The History of Integration of Religion and Society

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**Assignment #2 – Developmental Readings**

**1.** Create Developmental Readings from seminal sources and scholarly peer-reviewed

journal articles. Review instructions for Assignment #3, the course essential elements,

and course readings to identify selections of books and journals to create entries.

**a.** Refer to the "Student Guide to Developmental Readings" in the General folder

for updated information on sample comments, the grading rubric, and key

definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:**Akanbi, S. O., & Beyers, J. (2017). The church as a catalyst for transformation in

the society. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, 73(4),  [http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4635](https://d.docs.live.net/E9D6D8A75E43FF14/Documents/%09http:/dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4635).

**Comment 1:***(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The church as a religious and social organization, driven by moral and social principles as contained in the fundamental teachings and doctrine of Christian faith, is expected to play a significant role towards the social change and the improvement on society’s value system. This will lead to the transformation of social life and put society in a holistic growth- and development-oriented direction(p.1).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**This comment is a variant that has led to the understanding of the power and influence of Pentecostalism on Nigeria's socio-political landscape. Verifiably, Christianity through the African Pentecostal Movement had a significant impact on the economy and development of the state. This reflects society's shift towards the church's values through the gospel of Jesus Christ, and its ability to address citizen issues and influence infrastructure, economic development, and institutional collaborations.

**Contextualization:** Religion is a powerful force capable of both constructive and destructive outcomes. In the similitude of a sword, religion can be wielded for benevolent or malevolent purposes, depending on the intentions of those who grasp it. It sets the stage for the individual(s) 'mission and the purpose of their willingness to engage. In the case of Christianity, which influences the potential for positive change exemplified by the African Pentecostal Movement, a transformative agent that uses its influence to inspire community engagement.

**Comment 2:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** All the major faith traditions like Christianity and Islamic traditions have core principles that can motivate bonding and bridging social capital through community service, corporation, peace-making, pursuit of social justice and the possibility of respect and tolerance for others (pp. 2, 3).

**Essential Element:** These comments are associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**This comment is a variant that has led to the understanding of the spiritual power and influence African Pentecostalism has upon the socio-political infrastructures of Nigeria. Religion goes further and beyond its role in strengthening the social fabric. Religion exerts a cultural influence so deeply that it has in effect become a defining factor of the world’s major civilizations (p. 7).

**Contextualization:** The current political climate of the federal government in the Nation's Capital has set the thermostat to an extremely low temperature, causing job, advancement initiatives, education, and budget freeze. Before too long, survival in America may become more than just a struggle. The socio-political and economic development initiatives of African Pentecostalism are an impressive template for social change. Faith communities in the United States would benefit from learning what institutions like the African Pentecostal Church did when putting their gospel message into action.

**Source Two:**Cone, James H. & Wilmore, Gayraud S. (1993). Black Theology: *a documentary*

*history, volume one 1966-1979*, 2nd. Ed. Orbis Press, New York.

**Comment 1:***(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** There is a special connection between divine revelation and the poor. From the onset, the Gospels wish to convey that the Jesus-story is not simply about a good man who met an unfortunate fate. Rather, in Jesus, God is at work, telling his story and disclosing the divine plan of salvation (p. 167, 168).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with historical methodologies.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to the theology of the earthly mission and mandate of Jesus. As a servant he “took on” suffering. Jesus listened to, heard, and ministered to the hurts of the abused. He absorbs the hurt, the frustration, and affliction of those he was called to serve for the purpose of liberation.

**Contextualization:** The Gospels show Jesus' earthly ministry was not just for religious and salvific purposes but also to bring liberation for the marginalized and, with the same, the challenge by his deeds that spoke or presented truth to power. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is seen being met with opposition because of the interfering and interrupting power of his deeds against the backdrop of hostility purported by the religious and political elite of his day.

Taking into account the actions, rollbacks, and eliminating of policies and initiatives that have helped to propel advancement for the marginalized, with Black Americans being at the forefront of these tenets by the current Administration, it should be the Black church, in particular, to step in, develop and implement what the federal government is extracting. This will require some Black churches to rethink and reevaluate their purpose in the part of the kingdom they are called to serve.

It will require a return to the messaging ministry of the social teaching of the Gospel in understanding how to develop a community engagement plan. At the same time, gain collaborative support by connecting with institutions with similar missions, as well as identifying public policies where funding and programs or initiatives for the uplifting and empowering of the marginalized are noted. You cannot hold anyone to the fire unless you have some wood.

**Comment 2:***(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The Gospel comes not only as a gift but that the acceptance of the gift of freedom transforms our perception of our social and political existence. The message of liberation cannot appeal to those who profit from the imprisonment of others but only to slaves who strive against unauthorized power (p. 171).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with historical methodologies.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to the understanding of the earthly mission of the historical Jesus prophesied in Isaiah 61:1, with the hope of that prophesy brought forth in Luke 4:18. This proclamation is the substantiation of the Inaugurator Jesus, who sets the tone for laying the foundation for, and is the blueprint for social change for the church of all ages.

**Contextualization:** From a contemporary perspective, Jesus did not have the luxury, privilege, or access to policy or legislature supporting empowerment and development initiatives as a line item on a budget. He did not have a state representative or a congressperson to take the complaints of the marginalized to the authorities. The social change as the outcome of Jesus' ministry impacted and interfered with the economic system of the temple. The Roman government allowed any religion, if the priests paid taxes to Caesar, who relied on temple tax contributions from parishioners.

One would imagine that Jesus' popularity and the multitudes that followed him took that much more attention away from the established order. Truth is disruptive to biased budgets and misappropriate dollars. In the case of the current sociological dynamic created by the federal government interjecting fear and trepidation into the fabric of executive policy by looming the threat of cuts and elimination of policies, initiatives, employees, and budgets whose departments oversaw the programs that give sight to the blind, freedom to the captive, food for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and any other resource that advances empowerment and uplift that spawns social change.

An ecumenical investigation is underway to identify a context supportive of a Christian Education Ministry approach for developing a community engagement initiative focused on social change. Jesus’ interpretation of a social change initiatives requires the value system of the Gospel and the power of prayer to combat conservative public policy and its dismantling impact on today’s society. Due to the current Administration, churches across the board may have to retool, redirect, and refocus their efforts, events, ecumenical representation, and budgets to reflect the spirit of the earthly ministry of Jesus to aid in cushioning the impact of the executive blow and the collateral damage to be sorted through and ministered to.

**Source Three:** Hegeman, D. B. (2007). Plowing in hope: *Toward a biblical theology of culture*,

2nd. Ed. Canon Press. <https://www.exodusbooks.com/samples/Canon/30623sample.pdf>

**Comment 1:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Whether beautiful or repulsive, uplifting, or destructive, the effects of human habitation are everywhere to be seen across the whole surface of the earth. We call these durable effects of human habitation “culture.” Culture is the output of all human societies, the product of deliberate human activity(p. 12).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is variant to my understanding because the concept of culture has not been examined theologically within sociological terms, nor has there been any exposure to the idea of interpreting sociological contexts through a theological lens.

**Contextualization:** The term "culture" in this reading appears to be central to understanding social change and has taken on a number of meanings. It is defined as the beliefs, behavior, language, and entire way of life of a particular time or group of people. Simply put culture is the intellectual and artistic achievement of a society (p. 13). According to one online media platform, The Hollywood Reporter, the Kennedy Center for the Arts president says that the current President of the United States wants to make art great again. The article states that board members were fired, Trump named himself Chair, and the former Ambassador to Germany was appointed president of the once most prestigious entertainment shrine in America.

This takeover caused not only the resignations of prominent personalities associated with the continued success and diversification of talent showcased at the prestigious theater but also the plethora of cancellations of renowned artists choosing not to be a part of showing any complicity due to the type of culture the leader of the Nation represents, notwithstanding how the cultural value will further deflate due to a potential lack of diverse cultural artistic expressions. This political shake up of the arts is allegedly under the guise of being about the financial health of the famed institution. As if America being known for its white supremacist foundation and historically racist fabric was not enough, the agenda of culture wars by executive orders seeks to antagonize an already culturally fractured society.

**Comment 2:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Biblical theology differs from Systematic Theology, not in being more biblical, or adhering more closely to the truths of the Scriptures, but in that its principle of organizing the Biblical material is historical rather than logical. Biblical theology deals with the material from the historical standpoint, seeking to exhibit the organic growth or development of the truths of Special Revelation from the primitive pre-redemptive Special Revelation given in Eden to the close of the New Testament canon (p. 21).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is a variant of my understanding of being unexposed to the concept of a biblical theology of culture. As understood that Biblical theology studies God's character, purposes, actions, and revelation from a historical perspective (p. 21).

**Contextualization:** In exploring a biblical theology of culture, establishing a theological protocol has proven to be historically valuable and helps to establish a blueprint for inclusivity and sensitivity of cultures' influence in and on social change. Being that culture is the output of all human societies and the product of deliberate human activity; culture can never be assumed as just happening. As a product of God's deliberate imprinting through humanity, His purposes for us are made manifest in our cultural endeavors despite its modeling. In other words, whether the template for social change is sophisticated or simplistic, it is important to consider the breadth and diversity of human culture (p. 12).

**Source Four:** Hunter, J. D. (2010). *To change the world: The irony, tragedy, and possibility of*

*Christianity in the late modern world*. Oxford University Press.

**Comment 1:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Thus, the question for the church is not about choosing between power and powerlessness, but rather, how the church and its people will use the power that they have. The church has two essential tasks. The first is to disentangle the life and identity of the church from the life and identity of American society. The second task is for the church and for Christian believers to decouple the “public” from the “political.” (p. 4).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the role the church has played in social reform and social change. The Civil Rights Era is of particular interest in modern memory.

**Contextualization:** The Black Church was pivotal in social change during the 1960s fight for liberation, akin to the liberation of the Israelites. This era marked the emergence of Black theological discourse, which helped Black Americans reclaim and redefine their power. The term Black Power distinctively became a healing psychological force defined by Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., as the necessary power required to bring about social, political, or economic changes. Further, there is nothing wrong with power. The problem is that in America power is unequally distributed (Cone et al, 1993, p. 61). The current political climate is like the civil rights era, with national pushback and international protests reiterated white supremacy and emerging fascism. Places of worship, ministries, parachurches, and nonprofit/not-for-profit organizations may have to augment their missions, budgets, and agendas as potential lifelines, particularly for those in marginalized and poor communities where conservative (far right) public policy may infringe upon the quality of life, advocating and supplemented resourcing for the poor and working families.

**Comment 2:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Faithful presence in practice is the exercise of leadership in all spheres and all levels of life and activity. It represents a quality of commitment oriented towards the fruitfulness, wholeness, and wellbeing of all (p. 6).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the crucial role of *presence*, faithful presence plays in any endeavor concerning advocacy, compassion, and justice. Though churches are in the world, they are not of this world. The church will not flourish or serve well the common good if it isolates itself from the larger culture (p. 6).

**Contextualization:** To not omit diverse faith groups, people of goodwill, and sympathetic institutions that fought alongside Black America in the struggle for freedom, but one cannot fully understand the Black experience throughout the duration and reiterations of oppression, invasion and subjugation without knowing the role compassion has played in the journey. The compassion mentioned does not refer to sympathetic Caucasian Americans in this context. It was the compassion and self-restraint of Black Americans, disciplined in fortitude, which rejected revenge and embraced King's Gandhi-inspired non-violence.

The concept of non-violence gave Black people a way to channel their anger, the understandable desire for revenge, and focus the energy on changing the hearts of the adversary. What Dr. King did so brilliantly was to base his concept of non-violence on a central Biblical teaching: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lester, 2006, p. 305, 306).

**Source Five:** Lester, J. (2006). God and social change.*Cross currents, 56*(3), 303-311,433.

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/god-socialchange/docview/214931744/se2>.

**Comment 1:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** While the civil rights movement was responsible for significant social changes, it was, at heart, a religious movement. It was logical that the churches became the places for mass meetings, and Black ministers were looked to for leadership.(Lester, 2006, p. 304).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding because it lends further insight as to why I believe that the Black church evaluate and analyze its organizational documents to see if reformation is needed and gird up as an anchor in and for the community by reconnecting and recommitting to the social agenda of the Gospel.

**Contextualization:** The complexion of the preaching community I am a part of has changed. A comradery that was once present seems to be nonexistent, except when one is part of a clique. Amongst Black clergy in Louisville, Millennials and Baby Boomers comprise the percentage of the demographic. Should the political and economic climates become more adversely intense, communities will need their churches. People will discover that grant-funded food pantries and soup lines may be politically nonessential as a line item on a budget for partisan reasons.

Cities that are on the coastline are susceptible to hurricanes. Their media outlets, along with the National Weather Service, can warn citizens in time to evacuate or prepare before the storm.

Sometimes, those who decide to stay and hunker down during a hurricane sometimes discover that the storm either was not as bad as they perceived it to be or passed over and did not hit at all. It is best to be initiative-taking and prepare for inclement political weather, whether it is not as bad as one thought it would be or that which people are bracing for never happens. The point is that regardless, the church should always be prepared. The church should prepare to help people manage imminent political danger and its aftermath. Clergy must unite and collaborate on initiatives when the cameras and bright lights are not on, regardless of their political, theological, or denominational differences.

**Comment 2:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The religion practiced by the civil rights movement stands in profound contrast to the religion practiced by a truculent and reactionary Christian Right. They view those who disagree with it as an enemy to be vanquished. Their religion wants to recreate America into its own image, speaks in anger, and vilifies all who disagree with its definitions of what is good and what is evil. A cursory examination of American history reveals that today's Christian reactionaries are not a new phenomenon. Indeed, the attitudes and beliefs they espouse are little different than those espoused by the Puritans of the 18th century. Common to the Puritans then and those of today is their unshakable conviction that they, and they alone, know what God desires, and they are the only ones righteous enough to conduct God's will. The present religious and political conservatism is not the exception in American history; this is the norm.

(Lester, 2006, p. 306).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to the understanding of the various reiterations and interpretations of white supremacy under the guise of Christian Nationalism.

**Contextualization:** Politics should not influence religion. Instead, religion should influence one's politics, if religion exemplifies the loving and redeeming grace of God, the creator of heaven, earth, and the universe. In Donald Trump's address to Congress, he stated that he believes God saved him from the assassination attempts to make America great again. In contrast, throughout his speech, he continued to exhibit bigotry, conscious biases, and antagonistic untruths, which totally contradict his verbal conviction yet align with the ideology of far-right Christian nationalists. In my denominational association, local and state politicians visit popular progressive churches during election seasons, hoping pastors will let them address the congregation or recognize them causing the distinction between politics and religion to be unclear.

**Source Six:** Schmidt, A. J. (2004). How Christianity changed the world. Zondervan.

**Comment 1:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Christ’s power to transform individuals did not end with His disciples. Through His presence and/or that of His disciples, many others were transformed and in turn left their marks on history (Schmidt, 2004, Summary III p. 3).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the Christian worldview framework of the creation, fall, redemption, and restorative plan of God that extends through the church.

**Contextualization:** Jesus transformed the lives of those he met beginning first with his disciples who he ordained as apostles. In his earthly ministry, in his physical body, Jesus performed miracles that changed the lives of not only the ones he ministered to, but to those who were witnesses. When Jesus died, and resurrected from the dead, then appeared in the upper room, then his ascension. When he ascended, he sent his Spirit into the church. This was done so that the work of gospel through ministry could be accomplished. What Jesus did (changing the lives of people) in his physical body is what the church of all time are to do in his new body called the church. Mainstream Christianity tends to underemphasize the social aspect of Jesus who in his physical body was fully God-fully man, full of grace and truth.

Taking into consideration the miracle works of Jesus and the example left for the church of all time, today's church may not be able to take spit and mud and restore sight, but it can include in its Christian education agenda workshops, seminars, and special studies that give insight, offer discovery, and open the eyes of those locked into poverty, despair, and political bureaucracy who cannot see their potential, who cannot see their gifts, purpose, being debt free, owning a home, or moving beyond their circumstance. The church needs to take a social stand in their respective communities, become engaged, and restore connections in the community that may have gotten lost in the process of doing church. There was an old preacher that informed his church years ago by stating, “Y’all so heavenly bound that you’re no earthly good.”

**Comment 2:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** The abolition of slavery and the rejection of segregation are rooted in the early teachings of Christianity. Christianity was not

restrictive. It was freely offered to all individuals, classes, and nations.Opposing slavery was not popular during the Greco-Roman era; nor was it popular in England or America in the 1800s. Throughout history, it took incredible courage and conviction on the part of Christians to free the slaves(Schmidt, 2004, Summary III, p. 4, 5).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of the complexities, hardships, and trauma of epochs of reiterations of slavery in America and apartheid in South Africa and the perversion and misuse of God’s Word to support the heinous enterprise.

**Contextualization:** On plantations during the period of American chattel slavery there were two types of Christianity, one for slaves and the other for non-slaves. The presentation of colonial religion to the slaves was that God through the bible sanctioned slavery. The presentation of religion to non-slaves was that which had a hermeneutic that supported the institution, that what they were doing was God’s will as they possessed a very selfish interpretation of the bible. The theological tension that still permeates today within the heart of some and for others they are more external and vocal about it is the lens.

Psychologically, there is subconscious bias that will always exist, planted in the minds of the oppressed and distributed by the oppressor. This is about religious mythomania, the creation of myths and distortions to support Eurocentric domination using religious (i.e., biblical) justifications. The material power that Europeans had over Africans allowed them to systemically impose their mythomania so that no American social institution would be untouched. The hallmark of this mythomania would be the gospel of inherent Black inferiority and innate white superiority (Akbar, 2003, p. v).

The concept of mythomania may lend insight into the origin of the foundation of American systemic dysfunction. There is no way any person can go through a succession of trauma, and it does not have an impact on the lens through which they see and interpret life. The lens of the gospel is spectrumized, not homogenized. The American system is operating on reiterations of intergenerational racial oppression, as seen in the current nation's leaders, with the use of tools such as cabinet appointees, executive orders, and far-right policies.

**Source Seven:** Ward, D. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change.

JIS V26, (1-2), 29-56.

**Comment 1:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Christian interdisciplinary research can arise from a researcher’s response to God’s calling in any of the spheres of life that Scripture addresses: family, religion, government, work, or culture. Such a call in service to God and man should lead to truth, not bias (Ward, 2014, p. 34).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is variant to my understanding of Christian interdisciplinary studies as a researcher’s response to God’s calling.

**Contextualization:** The seven-stage process of Learning …to Change Your World provides a faith learning integrated basis for the unity of knowledge and to promote social change by addressing real world problems and opportunities (Ward, 2014, p. 33). More importantly, the Christian Worldview Framework is comprised of Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. One of the fruits of being Christ-redeemed is the call to service placed upon our lives. In Ephesians 4:1, the Apostle Paul encourages the believer to walk worthy of the vocation to which they have been called. According to Galatians 4:1, it is the initiative of God, through his grace, that the believer is called to service. One of my goals, in continuum with the course assignments, is to master Christian interdisciplinary studies skills as a scholar-researcher. It will help narrow, broaden, or adjust the lens regarding one's worldview.

**Comment 2:** *(from PHI 815-22 History of Integration of Religion & Society)*

**Quote/Paraphrase:** To regain access to the true unity of knowledge and source of moral authority, faith-learning integrations need criteria for testing truth claims at a worldview and a disciplinary level. A Christian interdisciplinary synthesis of criteria for truth should always include consistency, correspondence, coherence, conscience, and capability (Ward, 2014, p. 42).

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with Christianity’s influence on society.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is variant to my understanding of Christian interdisciplinary studies’ synthesis of consistency, correspondence, coherence, conscience, and capability and the role it plays in faith integration.

**Contextualization:** Ward's Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies (2014) is like a shotgun house that appears small from the outside, only to discover that once you go in, it has more rooms than a palace. This manuscript, which is shared by PHI 815-22 and PHI 805-12, is a twenty-five-page excerpt that begins on page twenty-nine (29) and ends on page fifty-four (54). Omitted are pages one (1) through twenty-eight. It is a deceiving manuscript, as the first impression was that it would be an easy read, an in-and-out deal. *Au contraire*, once inside, I discovered unimaginable cognitive space with opportunities for intellectual expansion. Within the residence of The Journal (2014) are foundational square footage of places to academically build on and find and establish a solid intellectual/scholarly voice into whatever tone or field of study that a person chooses (i.e., sociology, theology, psychology, and the like).

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