the atoning work of Jesus has the ability to reconcile us not only to God but also to each other. The issue is there must be a unified conclusion of the Jesus that died some 2000 plus years ago. Christ's work on Calvary must be viewed through an Eastern lens, complete with the socio-historical and socio-political context that comes with it. If the Jesus on the Cross at Calvary is an Americanized Jesus, bleeding red, white, and blue, with the star-spangled banner waving above Him, then that Jesus cannot (nor will He) reconcile races and wipe racial injustice on the continent of Africa, nor is He present in the US.

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Reconciliation with our Creator should lead to talk of racial reconciliation. Racial reconciliation in evangelical circles starts with ‘the gospel’s call for churches to be multicultural’, where possible (Williams 2015:1). Gospel-centered racial reconciliation results in diverse and multicultural churches. Yet ‘diversity may not be the same as gospel-centered racial reconciliation. The goal of gospel-centered racial reconciliation is not simply diversity’ (Soal 2020:73). Gospel-centered reconciliation seeks to love the ‘other’. Gospel-centered racial reconciliation may sound ‘more like a spiritualised version of Affirmative Action, which is not the same as gospel-centered racial reconciliation’ (Williams 2015:3). The purpose of this sacred secret is that God unites what has been separated by history and culture.

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

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is at variance with my understanding of the discussion around social reform. The author puts forth the idea that societal reform begins with the Church first understanding the mystery of God as revealed in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, specifically chapter 3. The author suggests that Paul’s letter declares and nearly demands that churches be multicultural in their make-up. While there is no question some churches within the biblical text were multicultural, we find no mandate for churches TO BE multicutltural.

**Contextualization:** I agree with the author’s premise that the reconciliation with God necessarily dictates racial reconciliation among humanity. However, I cannot agree that there is a biblical mandate for multicultural churches. While this a worthwhile endeavor, we have no imperative within the biblical text to pursue such a feat. To make such a bold declaration would imply those that don’t are in transgression of the Word of God and, therefore, find themselves in place of sin. The better suggestion would be that we all recognize each other as children of God and remove any tension caused by our racial composition and determine to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” and if this leads to formation of a multicultural church, we’ll follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**Source Four:** Moss, K. (2022). Priorities, power, and pilgrimage: Beyond comfortable, toward the beloved community. Theology Today, 79(3), 317–323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00405736221118650>

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** …priorities are a matter of importance and our actions or silence about things that matter reflect our priorities. For example, regarding the importance of inclusivity, one participant remarked, “Jesus would want us to do it despite discomfort, and despite the barriers, and despite all the extra work.” However, inclusivity is not the same as racial reconciliation, nor is access and acceptance the same as acknowledgement or racism, addressing injustice, and actions toward healing and building community. Racial reconciliation is a prioritized prerogative linked to a person’s social location, material reality, primarily identities, theological imperatives, and perspectives regarding what matters most in particular contexts. Hence, racial reconciliation can matter less in areas plagued with poverty and hardship where surviving to next week is more important.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element of

Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the discussion around Christianity’s influence on society. The author suggests that many people often experience a level of discomfort when discussing racial reconciliation because there isn’t much language in regards to the subject. In interviewing subjects for his article, the author notes how one participant stated that Jesus would require to work towards racial reconciliation despite the hard work or any discomfort that might come with it. The author goes on to suggest that one’s context often prioritizes one’s desire for racial reconciliation.

**Contextualization:** As one who often looks for opportunities to work toward racial reconciliation, I have found what the author communicates in his article to be factual. The context in which one finds oneself often dictates whether racial reconciliation is a priority. This is not limited to one ethnic demographic or income bracket. I’ve found that many within higher income brackets are least concerned with racial reconciliation because they cannot reason how it has any bearing on their financial bottom line or well-being. Likewise, the economically strapped don’t see a need to focus on racial reconciliation because their priority is on having enough to survive through to the following week. Far too much of what keeps us from seeking an end to racial injustice is that we are often distracted and concerned about our situations and conditions instead of putting our eyes on others.

**Source Five:** Mueller, J. (2023). On being a listening church: The U.S. Catholic Church and Black Lives Matter. Religions, 14(12), 1527. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121527>

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Examining the U.S. American context, it becomes important

to explore the characteristics of a listening church and the reasons why a synodal

church should prioritize the pursuit of racial justice and reconciliation. For one, systemic racial structures in the United States persist as one of the most pervasive issues of our time, perpetuating ongoing injustices. The resulting harm inflicted upon those who live on the margins disrupts the very fabric of our social structure, necessitating a concerted response as it impacts our collective journeying. Therefore, it underscores the urgency with which a synodal church must prioritize this matter as one of the most pressing ones within the country.

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

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment adds to my understanding of the discussion of social reform. The article's author seeks to discover how the Catholic church’s mandate to be a listening church helps them tackle the issue of social injustice within the confines of the Catholic Church and society at large. The author suggests that for the Catholic Church to be the listening church it desires to be, it must prioritize racial reconciliation within its own ecclesial body. That movement must spill beyond their walls out to the surrounding communities.

**Contextualization:** I haven’t any experience with the Catholic Church other than my daughter attending a private Catholic high school. What I can say in regard to the author’s article is that what he has found to be true in the Catholic church is true for all of Christendom. If we are to be a church that seeks to change our culture through our influence, we must first be a manifestation of that which we seek to be replicated in the communities in which our churches sit.

**Source Six:** Pettit, J. (2020). Blessing oppression: The role of White churches in housing apartheid. Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics, 40(2), 291–309. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jsce20211434>

Extra Line not needed.**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Once the churches recognize the offense of housing apartheid, not just generally, but with real effort to confront all the ways that housing apartheid has denied and destroyed opportunity for decades up to the present day, then the churches can being the process of reconciliation with non-white, and especially black people. Without this preliminary step, it is not clear why any black person would want to participate in such a sham reconciliation process in the first place.

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

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment adds to my understanding of the concept of social reform. The author firmly states within the article, where he focuses on what he coins as “housing apartheid” that in order for White churches to dismantle a system in which they had a hand in creating they must be willing to admit the problem exist. Without this admission and recognition of the systems in justice, there cannot be any move toward reconciliation.

**Contextualization:** This article resonates with me on so many levels. I have been a victim of what the author calls “housing apartheid”. Housing apartheid, as defined by the author, is the idea that there is a covert process or unwritten policy to keep Black families out of predominantly white neighborhoods. Even within the community I now live, it stated that it was developed as a community that was tucked away and meant to be exclusive for white families (and in cooperation with Asian families). They sought to specifically exclude Black families, but not having a way to legally bar us from owning in the subdivision, we (along with several other Black families) have purchased homes within this community.

**Source Seven:** Solomons, D. (2020). Overcoming reconciliation as a wicked problem. Philosophia Reformata, 85(2), 198–211. <https://doi.org/10.1163/23528230-8502a006>

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** It is abundantly clear from the available literature that *reconciliation* is understood in very different ways. Not only is there a lack of conceptual clarity, but strategies aimed at working towards this ideal reveal or produce new problems as an unintended consequence. Some strategies approach the discourse for the purpose of political expediency, while others are more interested in its theological (or existential) properties. This tension is referenced as the dominant split between heaven and earth. Notwithstanding the complexity of the problem, this contribution alludes to the limitations of such approaches if those who propagate them insist that such views remain mutually exclusive. Building on the theology of Allan Aubrey Boesak and Curtiss Paul DeYoung (2012), this contribution is an attempt to avoid the polarization of such views and highlight the fundamental asymmetry between divine and human action. This is underscored by the work of Christ through which God reconciled the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19) and the ministry of reconciliation in society.

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

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of religion and society integration models. The author of the article clearly articulates how religion and philosophies intersect to bring about racial reconciliation and wipe out the wickedness of racial injustice and racism.

**Contextualization:** The author of the article makes the case that racism and racial injustice are the great wickednesses that permeate our society. I am in absolute agreement with the author’s conclusion. This great wickedness that seems to permeate our society has far too long remained and seemingly no knows bounds as it reaches nearly every continent on the planet. We must be cognizant that we were called to be ambassadors of God’s Kingdom and declare a message of reconciliation, which is to be reconciled with God. It is in our being reconciled to Him that we seek to be reconciled with one another.

**Works Cited**

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