PHI 815 – History of the Integration of Religion & Society

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Professor

Dr. David Ward

***Assignment #1 – Core Essential Elements***

1. Select One (1) Core Essential Element from the Syllabus Outline:
	1. Create a 350-word original discussion paper (with cited sources) during the first week of the term. Post this document in DIAL.
	2. Professor will check for quality of content and word-count requirements. Grade assigned will be Credit or No Credit (CR/NC).

History involves a collection of shared experiences, spanning both the development and destruction of societies and civilizations over time. Changes in societies largely involve the reciprocal problems mankind faces throughout decades of inter-and-intrapersonal conflict (i.e., war, poverty, differences in values/beliefs, fundamental needs, etc.). As a result, how people think and view the meaning of life shapes their worldview. This worldview is the premise of meaning and understanding that helps determine how humanity functions according to their set assumption (Ward, 2014). In addition, how one views the impact throughout history is largely focused upon the lens and perception of one’s worldview.

However, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, all history began with God as the existence and creator of all things (John 1:1; Colossians 1:17). Therefore, it is important to consider how God, through Christianity’s influence on society, has impacted history throughout the years. In this paper, a brief overview of how society has been impacted from Christian revivals will be discussed. It is the hope that understanding the impact of Christ, and His followers, become a central theme of importance toward the future impact of world civilization and positive societal change.

**How Christian Revival Impacted Society**

The foundational principle of Christian faith has supported the desire for positive change in the followers of Jesus Christ. The Apostol Paul wrote in Romans 12:2 to “… not be conformed the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind… (NKJV). In a more literal New Living Translation, the verse says, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of the world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” Thus, the premise of Paul’s writing implies that humanities current state involves the need for change and transformation. This can be done by experiencing a revival or return to one’s true nature and purpose from the creator’s original intent for humanity (Liland et al., 2024).

Christian revival has been a source of social transformation starting at the individual level, leading into larger group and national and structural levels within society (Liland et al., 2024). However, change has always occurred first within the single individual, often through leadership and other intrinsic influences. One profound leader of Christian revival was Hans Nielsen Hauge, who led the Haugean revival in the late 1700’s. In 1796, Hauge experience a radical encounter with God that transformed his life and purpose. He began to share his experience with others and later resulted in those who listened to his testimony to become followers.

Hauge was instrumental in impacting and changing Norwegian society through his giftings and skills. Hauge began to write text and other literacy pieces to shared the love of God. During this time, literacy was an issue. People did not often read the bible, but followers of Hauge practiced in his footsteps, writing Christian text, resulting in the increase of reading and writing skills among common people (Liland et al., 2024). This in turn transformed the Norwegian society by expanding the literacy, reading, and writing abilities through Hauge’s revival experience.

**Conclusion**

As shared, societal change often occurs at the individual level and later transfers into larger scales within society. Like a small spark (individual revival), igniting a dry and dead terrain (a society in need of Christ’s redemption), can a wildfire abrupt a massive territory within society. In the same way Hauge was able to impact his world by indirectly influencing an increase in literacy skills and educating his society about the love of Christ, so can one person experience a similar revival and impact the world around them. In turn, those become change-agents around their world around them, become a domino-effect.

Therefore, God changes and transforms individuals through revival by learning and advancing one’s own understanding through God’s revelation of him. This experiential learning is applied in Romans 10:17 states that, “Consequently, faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (NIV). In addition, Christian revival results in a transformation of one’s heart (Ezekiel 36:26) which is the result of individual renewal (Liland et al., 2024), and in order for local revival and a national awaking can occur, the first initial renewal is needed for larger scales to help impact society.

**David, this is a great Assignment #1 focusing essentially on the Course Essential Element of Christianity’s Influence on Society. You captured the way revivals usually start small with a very few, or even one leader, and then spread out to revive the church, and then to cause spiritual awakenings in society, and finally impact society through social reforms. The Liland, Andersen, and Jenssen (2024) resource is a terrific research article that I was not aware of, and that I will add to the Course Resources.** **Remember that you can use any of the many course resources for the course in DIAL as Developmental Reading sources. Kee up the good work! Dr. Ward**

**Grade: A**

WORKS CITED

Liland, T., Andersen, J. D., & Jenssen, J. I. (2024). Perspectives on Christian revivals and societal change*. European Journal of Theology, 33*(2), 215–240.
<https://doi.org/10.5117/EJT2024.2.006.LILA>

Ward, D. C. (2014). Interdisciplinary faith-learning integration for social change. Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 26(1), 29-56. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jis2014261/22>