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# MB 770 The Indigenous Church

Darrell L. Whiteman

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Spring 2002

## **MB 770 The Indigenous Church**

Instructor: Darrell Whiteman  
SH 408  
Wednesdays 2:25-5:05

### **Course Description and Format**

This is an **advanced** course for students with a solid foundation in missiological anthropology. The format will therefore reflect the advanced standing of the students by giving you a larger share of the responsibility for the course. There will be considerable discussion of material being read for which you must always come well prepared, some lecturing, some films, and a significant amount of time given to student presentations of research papers. The focus of the course is on the relationship between Christianity and culture. We will explore how this can engender indigenous churches, or the opposite, how it can lead to syncretism in non-Western and Third World cultures as well as in North America and Europe.

### **Texts Used in the Course**

We will read the following books in this order:

Charles Kraft (1979) *Christianity in Culture*

Lamin Sanneh (1989) *Translating the Message*

Stephen Bevans (1992) *Models of Contextual Theology*

Lesslie Newbigin (1989) *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

Dean Gilliland, ed. (1989) *The Word Among Us* (photocopy)

Darrell Whiteman, compiler *Readings in Indigenous Church*

Collateral Reading: Robert Schreiter (1985) *Constructing Local Theologies*

### **Course Requirements and Important Dates**

A short 5-10 page paper will be written for each of the following books. In addition, when you hand in your paper, **also hand in 2-3 questions** which you want to pursue in our discussion of the book.

1. Begin **immediately** reading Charles Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*. Write a 5-10 page critique of the book, indicating areas where you find yourself in agreement and areas where you are having some difficulty. Record the important insights you have gained for developing an approach to indigenous Christianity. The date for turning in your paper is Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. We will discuss the book on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

2. Our second book to read and critique is Lamin Sanneh's *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Evaluate this book, noting especially the "surprises" you discovered in Sanneh's approach to this controversial topic. Your 5-10 page paper is due on Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup> for discussion on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

3. The third book we will read is Stephen Bevan's (1992) *Models of Contextual Theology*. Critique this book noting the strengths and weaknesses of each of the five models Bevans proposes. We will discuss the book April 17<sup>th</sup> so have your paper to me by Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup>.

4. In our final area of discussion of the indigenous church we will turn our focus on the West. There is no more eloquent spokesman for this concern than Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. He "knocked our socks off" with *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (1986), but now he has gone a step further with his powerful book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Read and critique this book, and include in your paper the contrast between indigenizing the church "over there" and doing it "here at home." We'll discuss this book on May 8<sup>th</sup> so have your paper turned in by May 6<sup>th</sup>.

5. We are using two "Readers" in this course: (1) Gilliland's *The Word Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today* which will give you an overview of the ideas coming out of Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission faculty, plus (2) "Whiteman's Reader" of ten classic articles, plus one of my own. Each week you will need to hand in "Interaction" papers on the articles you have read for that week. Because we will give some of our class time to discussing these, they need to be given to me on Monday. Do not be late as this will hamper our discussion together. There are a total of 24 articles to read and critique.

6. **Collateral Reading:** For those of you who want to push yourself a bit more in this course for extra credit (10%) you can read Bob Schreiter's *Constructing Local Theologies*. This is not an easy book to read, especially the material on semiotics, so you may have to read it more than once to get all the gold that is there. Have your paper turned in by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

The following dates are those when our class will meet and discuss these articles; your "Interaction Papers" are **due the Monday before**.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Gilliland</u>	<u>Whiteman's Reader</u>
2/13	Class begins	

2/20	1 - Gilliland	1. Smalley, "Cultural Implications.."
2/27	2 - Glasser	2. Tippett, "Indigenous Principles..."
3/6	3 - Gilliland	3. Von Allmen, "The Birth of..."
3/13	4 - Van Engen	4. Taber, "The Limits of..."
3/20	5 - Hiebert	5. Walls, "The Gospel as the..."
3/27	6 - Kraft	6. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization"
4/3	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
4/10	7 - Shaw	7. Whiteman, "Contextualization..."
4/17	8 - Sogaard	8. Dye, "Toward a Cross-Cultural..."
4/24	10 - Ellison	9. Arbuckle, "Inculturation and ..."
5/1	11 - Wagner	10. Willowbank, "Report of a..."
5/8	12 - Gibbs, & 13 - Tan Che-Bin	11. Costas, "Survival, Hope, and..."
5/15	14 - Woodberry	

7. **Research Papers.** Each student is required to prepare a major research paper of approximately 20 pages, plus a solid bibliography. A number of these papers will be selected for presentation to the class. A copy of each paper will be put on reserve in the library so that it can be copied by anyone interested in the topic. The paper should be reduced two pages to one to lower the cost of photocopying. Turn in one standard 8 1/2 X 11, and make a copy for yourself. A one page abstract of your paper should be written and distributed to all members of the class. Your topic should be chosen and approved as soon as possible, but no later than **March 13<sup>th</sup>**. An outline of your paper should be turned in **March 27<sup>th</sup>**. The paper and one page abstract to be passed out to your colleagues is due **May 1<sup>st</sup>**.

Your paper should relate to the topic of indigenous Christianity with both a theoretical issue(s) and a practical application(s). Here are some possible topics from which to choose. You may want to add to this list as well:

1. The Muslim Concept of Jesus as it Relates to Indigenous Christianity
2. The Problem of Cultural Relativism and Christianity
3. God Working Through Culture: Incarnation as Model for Ministry



5/01	Research Paper and Abstract due
5/06	Critique of Newbigin is due
5/08	Discuss Newbigin
5/08	Film: "Sister Act"
5/15	Collateral Reading of Schreier is due

### Course Evaluation

There will not be a final examination in this course. Your grade will be determined in the following manner:

1. 35% Research Paper
2. 25% Weekly Interaction Papers
3. 10% Critique of Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*
4. 10% Critique of Sanneh's *Translating the Message*
5. 10% Critique of Bevans' *Models of Contextual Theology*
6. 10% Critique of Newbigin's *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

You will also be given an opportunity to nominate your final grade for the course.

### Office Hours

I am available for office hours Thursday 2:00-4:30. I will appreciate it if you will observe these hours for your appointments. Call me to set a time: 858-2215, or email: darrell\_whiteman@asburyseminary.edu.

**Spring 2002**

### MB 770 The Indigenous Church Interaction Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter or Article Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Rating on a Scale of 1-10 \_\_\_\_\_ [10 = high]

Summary:

What new insights have you gained from reading this article?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How do you suggest these new insights can be applied to the problem of Indigenous Christianity?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What are some problems that have been raised that we should discuss in class?