PHI 815-22: History of the Integration of Religion & Society

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Professor

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**Lakeisha, this is a great Assignment #1 focusing essentially on the Course Essential Element of Christianity’s Influence on Society. It was inspiring to see that in a short discussion essay, you addressed the role of women in ministry, racial justice, and the compassionate care of the needy. It was wonderful to read your mother’s encouragement as a pastor’s daughter, *"No one can hold a strong woman of God down because he is within her, and she will not fail."* You cited relevant Bible passages to support faith-learning integration and cited my 2014 article as well as Hunter’s seminal 2010 book, *To Change the World*.** **Remember that you can use any of the many course resources for the course in DIAL as Developmental Reading sources. Your APA form in citing your supportive sources in the body of the essay and in the Works Cited was good. Keep up the good work! Dr. Ward**

**Grade: A**

**The Societal Impact of Christianity: A Glance into Women's Issues, Racial Justice, and Compassion**

As a young, black female Christian follower, I believe Christianity has powerfully shaped society differently, influencing women's rights, racial justice, and the compassionate care of the needy. Yet, Christianity's teachings have also created tension and controversy, specifically regarding the role of women in church leadership. For centuries, many churches prohibited women from preaching and holding leadership, traditionally citing biblical texts like 1 Timothy 2:12, which stated, *"I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet."* However, interpretation changes on such scriptures are constantly fighting such considerations at a time when the call for a female preacher and a leader finds great appeal among Christians in present times. As a pastor's daughter, I witnessed my father have this same mentality while I was growing up. He did not allow my mother or any other women in the church to have titles; however, these women were the same boots on the ground running the business behind the scenes. I never quite understood it! My mom has always said, *"No one can hold a strong woman of God down because he is within her, and she will not fail."*

Another area of contemporary society in which Christianity has significantly influenced is racial justice. Attending a predominantly white church shortly after I moved to Hattiesburg, I have felt firsthand the compassionate, welcoming environment given to me by church members through striving to bring about racial reconciliation. At a time when there was much racial division nationally, I was led to attend that particular church, and some congregation members, unfamiliar with me, reached out kind and courteously across our racial differences, testifying to Christian imperatives to unity. After all, God sees us as his children, and he is no respecter of persons. The Bible speaks to this in Galatians 3:28, which reminds us, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* This verse has inspired countless movements for justice and equality within and outside the church walls.

I believe that as Christians, we are called to serve others. Had Christ not shown compassion toward us, the world in which we live would be in chaos, so who are we to turn our eyes away from those unlike us? Compassion for people in need is another central belief of Christianity. My church and sorority do quarterly community service, whereby we feed the homeless and serve people in need. As it is stated in Matthew 25:35-36, *"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink,"* such community service is part of the commitment that as a Christian one should fulfill to their brethren in need.

Also, while watching the assigned videos and reading the materials for this class, I understand the importance of faith-driven intervention in bringing about social change through social movements and community resources. As I look for a better answer to problems involving youth offenders, especially the issue of incarcerated youth and absent fathers, I must admit that I am struggling with the hermeneutical stage of actually narrowing down one identifying problem. Still, my heart and mind are ready and open to *learning* every facet to understand the *"why"* of the problem (Ward, 2014). I often wonder how these young offenders got into their situations, and then I ponder where I can go from here and how I can help make them better. As the video on essential elements said, we look beyond problem identification to the root cause of the problem and find in God the long-term solution. And that is where I struggle: how will I be able to help deal with criminality in its cycle without first understanding the more profound spiritual and social reasons involved?

God is everywhere, so the Church has to be everywhere and not limited inside the church doors. In his work, Hunter (2010) argues the Church should adopt a *"theology of faithful presence"* (95). I understand him to mean that the Church exists to live out the Kingdom and be a clear testimony of God's rule, not only to announce it. Being faithful to God's work of transformation and hope in the world is active participation. This primarily depends on redemptive grace since history demonstrates that spiritual development can result in societal changes. Movements such as women's suffrage, the Civil Rights Movement, and the elimination of slavery demonstrate God traversing redeeming grace to raise the oppressed and forward society. Christianity impacts contemporary concerns, including women's leadership, racial fairness, and poverty relief today. Looking ahead, we must learn from past moves and wonder, *"What has brought us here, and where do we go next?"*

 **Works Cited**

Hunter, J. D. (2010). *To change the world: The irony, tragedy, and possibility of Christianity in the late modern world*. Oxford University Press. **[Seminal] [Amazon-Preview]** [see Course Resources]

Ward, D. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change. ***JIS, V26,*** (1-2), 29-

56. [Seminal] [Proquest - Use OGS Login]