The Rev. Robert S. Heaney, Ph.D., D. Phil., Director of the Center for Anglican Communion Studies and Assistant Professor of Christian Mission, at Virginia Theological Seminary, recommends the following books as part of the Bishop Payne Library’s monthly series highlighting a faculty member’s “picks”:


Jonathan S. Barnes is Executive of Mission Interpretation for Global Ministries and in *Power and Partnership* he addresses the problematic relationship between power and Christian mission seen through the lens of “partnership”. The term has been seen by some as evidence of a continuation of colonial power relations (related to the concept and practice of “trusteeship”). For that reason, Barnes compares the adoption and use of the term not only in missionary and ecumenical relations but also in political and imperial relations. The colonial heritage of the term is faced by Barnes and in doing so he, on the whole, succeeds in avoiding a dualistic analysis where readers are forced either to see partnership as a wholly colonial practice or a “pure” Gospel practice. Rather, he argues that it was a contested term and practice and continues to be a contested term and practice.

From the history of the ecumenical movement Barnes identifies four themes that forestall mutuality. These are the themes of the home base, humanitarianism and development, authority (especially in relation to finance), and disparity between rhetoric and reality. While he is interested in historical analysis that does not mean there are not lessons for how Christians today participate in mission and participate in cross-cultural partnerships. Indeed, to study the history of the modern missionary movement(s) through the lens of “partnership” is a particular potent means to bridging the past with the present. For while those of us in the rich North seek to participate more deeply in the mission of God there is ever the danger that we simply participate more deeply in the paternalisms of our forebears. It is a danger we face each day even if we never venture much further than our front yard. There is always the danger of doing theology that simply justifies our views and our traditions. There is always the danger of thinking about mission in expansionist terms. There is always the danger that as the world around us becomes more pluralist and more religiously diverse we fail to read, do, and be formed by cross-cultural theologizing. Of course we mean well. But that is not enough.

This book is a substantial and significant text well worth engaging with as it will, hopefully, result in us seeking to tone down our talk or up our game. My hesitation about making it central to a syllabus is that for all its merits it is another study on the discourses of the global North when what we need more urgently are voices that continue to interrupt those discourses.


Emmanuel Yartegwei Amugi Lartey is the Professor of Pastoral Theology, Care and Counseling at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta and he provides in this text what might be an introduction to postcolonial Theology. At the very least, this is a book written by someone able to speak to the issues from a particularly pertinent perspective.
For Lartey, postcolonialism is about postcolonizing our vision of God. To have a postcolonial vision of God is to have a vision of God decolonizing, diversifying and (re)creating counter-hegemonic social conditions (p.xiii). From that vision of God a particular way of participating in the mission of God emerges. In large part, this short book begins to define what postcolonizing practice looks like. Thus, Lartey begins with God’s commitment to (re)creating diversity through (re)readings of the biblical text; he unearths postcolonizing practice in African American spirituality; grounds it in an example of postcolonizing healing and reconciliation ritual and through an analysis of Ghanaian participation in God’s mission; he explores the need and possibility of postcolonizing pastoral care that redresses reductionist approaches to care.

Lartey wants to bring to the fore the postcolonial experiences of Africa and contend for the particular significance that those experiences might bring to the practice of postcolonial theology. Given the brevity of the book he does point to how this might be done. He does not provide, however, a thorough post-colonial framework to enable readers to identify what it is to do post-colonial theology and what it is to read from that perspective. While referencing post-colonial criticism and theology he tends to reduce the potency of such analysis through, for example, almost reducing hybridity to diversity. The idea of post-colonizing the doctrine of God is sound though he does not see the potency in, for example, Christological/divine kenosis. Lartey is correct. “The new creation is to be a postcolonial reality.” (p.14) That is the mission of God and Lartey’s book begins to point us to that end. This book is but a beginning. Much more needs to be said. Much more needs to be done.


The is a collection of essays by a collection of scholars involved in teaching and researching issues in interreligious dialogue, film, writing, culture, history, magic, Anglicanism, ethics, social/political philosophy, physics, biblical studies, popular culture, English, law, technology, literature, phenomenology and theological anthropology. It is possible that only one person could bring so disparate a group of thinkers together and that person is The Doctor.

Doctor Who is a travelling alien time lord who, originally, was based on another traveler – St. Paul. Dr. Who may or may not have a mission, may or may not know what he’s doing or where he’s going but often does what he does with an ebullience, wit and pathos that might only be associated with a BBC production. A production that, by the way, is the longest running science fiction show in the world and is thus older than Star Trek! For a six minute summary of Doctor Who see www.youtube.com/watch?v=szHO-wEmvio

There are nineteen chapters in this collection addressing the religious, theological and even missiological themes present in the universes of Doctor Who. To the uninitiated this may all be rather overwhelming. Nonetheless, it is a volume worth the effort as the authors grapple with a character who may or may not be a Messiah figure but who does struggle to make good ethical decisions, dodges death, saves humanity again and again, and is always to prepared to give his life so that the most unlikely of species may live.