1 Introduction

A huge disconnect exists between the orthodox, official theology of the ruling classes of religious institutions on the one hand, and the living faiths of believers on the other. Official church dogma is often not what most Christians live by. Whereas official statements emphasize the ‘purity’ of the faith, most Christians in the pews and practitioners of other living religious faiths, live what can be described as a mixed, pragmatic version which is a combination of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, official teaching and local cultural practices, religious understandings, and experiential realities. This phenomenon is observable in most if not all faith traditions. Christian systematic theology has focused on the statements of faith (creeds, councils, and doctrines) of officialdom and the writings of recognized authority figures whereas many practical theologians have by and large grappled with the lived experience and daily-life faith of ordinary believers. This historic divide has been the case down through the years and arguably lies at the heart of the reason for the Councils and Creeds of Early Christianity, whose primary purpose was to clearly define the core, essential, pure, and true faith to which all believers were to be directed and by which heresies could be detected and expunged, corrected, or punished. An example of this in contemporary times takes the form of the conflicts and controversies between purists who insist on the exclusive claims of Christian doctrine and the ‘multiple religious belonging’ that characterize the lives of many Christians. It is also evident in postcolonial studies in practical theology.

In this chapter I shall be focusing on the practical theological disciplines of pastoral theology and pastoral care in tracing the trajectory of postcolonial criticism in the work of practical theology, especially emphasizing the work of those whose cultural and historical heritage, like my own, is traceable to the African continent.¹ Pathways in postcolonial thought and practice typically seek to enhance an engagement with the cultural heritage of the formerly colonized in ways that lift up subjugated knowledge for the purpose of a more authentic future in which suppressed ways of being and knowing are represented and clearly articulated at the table of all pastoral theology.

¹ See Lartey (2018, 79–97). In this chapter, as in that one, for the purposes of brevity and focus, I stay within the discipline of pastoral theology understood as exploring the theological underpinnings, implications, and practices of pastoral care and counseling as a sub-discipline of practical theology. Practical theology, as a whole, I would define as encompassing the four disciplines of Religious Education, Liturgy and Worship, Homiletics, and Pastoral Theology.
I write from the region of the United States of America which is referred to as the Deep South where for the past nineteen years I have lived, taught, researched, and provided pastoral care and counseling. I was born in Ghana, then known as the Gold Coast, in the dying years of British colonial rule on the African continent. My own experience growing up, living, and teaching in Africa, and then studying and teaching for over a decade in Britain, and now since 2001 here in the United States, informs everything I have to say and has had a marked influence on my perspectives and views. Moreover, I have had the honor and privilege of travelling internationally and engaging in research and study in different parts of the world, including extensively in Africa, in Europe, in Asia, the Caribbean and South America. My experience has typically been in intercultural communities located in the various countries I have worked in. Coming from a minority ethnic group in my home country, and then sharing the life space and existential realities of minorities – Black British, African Americans and people of color – has given me a particularly keen sense of the experience of being marginalized. However, as a professor and religious leader, privilege and power have not been absent from my experience as well. In this regard marginalization and recognition, oppression and valuing, resentment and respect, rejection, and acceptance, have in curious ways been the hallmarks of my existence and social location.

Since the mid-1980s a steady stream of works from pastoral theologians have embraced and operated through a lens that has been described as ‘intercultural’. In this approach a concerted effort is made to seriously promote a dialogical and interactive study and practice of ministry and pastoral care, drawing upon theories and practices from different cultures. The underlying premise of this effort is equal respect for all cultures and all people as bearing the image and likeness of God. The modus operandi of intercultural pastoral care and counseling has entailed respectful dialogue between participants from different geographic and social locations in which each purport to learn from the other. If all people are created in and bear the image of God, then all have a contribution to make in the presentation of the God of all creation and in the care of all humanity. It goes without saying that if there is to be genuine intercultural interaction among pastoral practitioners there indeed needs to be recognition and respect for each participant’s cultural and religious heritage. Such however was not the case from the beginnings of interaction between Europeans and peoples of the rest of the world. When Europeans ventured out of their shores beginning in the fifteenth century CE it was in a mode of conquest and control of trade, economics, culture, and religion. European civilization sought dominated and imposed its own values on all everywhere it went. European imperialism and colonialism were fuelled by views of superiority and patronage.

The colonial project with its inherently oppressive and de-facing characteristics in relation to cultures different from itself has left the partners in intercultural interaction who originate from the former colonies unable to truly engage the colonizers and their descendants from an equal epistemological, sociological, and political base. Psychiatrist and political activist Frantz Fanon perhaps most clearly analyzed
the deleterious effect of colonialism upon Africans. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, a seminal text which, although predating formal designations of ‘postcolonial criticism’, articulates very well the core values of postcolonial thought, Fanon declared, “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.” (Fanon [1961] 1990, 169) As Sugirtharajah, a towering figure in postcolonial studies, puts it in language that describes lingering images of Africa that persist even today, “for colonialism the vast continent of Africa was a ‘haunt of savages’ replete with ‘superstitions and fanaticisms’, and was held in contempt and cursed by God.” (Sugirtharajah 2002, 17)

The task ‘postcolonializing’ activities seek to accomplish entails critique, validation, recovery, and construction. They aim to facilitate the formerly colonized person’s authentic participation in scholarly as well as pragmatic engagement. As critique, postcolonial criticism uncovers the logic of colonialism’s constructions of the colonized and demonstrates its inadequacy and misrepresentation of the people and cultures encountered. It also critiques the hegemony and ‘control over’ that is embedded in much of the discourse of relations between nations and cultures. Because of the pervasive, often pernicious, and latent power of the colonial project upon the personhood of the colonized, an important aspect of postcolonial criticism and one of its objectives is the ‘de-colonizing’ of the thought, theory, and practice of colonized experience. As validation, postcolonial interpretations of the realities of the colonized re-value their humanity and begin to underscore and strengthen the formerly colonized people’s capacity for authentic selfhood. The task of recovery undertaken in postcolonial studies entails a process of re-appropriation of subjugated knowledge and epistemology. Such recovery requires both historical and constructive research and crafting. Subjugated knowledge needs to be re-appropriated, validated and put to work in the construction of new realities, theories, and practices able to forge a new consciousness and new orientation to life for all in the future. Postcolonial criticism thus requires both courage and creativity.

2 What Do We Mean by Postcolonial?

The term *postcolonial* has many and varied usages in different disciplines. It points more often not merely to a chronological ordering of relations in reference to what follows the colonial, but rather as a discourse about existing orientations and in critique of ongoing international relational realities. Generally, it is employed in an attempt to capture two particular features of international relations historic and contemporaneous. First, postcolonial studies have been about an analysis of the

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2 A term I coined to express an ongoing activity as opposed to a static state, see Lartey (2013).
various strategies employed by colonizers to construct images of and to exercise dominance over the colonized. This form of study undertaken mostly by scholars from the historic colonizing nations can and has been very sharply criticized.\(^3\) Second, postcolonial criticism has referred to the study of the agency of the colonized in making use of and transcending colonial strategies of dominance, subjugation and demeaning in order to articulate and assert their dignity, self-worth and identity, and to empower themselves. Sugirtharajah, whose work has been pioneering in the field of postcolonial Biblical and Asian studies, describes postcolonial criticism “as signifying a reactive resistance discourse of the colonized who critically interrogate dominant knowledge systems in order to recover the past from the Western slander and misinformation of the colonial period.” (Sugirtharajah, 2002, 13) This way of using the term has led to a flurry of studies and texts mostly by nationals of the former colonized nations. It is important to note that in this latter way of analysis the critique has included that of the ‘colonized’ themselves and the ways they have at times internalized the images and projections of their interlocutors, as Sugirtharajah puts it postcolonial criticism “also continues to interrogate neo-colonizing tendencies after the declaration of independence.” (2002, 13)

3 Postcolonial Criticism in Pastoral Theology and Care

One of the first publications in the field of pastoral theology and pastoral care to engage in a critique of colonial anthropological presuppositions in pastoral care was my doctoral dissertation, *Pastoral Counselling in Inter-cultural Perspective: A Study of Some African (Ghanaian) and Anglo-American Views on Human Existence and Counselling* (Lartey 1987). In this pioneering work African anthropological conceptions are utilized in a critique of Euro-American foundations of pastoral care and counseling. This early critical work that played a leading role in the formulation of an intercultural paradigm of pastoral care and counseling predated the explicit usage of the term ‘postcolonial’ in the literature of practical theology. Perhaps the first work to explicitly refer to postcolonial theory and practice in the sense we have outlined was *Pastoral Care from a Third World Perspective: A Pastoral Theology of Care for the Urban Contemporary Shona in Zimbabwe* (Mucherera 2001). Mucherera identifies the existence of deep psychological and spiritual scars needing healing within his formerly colonized Zimbabwean compatriots. Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon’s answer to the scars of colonization was a call to Africans to recover their history and reassert their identity, dignity, and culture (Fanon 1990). Mucherera, as had Lartey before him, called for pastoral caregivers with “integrative consciousness” (Mucher-

\(^3\) For a detailed summary of the most trenchant critiques see Moore-Gilbert (1997, 5–33).
era, 2001, 175) by which he meant caregivers who understood both the traditional African and the western worldview and able to integrate these in treatment modalities.

Mucherera’s second monograph *Meet me at the Palaver* (2009) in true postcolonial vein, lifts up a tried and tested ancient African approach to communal conflict management and education – the village gatherings referred to as ‘palavers’ – and demonstrates how African wisdom operates more adequately in dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic plaguing the continent than individualistic Western logocentric approaches. Drawing on holistic communal narratives and oral story-telling modes of communication Mucherera takes seriously African attention to spirit, body, and mind, in quest for healing of souls.

Pastoral theologians made a significant turn towards the postcolonial in the mid-2000s. The *Journal of Pastoral Theology* has in recent years regularly featured articles that represent postcolonializing discourse. The Society of Pastoral Theology’s 2007 annual study conference held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, had as its main theme “Doing Pastoral Theology in a Post-Colonial Context.” Articles generated from this conference published in the *Journal of Pastoral Theology* address very squarely the complex and intriguing postcolonial relations within the South, Central and North American context. This conference was itself evidence of the desire on the part of members of the Society for Pastoral Theology, most of whom are US nationals, to engage decidedly in and seek to study long standing postcolonial pastoral theological theories and practices promulgated by Central American peoples. In that issue (2007) of the *Journal of Pastoral Theology* Professor Héctor López-Sierra pointing to the subversive survival skills (la *brega*) and resilience of Hispanic Caribbean religious subjects, speaks of their need to “reinvent ourselves” (López-Sierra 2007, 60). In the midst of the liminality and hybridity of the Hispanic Caribbean lived experience he argues that “one of the results of that *brega* has been to make our myths and customs survive through the subaltern worldviews and practices of popular religions, spirituality, and multiple religious belongings or ‘affiliations’ of the peoples” (López-Sierra 2007, 61). He further points to a postcolonial methodology in which his people

raise an ‘ironic syncretic voice’ that starts with the criticism and deconstruction of Iberian-European and North American hegemonic God-talk and ends by subverting the institutionalized story of ‘official’ Christianity from the hybrid and ‘syncretic rhetoric’ of ‘popular’ religion, spirituality, and contemporary socio-cultural knowledges. (López-Sierra 2007, 61)

As López-Sierra shows Hispanic-Caribbean postcolonializing pastoral theology has been going on “ironically” for a long time. Its two-fold methodology both clear and intriguing is as follows:
Criticize, deconstruct, and subvert the Iberian-European and North American hegemonic God-talk

Utilize “the hybrid and syncretic rhetoric of official Christian ecclesial establishment discourse and tradition, ‘popular’ religion and spirituality, and contemporary psycho-socio-cultural knowledge.” (López-Sierra 2007, 77)

Such deconstructive and constructive strategies are present in all forms of postcolonial pastoral theology and pastoral care.

Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology was published in 2013 in which I explore historic examples of postcolonializing activities undertaken by different leaders of colonized and formerly colonized peoples. These activities are discernible, if latent, in much of African Indigenous (independent) Christianity and latterly more so in the religious pluralism that is evident in the growth of mystical and interreligious movements on the African continent and in the diaspora. In direct reference to pastoral care, I raise the centrality of spirituality, the crucial function of building healthy communities and the transformation of cultures that continue to be key goals of postcolonial pastoral practice, about which more will be found later in this chapter. That same year Melinda McGarrah Sharp offered a work based on her experience as a Peace Corp volunteer in Suriname, South America. Titled Misunderstanding Stories: Towards a postcolonial pastoral theology (McGarrah Sharp 2013). Sharp addresses a very real challenge embedded in encounters across cultures unexplored in earlier works, namely misunderstandings and conflicts. Drawing thoughtfully on resources from pastoral theology, ethnography, and postcolonial studies she provides a valuable resource for relating across cultural difference especially where conflict and misunderstanding rises to the fore. An important methodological recognition that is common to both Mucherera with reference to Zimbabwe (East Africa) and Sharp in reference to Surinam (South America) is the pursuit and exploration of narrative as a significant analytic category highly valued within the subjugated knowledge repertoire and practice of colonized people across the world.

In the terms of methodologies of pastoral theological research and engagement with the agency of post-colonial subjects, Hee-Kyu Heidi Park demonstrates the twofold action of postcolonial criticism in first, unearthing the epistemological assumptions and reductive essentializing tendencies in phenomenology, and second, in constructive mode, drawing on feminist standpoint theory, indigenous research and postcolonial theories to propose “a pastoral theological phenomenology that allows the postcolonial person, as a person characterized by hybridity and mimicry, to reflect on the power dynamic within the self and to stand on the bracket as his or her standpoint.” (Park 2014, 3–14) Postcolonial critical studies make room for the complexity of postcolonial experience to find both authentic standpoint and voice at the table.

In a similar postcolonial turn Congolese American pastoral theologian Fulgence Nyengele engages in what is a third feature of postcolonial study, namely the articulation and enhancement of subjugated knowledge. Nyengele lifts up subjugated knowledge in the form of the Southern African Zulu concept of Ubuntu bringing it
in critical dialogue with the recently articulated discipline of positive psychology “to recover African ancestral wisdom and put it to the positive service of the world” (Nyengele 2014, 4–28). A significant recent example of this turn to subjugated knowledge and to Ubuntu precisely in the field of Practical Theology was the 2015 International Academy of Practical Theology’s conference which was held in Pretoria, South Africa. Twenty-two thoughtful papers from the conference containing reflections on Ubuntu as it relates to justice, personhood and human dignity in Southern Africa as well as across the globe are contained in the book titled, Practicing Ubuntu: Practical Theological perspectives on Injustice, Personhood and Human Dignity (Dreyer et al. 2017).

Korean American theologian Hee-An Choi in A Postcolonial Self: Korean Immigrant Theology and the Church (2016) extends postcolonial discourse into the realm of the experience of minorities within the US western colonial metropolis. As Sugirtharajah, following Madsen argues, “since a sense of commonality runs through the writings of the Third World and American minority writers based on experience of ‘imperial domination, cultural catastrophe, genocide, and erasure’ (Madsen 1999, 11) there is no justification for excluding their texts” (Sugirtharajah 2002, 35) from considerations of postcolonial discourse. Choi explores how Korean immigrants work to create a different identity in response to life in the United States. She discusses how a Korean ethnic self differs from Western norms. She then examines theological debates over the concept of the independent self, and the impact of racism, sexism, classism, and postcolonialism on the formation of this self. The book concludes with a look at how Korean immigrants, especially immigrant women, cope with the transition to a US culture which includes prejudice and discrimination, and the role the Korean immigrant church plays in this. Choi’s work provides an illuminating analysis of postcolonial Korean experience and acts as a resource for postcolonial Asian American pastoral care and counseling.

Postcolonial Practice of Ministry: Leadership, Liturgy and Interfaith Engagement edited by systematic theologian Kwok-Pui Lan and pastoral theologian Stephen Burns (2016), a ground-breaking text exploring various aspects of practical theology and ministry through postcolonial lenses, was published in 2016. This comprehensive collection of essays, international in scope, covers the various disciplines of practical theology and includes chapters on the “Dynamics of Interfaith Collaborations in Postcolonial Asia” (Tan 2016), “Womanist Interfaith Dialogue: Inter, Intra, and All the Spaces in Between” (Harris 2016), “Table Habits, Liturgical Pela, and Displacing Conversation” (Jagessar 2016), and “Church Music in Postcolonial Liturgical Celebration” (Lim 2016). The first section of the book, headed, “Pastoral Leadership” contains illuminating pastoral theological articles by Emmanuel Lartey, Melinda Sharp, Mona West, and Stephanie Mitchem, all engaging in postcolonial critical discourse in the arena of the spiritual care of individuals and communities.
4 Themes in Postcolonial Practical Theology

In terms of postcolonial practical theology, three main thematic issues are discernible. These are
- Voice
- Epistemology
- Praxis

4.1 Voice: Can the Subaltern Speak?

Spivak’s poignant question⁴ draws attention to the complex realities of the silencing and the silence of the economically dispossessed. The issue clearly is not simply the physical ability of the subaltern to speak but rather whether they are given the space or the permission to voice their own views or whether western intellectuals will be the only ones permitted to speak on behalf of the dispossessed and colonized. In postcolonial practical theological discourse four types of speaking by the formerly colonized are recognized and discussed. These are mimicry, improvisation, innovation, and polyvocality. An intriguing example of all these ways of speaking, or perhaps ‘seeing’ (to use the framing vision – ‘opting for an optic’ – adopted in the book) is contained in the text Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives, co-authored by Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns (2014). Jagessar and Burns provocatively describe their book as offering “an unsystematic, fragmentary, piecemeal and unfinished – and yet for us challenging, unsettling, exciting and rewarding – shared insight into numerous and ongoing conversations about the shape, style and future of Christian worship.” (Jagessar and Burns 2014, x) They write “for participants and presiders in Christian worship, to invite questions, directions and consideration of how liturgical theology and practice needs in certain respects, in different situations, to be chastened, expanded and re-visioned in conversation with postcolonial perspectives.” (Jagessar and Burns 2014, xi) Postcolonial perspectives and practices of imitation, improvisation, creativity, and polyvocality are clearly in evidence in liturgical theology and practice.

4.1.1 Imitation

*Imitation* (Homi Bhabha’s ‘mimicry’) in which the colonized speaks in the very form and ‘voice’ of the oppressor, in my experience is adopted as a strategy to fulfil different objectives. Being able to reproduce the colonizer’s speech ‘to the letter’ convinces

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⁴ Spivak’s oft-quoted essay with the title, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” was first published in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg’s *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988).
the colonizer that the colonized, far from being incapable, incompetent, or even sub-
human, actually possesses all the capabilities of the colonizer. However, as Bhabha
argues, mimicry because it always contains an element of mockery, remains menac-
ing to the colonizer always causing uncertainty as to what the colonized is actually
trying to convey, and ominously suggesting that the colonized may actually have had
an edge over the colonizer (Bhabha 1984, 86). The colonized can ‘play the oppressor’s
part’. Mimicry as a strategy for the subversion and overthrow of colonialism has be-
come a post-colonial way of life, that at times far exceeds even the practice during
the colonial period. In Africa we are left especially in the churches with the repetition
of the doctrines and negative attitudes of the colonizers towards all things African to
the detriment and neglect of these rich traditions. Many of the traumas suffered by
persons of African descent result from inauthentic imitation of the discourse and be-
belief patterns foisted upon Africans during colonization. Mimicry as a postcolonializ-
ing strategy needs reconsideration for its potential to subvert the crucial tasks of re-
covery and uncovering of subjugated knowledge can render it counter-productive.
Mimicry functions as a defense mechanism needed for the protection of vulnerable
souls yet often masking the painful reality of inauthentic existence. Pastoral caregiv-
ers and counselors seek to promote the authentic selfhood of clients and parishion-
ers. In this task though they often have to plough on through and work with the sub-
tilities and defenses of mimicry.

4.1.2 Improvisation

In improvisation persons utilize whatever they can find at hand to make the most of
an inadequate situation. Improvisation is the creed of the slave, the colonized, the
un-free, who must make the most of whatever they can lay their hands on or have
access to. The colonized, slaves, and people kept under domination have used in-
credible skills to improvise. Improvisation is the art of survival. Improvisation is
the ‘muddling through’ that is the lived experience of so many former colonized peo-
ple. Improvisation in music, art and literature bears witness to the ingenuity and so-
cial fortitude of the oppressed. In terms of the colonial experience, it seems to me
that the colonized and especially the enslaved utilized improvisation to good effect
as a survival strategy. As the need arose for the formulation of ceremonies at times
especially of gathering, slaves no doubt used whatever was at hand, and whatever
they could call to memory in the crafting of rituals of encouragement, memorial,
and renewal. With limited resources of education in the languages of the colonizer,
the colonized were still able, as for instance in the establishment of Independent In-
digenous churches on the African continent and in the Caribbean and elsewhere,
Black churches and other Black spiritual movements, to form social institutions
that resembled those of the colonizers whilst infusing them with the philosophies
and cultural content of their African heritage.
Improvisation as a colonial and post-colonial activity differs from mimicry in that it includes substantial content from the cultural heritage of the colonized. As a postcolonializing exercise improvisation goes much further than imitation. It entails a degree of independence and unconcern with the gaze of the colonizer. In the early days of slavery it happened mostly away from that gaze. In colonialism it took place decidedly in contexts in which the influence of colonizers was very limited. Thus, improvisation became a significant strategy of the free in which their dignity and capabilities were expressed and endorsed from within themselves and their own communities. Improvisation continues to be a significant postcolonializing activity, but that of those whose resources in both colonial and indigenous terms, are limited. So long as access and opportunity remain limited improvisation will continue to be an important feature of the postcolonial discourse in practical theology.

4.1.3 Creativity

In creativity the colonized have great facility in both their own arts and those of the colonizer. The creative person has inner freedom that is borne of confidence in different spheres and fields of knowledge. Mucherera referred to this as ‘integrative consciousness’ (2001). Such confidence comes from a variety of sources. The creative person is neither afraid of the sanctions of an authority nor has anxiety at the gaze of any legitimizing forerunner. Creativity is what postcolonial pastoral theology craves and calls for. Innovation is the language of postcolonial practical theologians that have attained maturity. Postcolonial practical theologians are increasingly finding their own authentic voice and are thus more able to make substantial contributions to the disciplines and practices of practical theology. They call for and produce new forms of being, institutions and practices. They weave together disparate materials into innovative forms and practices. Moving beyond improvisation which implies utilizing the leftovers and whatever is available in and from the colonial project in the formulation of structures that implicitly are temporary, creativity requires the generation and utilization of new practices, methods and material in the development and promotion of substantially different forms of activity that go beyond the status quo inherited or established as standard by colonizers. This is what Héctor López-Sierra has referred to as “reinventing of self” (López-Sierra, 2007, 60).

4.1.4 Polyvocality

Postcolonial practical theologians recognize, operate out of and highly value polyvocality. They recognize and encourage many voices to speak and be heard on the subjects under consideration. Never satisfied with solely one perspective on any subject, the postcolonial pastoral theologian actively seeks out voices other than their own, especially submerged, ignored or rejected voices, to be invited to the table, and there
to articulate their own authentic voice. Subjugated voices with submerged often despised knowledge are given room at the postcolonial table. Educated, middle-class, liberal, progressive voices are not the only ones invited to speak. Nor is there an attempt to silence the speech of the uneducated, differently able, or different. Such recognition and encouragement are vital to the postcolonial project. It is precisely the silencing, suppression, denial, or ignoring of voices because of their difference from the dominant ones, that has led to the need for postcolonial activity.

4.2 Epistemology: How Do we Know What we Know?

Questions such as the following are being addressed. What specifically do the colonized know and how different is it from western knowledge? What does postcolonial or de-colonial practical knowledge really look like? Four features of postcolonial practical epistemology are apparent.

First, it is recognized that postcolonial activities in practical theology need to be counter-hegemonic, insurgent even subversive in nature and character. That is to say that postcolonial practical theology operates out of a counter-hegemonic epistemology. Such ways of knowledge by their very nature call into question hierarchy, dominance, and hegemony in human relations. Where patterns of dominance have solidified into oppressive structures that stifle or threaten to squeeze the life out of clients, postcolonial pastoral theologians actively support insurgency and may be deemed subversive by the powers that be. They essentially problematize, disrupt, and attempt to subvert dominant structures with a view to the establishment of more equable relations between and amongst people. Through recognition of domestication on the part of many who suffered the brutal suppression and selective valorizing processes of colonialism, and of the nature of domesticated discourse, it is possible to discern counter-hegemonic patterns and strategies sometimes deeply embedded within domesticated discourse. It is also possible to recognize more overt forms of counter-hegemonic activities in which existing structures are being torn down.

Second, postcolonial practical theology is politically strategic. In other words, it brings into critical focus the dialogical nature of relations between theory and practice, and results in actions with transformative intent in the world. I have described this kind of knowledge in line with liberation theologians as “praxiological or practical-and-theoretical with an action-for-change orientation.” (Lartey 2013, xvi) The kind of knowing referred to here is knowledge gained through action. An example of this that is being utilized in pastoral care and liturgical reform is dance and rhythmic movement. Drawing upon ethnographic research I have engaged in with African religious healers, elaborated on in a chapter titled, “Knowing through Moving: African Embodied Epistemologies”, I write about African embodied ways of knowing self, other and God. With reference to the Anlo-Ewe people of South-East Ghana and Togo, I explain how “proprioception, the term used to describe the sensory information that contributes to the sense of position of self and movement, seems to mark
the key to human ontology and epistemology in African traditional and African Diasporan religious practice” (Lartey 2016, 102). As I listened intensely and participated in the rituals and practices of African religious practitioners, what has been fascinating for me is that in place of a logo-centric, word-based theory from which is derived particular healing and care practices, African priest healers seem to know through a different means, one more bodily, more incarnational, and especially more kinesthetic. Movement, rhythm, and dance are for them powerful symbols and signals that are cathartic in themselves and also convey important messages that can assist in calling the desired states of being into existence.

Third, postcolonial practical knowledge recognizes its hybridity and participation in multi-dimensional discourses and practices. Such knowledge is intrinsically variegated and plural. Diversity is a hallmark, characteristic feature, and desired end of postcolonial practical theological processes. As such they are messy, (Jagessar and Burns’s ‘unsystematic’) in that they question and disrupt sharp and clear boundaries between materials, recognizing the often-arbitrary lines of demarcation that are drawn, and calling for attention to complexity and metissage in the approach to all matters. Sharp demarcations and neat contents are not to be found in postcolonializing discourse and practices. They are therefore also and always ambiguous and at times contradictory, full of contestation and controversy, wary of over-privileging any one form over all others.

Fourth, postcolonial practical theology is dynamic in nature. Epistemological dynamism recognizes that issues are in a constant state of change and flux. As such postcolonial practical theologians attempt to engage in analyses that reflect time, change and movement. Analyzing moving structures can be daunting. However, recognizing that social reality is inevitably fluid is a sign of maturity not to be rejected.

4.3 Praxis: What Does Practical Theology Look Like When it Is Informed by Postcolonial Theory and Practice?

Postcolonial practical theology is definitely oriented towards the ‘action’ dimension of the ‘action-reflection’ couplet characteristic of practical theological discourse. Postcolonial practical theologians are wary of discourse that ends with an aesthetically pleasing statement that may not realistically change anything on the ground. They are suspicious of theoretical abstractions that leave power imbalances and inequalities in the distribution of goods, services, and materials intact in the real world. In this regard the praxis-orientation of Liberation Theology continues to be attractive across postcolonial practical theological disciplines. To this end, postcolonial practical theologians recognize the importance of and work towards transformation of communities.
4.3.1 Building Healthy Community

Whereas colonial models of pastoral care and counseling tend to focus upon individuals and their intro-psychic processes, postcolonial pastoral care and counseling emphasizes the deeply *interactional, interpersonal, and intersubjective* nature of the human persons. Postcolonial pastoral theologians emphasize the social and global nature of all phenomena and encourage approaches to subjects that engage interactively with all people’s experience in the discourse on any subject. Put in another way, postcolonial practical theologians tend to engage analytically and relationally with the agents as well as the practices they wish to critique and transform. Relationality is valued especially when it is set within an ethical framework of equality and respect.

Postcolonial pastoral care ultimately is about community building. A central motivation for postcolonial approaches to pastoral care is a communal relational one. One of the downsides of the drive for the autonomous, self-directed, personally morally responsible, rational, logic-centered individual envisaged and imposed by the westernizing colonial social agents was the loss of community and the socially and relationally integrated persons that traditional African morals upheld. This is not an argument for one to replace the other which sadly was the effect of colonialism. Had there been a greater respect for the communal values of the colonized a better balance would have been sought between the rugged rational individual and the socially responsible communal person. Postcolonial pastoral counseling is directed at the fostering of communities within which acts of care and counseling have meaning and significance, and within which persons may thrive as individuals as well as participants in relational networks to which they may contribute. Pastoral practices and pastoral counseling are the natural outflow of these communities of care. Healthy communities – like healthy families – produce healthy people. Individuals who receive excellent pastoral counseling and whose inner lives are repaired only to return into unwholesome social circumstances will soon be re-infected and need to return for individual therapy. It is the growth of healthy societies that will lead to the stabilization of healthy persons. An individual cannot be well in a society that is toxic and that allows illness to fester. As such there is the need for attention both to the care of individuals and the care of communities if there is to be an encompassing delivery of health.

The aim of postcolonial pastoral care is the cultivation of communal spaces in which all people can be safe, nurtured and empowered to grow. The focus on individual therapy to the exclusion of communal care follows the pattern of an ineffectual colonialism. Postcolonial pastoral care sets individual therapy within a community building paradigm that privileges the growth of persons as social beings and communal participants who seek the well-being of total groups. Pastoral care givers by virtue of their recognition of the importance of communal space and communal resources will be in the forefront of the struggle for safety in community. They seek to establish and often transform ecclesial spaces into places of safety for all persons at
risk of molestation, violence, discriminatory or oppressive practices of any sort. This frequently means a keen eye for potential danger evident in the social climate. Aware of the fact that societies can be manipulated and mobilized in ways that are oppressive of minority groups, they keep alert to social and public policy making processes for any hints of legislation that could prove harmful to certain groups. They mobilize resources for the provision of safe houses for women at risk of violence, and the staffing of such premises with suitably trained personnel. They engage in the political processes of the communities in which they work and often advocate in the interest of disadvantaged and marginalized groups. This means that a crucial part of the post-colonial pastoral care giver’s art is listening for the voices of the marginalized of whatever kind. Such voices are frequently very loud by their absence. So pastoral care givers will be attuned to the voices of the silenced and the silence of the voiceless. Pastoral care giving includes advocacy for social justice. And pastoral care givers do not shy away from participating in and engaging the political process in the interest of the creation of humane communities. The goal of pastoral care is always the creation of healthy communities in which all persons can live humane lives. Human dignity is premised upon social institutions and processes of nurture and growth.

4.3.2 Transforming Cultures: It Takes the Whole World

Postcolonial pastoral care has ultimately to do with the transformation of cultures. Postcolonial pastoral theologians see pastoral care, when it is fulfilling its true vocation, as functioning as a liberating human activity, in line with divine activity. As such it aims at changing underlying assumptions about human communities, about divine presence and activity, and about human well-being. Accordingly, post-colonial pastoral care aims not merely at the personal transformation of individuals, but rather at changing the total ecology of the world, the nature of relations between and amongst peoples. Communities, and therefore individuals, are set within cultures. Whole cultures can promote and maintain healthy communities which in turn nurture individuals who are well. Cultures, in which the signs, symbols, tendencies, ideologies and covert assumptions are disrespectful of human persons and death-dealing, cannot produce healthy communities. Communities that result from the postcolonial pastoral care activities and practices referred to do bear the hallmarks and characteristics of health, safety, and human dignity, interpersonal, communal, and inter-communal well-being.

5 Conclusion

Postcolonial practical theologians are charting a path in their different disciplines in which the upliftment of the forgotten, denied, suppressed, marginalized, and subju-
gated is front and center. Their aim is not merely to supplant or replace western forms of the disciplines but rather to be authentic partnering voices in what needs to be a global phenomenon in which voices from throughout the world are able to contribute their wisdom and where such contributions are valued and respected. Postcolonial practical theology operates under a vision of empowered communities of the oppressed former colonialized peoples of this world. This vision of global responsibility inspires postcolonial theorists and practitioners to recover subjugated knowledge and to revalue silenced people. The table can be enriched. The practical theological disciplines can be more relevant to a world that is diverse and polyvalent, not by a one-size-fits-all monolithic endeavor but instead by a polyvocal, communal, respectful practice of the care of persons.

Bibliography


