

Emmanuel Y. Lartey. *Postcolonializing God: New Perspectives in Pastoral and Practical Theology*. London: SCM, 2012. 224 pages. \$36.

In *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology*, Emmanuel Y. Lartey declares that “African practical theology must pursue and engage in the activities of postcolonializing God as a counter-hegemonic practice” (129). Lartey in this volume performs theological examinations of African postcolonializing activities in cooperation with the Divine especially as found in African indigenous religious, spiritual, and cultural heritages. For him, African agents’ postcolonializing praxis, whether they are indigenous Africans or diasporan Africans, is innovative practical theological work that subverts hierarchical European Christianity’s misinterpretation and mischaracterization of African life, religions, and thoughts. This postcolonializing task, the author hopes, will eventually contribute to (African) human liberation specifically through pastoral theological work, community-building, and culture-transforming work. Throughout the book, he tries to unveil postcolonial discourses and performances in African faith communities in the effort of constructing unique African practical theology. His work is truly an interdisciplinary dialogue between biblical studies, postcolonial theory, pastoral theology, and Black theology, just to name a few.

Toward theological re-affirmation of African churches’ postcolonializing activities, Chapter One re-interprets biblical passages with a postcolonial reading of them, e.g., God’s counter-hegemonic and pluralizing activity in the Tower of Babel and the Spirit’s affirmation of diversity and plurality in the event of Pentecost. Chapter Two conveys the inquiry into primitive African religious and cultural heritages that are already embedded in Black Christianity and its spirituality. Lartey identifies obvious characteristics of African heritages in Black Christianity. Especially, he contends that the New Religious Movement among diasporan Africans has historically represented African churches’ postcolonializing activity by means of its synthetic thinking and dynamic hybrid creativity, quite different from dominant Western analytical thinking (36–37). Chapter Three analyzes and re-conceptualizes public theological ceremony enacted in Elmina, Ghana in 2007 through his particular theological perspective of indigenization and postcolonialism. Chapter Four re-elucidates the Ghanaian mystic Ishmael Tetteh’s African mysticism and his innovative Ethereal Mission that predominantly relies on practices of African traditional priest healers. Lartey finds Tetteh’s mystical religious practice a vividly lived example of African postcolonializing activity (117). Chapter Five explores postcolonializing pastoral practice that seeks to build healthy community, well-being for all humans, the total dignity of humanity, and the transformation of colonizing culture, which all goes far beyond individual pastoral care and healing (121–122). The last chapter concludes the book by proposing practical theological strategies such as imitation, improvisation, and creativity needed for the further development of postcolonializing activity.

A notable strength of the book is the author’s insightful investigations of the representative African indigenous inheritance found in African postcolonializing activity, the hallmarks of Africans’ synthetic ethos, and African-indigenized pastoral care. This book is a remarkable example for theologians and ecclesiological leaders of other ethnic groups who want to develop their own ethnic/racial postcolonial practical theology. Lartey thus invites readers from any specific ethnic/racial groups to courageously engage in innovative postcolonial religious and practical theological work by re-examining the deleterious effects of the prevailing colonization legacy in their own contexts.

Nonetheless, this book includes some questions that should have been more explored. For example, Chapter Six leaves behind the inevitable question, “What would be the standard for imitation and improvisation that leads to the articulation of creative ethnic practical theology in a particular context?” Also, in Chapters Six and Seven, readers might expect to hear more of the author’s own voice

on the interpretive concept of African pastoral and practical theology, beyond the analysis of the African church's pastoral performance and demonstration of an example from Tetteh's mysticism.

Overall, Lartey's work is a significant contribution to the field of practical theology, Black theological studies, postcolonial biblical study, postcolonial theory, and ethnic postcolonial study. His effort to divulge and analyze African indigenous spiritual movement wonderfully rediscovers the constructive interplay between the Divine and humanity toward the latter's postcolonial liberation. Moreover, his work emphatically stimulates other ethnic groups' ongoing postcolonializing theological works and practices. I recommend this book as a critical textbook for any classroom where a discussion on provocative and transformative roles and practices of postcolonialism is welcome, especially for the promotion of indigenous and unique practical theologies among marginalized ethnic/racial groups around the world.

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