

Sarah Travis. *Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014. 158 pages. \$ 22.00.

The colonial period ended long ago, but the impact of colonialism and imperialism persists in a new guise. Ongoing effects of colonialism/imperialism continue to shape a post-colonial world order and the lives of those who live in this post-colonial reality. Embedded colonizing discourses continue to guide the daily life of people and shape the personal and social identities of preachers and listeners. Postcolonial reality is not a neutral context for preaching, but rather it raises critical questions for preachers and the task of preaching. In *Decolonizing Preaching*, Sarah Travis critically examines the post-colonial world, colonizing discourses, and their implications for the practice of preaching. She then proposes a new imaginative vision of postcolonial preaching through a critical dialogue with postcolonial theories and the social doctrine of the Trinity.

This book is comprised of three parts: “The Omnipresence of Empire,” “Developing an Alternative Discourse,” and “A Toolbox for Decolonizing Preaching.” Part one provides a comprehensive overview of colonial/imperial history and contemporary post-colonial setting in North America along with its implications for preaching. The author argues that colonialism/imperialism is in essence a relational system. Although relationships between the colonizers and the colonized have been complex, ambiguous, and multifaceted, colonizing discourses seek to maintain a fixed boundary between center/the colonizer and margins/the colonized in order to assert western superiority over others. (23) This destructive discourse of power and relationships still impacts our local and global relationships in the postcolonial world. It also shapes the current context for preaching. Preaching is always done in the midst of empire. Preachers must find a way to overcome the pervasive impact of colonizing discourses on the church, listeners and the practice of preaching. Decolonizing preaching seeks to transform congregations’ collective worldview, ethics and identity by envisioning and proclaiming a new world based on God’s own nature and God’s intention for all humanity. (48)

Part two examines postcolonial theories and Trinitarian theology as resources for decolonizing preaching and an alternative discourse of relationships and identity. The author searches for a new foundation of human community and human relationship in the image of God. While colonizing discourses are about domination, separation, homogeneity, and closed system, the social doctrine of the Trinity provides God’s image that is “non-hierarchical, relational, differentiated, and open to creation.” (55) In response to colonizing discourses, the Social Trinity not only serves as a new bedrock for human community and relationship for Christians, but also effectively deconstructs colonizing discourses. In the second section of part two, the author introduces the central concepts of postcolonial theory such as ambivalence, hybridity and Third Space for preachers. This concise introduction to postcolonial theory equips preachers with these useful tools for decolonizing preaching.

Part Three offers practical and homiletical strategies for decolonizing preaching. The author creatively synthesizes postcolonial theory, postcolonial biblical hermeneutics, and a social doctrine of Trinity for the aid of the practice of preaching. The author contends that the Trinity is the theological ground for postcolonial preaching. Preaching is always done in the perichoretic

space of the Trinity, which creates a Third Space in which rigid boundaries are blurred, identities and relationships negotiated, and hybridity permitted. (128) In other words, preaching in the perichoretic space creates a space in which Christian self-understanding and understanding of others are formed and reformed through complex interactions, and other-oriented and fluid communal identities are forged on the basis of the divine nature of the Trinity. The practice of preaching nurtures this distinctive but radically open Christian identities by inviting listeners to the Triune God's mission of reconciliation and healing.

Although this book is primarily intended for middle class North Americans of European origin, (5) it is a valuable resource for Asian American preachers as well. This book provides a comprehensive description of postcolonial history and context, theoretical and theological frameworks to engage with the postcolonial reality, and homiletical tools for decolonizing preaching. Regardless of their social locations and ethnicity, preachers will enormously benefit from this work which uncovers a complex postcolonial context for preaching. This book is a thoughtful guide for preachers who seek/aim to understand the uncharted territory of the postcolonial world and proclaim the gospel in the midst of empire.

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