PHI 815 – History of the Integration of Religion & Society

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Professor

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***Assignment #3 – Essay***

* 1. Write a 5-page essay that analyzes the following items: **Introduction of the Present Issue**: Begin with a contemporary social issue that has a (probably unappreciated) history of positive Judeo-Christian response to it.
		1. Body Sections: **Biblical Worldview Perspective**: Locate the issue in the progress of Biblical revelation and explain the foundations of a Judeo-Christian perspective. What is a biblical/theological position on this issue based on sound biblical interpretation?
		2. **History of the Issue**: Trace the development of the selected issue alongside the history of Christianity's social impact on it. Summarize the historical trend at different points in history with an eye to identifying significant causes of the social problem, identifiable processes at work, and enduring patterns that emerged. How did the problem/issue originate and develop? What were the causes of the social problem? What identifiable sociological or theological processes were at work? What enduring patterns emerged that recur?
		3. **Exemplars of Religion and Society Integration**: Present a specific example (e.g. key leader(s) or movement(s) of socially and intellectually active Christians) of religion and society integration. If known, discuss how God raised up the leader or movement.
		4. **Applicable Principles**: Distill the timeless principles of truth or leadership derived from the historical examples above. (Develop these based on the Body Sections #1-#3). Pose possible contemporary applications for the integration of religion and society in your field of influence.
		5. **Conclusion:** End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis. Discuss what impact this research had on your sense of calling to change your world.
	2. **Paper Outline**
	3. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.
	4. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.
	5. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.
	6. Use a minimum of **eleven** scholarly research sources (two books and the remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**David, excellent work on this assignment! Your essay aligns with the course's essential elements of the social impact of how faith put literacy into the common masses and changed the world. This was exactly the issue in the history of Christian scholars translating the Bible into the language of the people and causing revolutionary constructive change in cultures: Wycliffe in England, Hus in Czechoslovakia, Luther in Germany, Calvin in Geneva, etc. I can’t wait until I get to show you the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC! There is one floor that I call the OGS floor because you see our heritage in the historical example of Christian scholarship! It nicely expresses your professional interests as a Christian scholar. Your reflections show thoughtful engagement with the course content for PHI 815-22. Nice use of scholarly citations to support your responses. Your paper meets length requirements and conforms to almost perfectly to APA style. It looks like you chose relevant sources, but consider balancing complementary (additive) an occasional variant source. Keep up the excellent work!-- Dr. David Ward**

**Grade: A**

With the increase in technological advancements, it can be argued that much of the information digested among the world involves visual and social media consumption. While technology has benefited humanity, it has also incapacitated society by stifling general literacy in reading, writing, and verbal language communication skills (Gusti Yanti et al., 2020). As the world is spoon-fed information through social constructs, the challenge many educators are facing is the ability to help students develop literacy skills toward critical thinking and transformational innovation of thought through reading and writing skills. This concern leads to the important consideration of how educational literacy was founded throughout history and how it can be applied today.

Historically, Judeo-Christian influencers have developed much of the current-day literacy known and applied in educational settings. Through both biblical literacy and general educational literacy, historical figures have influenced the social need for informational literacy today. In this paper, a discussion of a Biblical worldview perspective will be presented, as well as an overview of the historical issues surrounding biblical and general literacy skills, followed by an introduction of two key leaders in history that have directly, or indirectly, impacted biblical literacy. These leaders are: Martin Luther and Hans Nielsen Hauge. Finally, an application of the principles learned in how Judeo-Christian values and influences have intersected with today’s societal needs for literacy development will be addressed.

**Biblical Worldview Perspective on Literacy**

Before addressing scriptural references, it is important to consider what literacy is and what a common definition of literacy is today. According to Pilgrim and Martinez (2013), there are several different types of literacies but the term initially refers to reading and writing effectiveness. However, there are also elements of literacy that involve the process of simply learning to communicate verbally through speaking and listening. In essence, literacy is any form of cognitive insights that allow a person to comprehend and communicate through multiple mediums. Effectively, Biblical literacy stems from this comprehension and communication.

The Bible communicates several passages that support education and literacy skills. Proverbs 1:7 states, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (NASB). In the story of Daniel, the Bible shares how “… God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every kind of literature and expertise” (Daniel 1:17, NASB). The book of Proverbs is considered a book of wisdom and supports teaching and learning: “Give instruction to a wise person and he will become still wiser; Teach a righteous person and he will increase his insight.” (Proverbs 9:9, NASB). Finally, one of the most supportive verses describes how Jesus supported the notion of personal growth and development, as, “… Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:52, NASB). All of these verses reflect literacy with several actions: (1) Knowledge Acquisition; (2) Teaching; and (3) Application of Knowledge (described as wisdom).

There are multiple accounts where knowledge is acquired through biblical teaching, and the byproduct of that knowledge results in an immediate action and application of that knowledge. The eighth chapter of the Book of Acts depicts an event where Philip, not the Apostle, but the deacon in the early church (Francis & Jones, 2022), ministering to the people of Samaria began his journey back to Jerusalem. In the process, Philip encounters an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the text from the Book of Isaiah. In a series of what seem to be unplanned events, Philip questions the eunuch if he understood the text he was reading, and in reply the question of, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31, NASB).

Without hesitation, Philip aids the eunuch towards understanding the biblical text that describes the story of Jesus. While it is not known how the eunuch understood the concept of baptism, upon coming up to a body of water, the eunuch questioned what was preventing him from becoming baptized. Thus, Philip leads the eunuch to be baptized, after preaching the message about Jesus Christ. This becomes the primary example of how Christianity has impacted and influenced the world. Through a discipleship model of teaching and development, literacy skills are a foundational construct in learning about the Word of God, which can transform individuals to later transform others around those individuals (Liland et al., 2024).

**Historical Issues**

The book of Hosea shares a meaningful and historic truth related to a lack of understanding, a lack of biblical literacy. God shares through the prophet Hosea that “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge…” (Hosea 4:6, NASB). It is clear that there is a critical importance in the understanding and acquisition of knowledge throughout humanity. Historically, the Word of God shares there is a need for parents to share and speak of the God’s commandments (Deuteronomy 6:7) and to teach children the Word of God (Deuteronomy 11:18-19). This teaching involves literary skills through reading, writing, and listening. While these requirements were established in the Old Testament timeframes within Jewish culture, once the Word of God was shared after Jesus’s first coming, it became clear there was a need to help translate the biblical languages into common day literature for others to read and interpret the Good News (Loba-Mkole, 2008).

Throughout the history of Jewish society, one of the first-tier systems that separated humanity into social classes involved those who could read and those who were unable to read (McKenzie & Harton, 2002). The book of Nehemiah, Chapter 8, shares how the priest Ezra was called to read from the Book of Moses. While the intent for reading and educating was toward the development of God’s desire to build and edify those who listened (Daramola, 2020), unfortunately, as time progressed, this ability to read became the catalyst for creating social divide (McKenzie & Harton, 2002). Those who could read were in positions of leadership and teaching, while lesser class citizens were reliant upon those who could communicate the written Word of God. This evidently became an issue throughout history, especially in many European nations, where a lack of understanding and ability to read was predominant among lower social classes.

**Exemplars of Religious and Societal Integration**

**Martin Luther**

During the Renaissance era, the Catholic church was the main power system in the culture and region across many European-led nations. On a social level, those who were of the upper echelons classes were privileged to have access to the biblical text (Wang, 2024), often requiring those in lower socio-economic classes to pay alms for the anointment of their sins. This corruption led to the uprising of leaders, such as Martin Luther, towards a reformation of the Catholic church practices. Through the use of technology, the printing press was developed to mass produce the biblical text to the common folk (McKenzie & Harton, 2002). As a result of Luther’s public printing materials, this led towards a reformation and critical impact on a global scale. As discussed by Becker and colleagues (2020) Luther had connections with local elites and these elites also had influence within the scope of their city. Thus, the reformation began through literature development. This development of creating literature for the masses supported literacy skills, but also was the initial start toward the Enlightenment era.

 Martin Luther’s initial challenge to the authority of the Catholic church may have indirectly led to the rise of the Enlightenment period. Becker and colleagues (2020) argue that Luther’s movement had the long-desired outcome of limiting the Catholic church and its political power. Therefore, it likely could be argued that the upcoming error of challenging authority and questioning reality may have indirectly influenced the challenges brought up by the Enlightenment era. With the shift away from the knowledge of God and directing that knowledge through secular and postmodern constructs, society has drifted away from the wisdom and essence of all truth and knowledge, which is found in Jesus Christ (Ward, 2014). Ultimately, this act and desire for human knowledge can best resemble that “… knowledge makes one conceited…” (1 Corinthians 8:1, NASB). Thus, those who believe in science verses those who believe in God continue to separate humanity based upon this educational divide.

**Hans Nielsen Hauge**

Proceeding from Martin Luther’s influence on biblical literacy, Hans Nielsen Hauge has indirectly influenced the development of biblical literacy in Norway. Hans Nielsen Hauge who was best known for his influence on the Norwegian Christian revival in the nineteenth century (Liland et al., 2024). Chua and colleagues (2017) shared that whenever the church experiences a period of stagnation, often these are the times when God sparks a revival among the lives of leaders. One such revival occurred in the life of Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824), where God provided him with a revelation from which Hauge began preaching the Gospel throughout his homeland (Liland et al., 2024). In response to this experience, the Haugean Movement began through the creation of written books and literature he created for his followers (Liland, 2024).

According to Hauge, literacy was undoubtedly connected to the preaching of God’s Word (Haukland, 2014). As Hauge would preach throughout the region, many of his followers would begin to mimic and follow his actions in writing biblical texts (Liland, et al., 2024). These followers were called “readers” and were focused on the efforts of developing literacy skills for those within society (Haukland, 2014). In turn, while this was not the initial intent for the revival moment to occur, indirectly followers of Hauge’s supported the literacy development among social classes in European nations.

**Application in Today’s World**

Focusing back on the narrative discussing Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, it is clear that there is a requirement of biblical hermeneutics that is required to help interpret the biblical message into meaning in today’s understanding. However, besides hermeneutics, it requires literacy skills to properly read and interpret the context of the words and to begin to question how to interpret historical context. For example, it is clear that the city of Jerusalem was considered a place of worship, and that the Ethiopian was accustomed to the cultural understanding within that region, otherwise he would not have been in participation of worship (Leslie, 2020). In addition, Leslie (2020) argues that it is likely that that Ethiopian understood how to read the Hebrew language. However, it required Philip to help with the hermeneutics (the interpretation and understanding) of the passage in the Book of Isaiah, as this was the language the words were originally written in.

The interconnection of social sciences and faith also supports the growth and development of literacy skills through an interdisciplinary lens. Focusing upon a psychological framework, biblical hermeneutics (applied literacy skills) were examined based upon Carl Jung’s framework of personality theory. Francis and Jones (2022) employed a study where they invited 24 clergy to discuss the narrative of Philip and the Ethiopian and to identify the interpretation of the biblical text through a predominate personality viewpoint (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking).

Based off Jung’s theory of personalities, humans are able to interpret the world around them through these four distinct traits. Those in the *Sensing* group were able to help identify the text by relating to common ideas that surrounded their knowledge of relevance. For example, in the region these clergy were located in, sheep were not a common livestock to identify the passage in Isaiah, but moose were. They then swapped the concept of a sheep with a moose to help identify the passage that was relevant to a clearer understanding. Those in the *Intuition* group developed several ideas, but did not identify anything concrete. The emphasis of nine different ideas about the literature were discussed and was not able to answer what was seen in the narrative from their perspective. The *Feeling* group were easily able to articulate how they felt about the context, often adding adjectives such as the word “gentle” in describing how Philip walked alongside the Ethiopian, yet the biblical text never mentioned this word. However, when it is mentioned that the Spirit of the Lord “snatched” Philip away, this was interpreted as a harshness and questioned why this was done this way. Finally, those who were part of the *Thinking* group questioned the background context and wondered how the Ethiopian got hold of the historical text of Isaiah, and were puzzled by the text about how the Ethiopian was rejoicing when Philip was snatched by the Spirit of the Lord.

 What Francis and Jones’ (2022) publication does is support the indication that the biblical text is able to help develop hermeneutics (meaning) through the literacy skills of reading the text. It also identifies meaning through a variation of different humanistic perspectives. These perspectives help shape the understanding of social constructs and help address the meaningfulness in life as it pertaofs to this biblical account of salvation and Christian discipleship. Ultimately, the uncovering of biblical literacy is rooted through the understanding of how the Bible relates to the reader through the relevant issues and historical backgrounds related to everyone throughout time (Duvall & Hayes, 2012), as there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

**Conclusion**

Since the Bible is a collection of scripture that must be read, it is clear that the God of all creation is interested in mankind’s ability to learn and comprehend his written word through biblical literacy. Ultimately, this is how God decides to communicate to humanity (Duvall & Hays, 2012). Therefore, since literacy is an essential construct to the growth of humanity and society, it should be an essential part of Christian discipleship. However, to become a disciple of Christ, one must be taught and directed. In essence, the foundation of applying literacy skills is essential for growth. In addition, Christian followers should strive to be more like Jesus and follow developing healthy biblical literacy habits. Just as Jesus grew in wisdom (cognitively), stature (physically), and in favor with God (spiritually) and man (socially), Christians are called to grow in these four areas. Yet, the foundation of knowledge acquisition, teaching, and application of knowledge cannot be done without the involvement of biblical and general literacy skills.

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