

Travis, Sarah. *Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014. 168 pages. \$20.

Postcolonial theory is a relatively new addition to radical critical theory. Stemming from literary studies, this theory is now analyzing the postcolonial condition from different political, sociological and anthropological standpoints. Given its congruency with—and even contributions to—racial-ethnic, political, and Third-World theologies, it was a matter of time before someone would tackle the task of developing a postcolonial homiletic.

Sarah Travis, a Canadian scholar, is the author of this important contribution to the study of preaching, penning the first book dedicated solely to the development of a homiletic in a postcolonial key. *Decolonizing Preaching: The Pulpit as Postcolonial Space* is the title of this volume, appearing in the Lloyd John Ogilvie Institute of Preaching Series.

The aim of the book is to foster a conversation between “colonized and colonizing persons” (6) in order to “recognize and interrupt colonizing discourses and to uncover embedded colonial/imperial assumptions that guide daily life” (4). The main idea is: “Preaching is a means of decolonizing relationships within the church and beyond the church. To preach the good news of God’s kingdom is to speak a resounding ‘no’ to discourses that seek to dominate, separate, and homogenize others” (5).

The book contains an introduction plus seven chapters divided in three parts. The first part is titled “The Omnipresence of Empire.” This section contains two chapters: “Coming to Terms with Empire” and “The Challenge of Preaching in the Midst of Empire.” Travis describes the effort of coming to terms with the colonial heritage of the church as the “most most heart-wrenching task” (7).

The second section of the book, titled “Developing an Alternative Discourse” also contains two chapters: “A Theological Response to Empire” and “Postcolonial Theory for Preachers.” In many ways, this section is the heart of the book, given that in the third chapter the author advances her main idea: “The Trinity, then, provides a theological foundation and practical instruction for the goal of decolonizing preaching” (8). The fourth chapter equips the reader to negotiate the complex terrain of postcolonial theory, introducing all the major theorists in a concise and understandable way.

The third and last part of the book, “A Toolbox for Decolonizing Preaching,” includes three chapters: “Preaching with a Postcolonial Imagination,” “Rereading Scripture: Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation,” and “Preaching in Postcolonial Embrace.” The last chapter functions as the conclusion for the whole book, reiterating Travis’ main idea.

In general, *Decolonizing Preaching* is a solid introduction to a very complex topic, a “must-read” for any scholar interested in preaching in the twenty-first century. In particular, it is a key resource for all racial-ethnic scholars in the field of homiletics living, teaching, and preaching in the United States and Canada.

The “elephant in the room” is that Travis is Anglo. The problem is that Travis constantly reminds the reader that she does not belong to any group traditionally identified as “colonized,” but that she is a descendant of the “colonizers.” At times, as when she describes her first trip to India, Travis even sounds apologetic, as if she had no right to explore postcolonial preaching.

I challenge her perspective by rejecting this binary approach to postcolonial theory. The fact is that the Americas, as a whole, have a colonial heritage. Even those nations who eventually rose to power, such as the United States and Canada, began their contemporary history as colonies of Great Britain. Canada, in particular, has had a long and complex colonial and

neocolonial relationship with England. Therefore, I challenge Travis' self-assessment and affirm that she is as "colonized" as any of us.

It is precisely that stress in the binary relationship between the colonized and the colonizer that leads the book to overlook an important trait of our postcolonial condition. The constant growth of racial-ethnic communities in Europe, the United States, and Canada is dramatically transforming the former colonial powers. Of course, those "minority communities" arrived to the so-called "First World" due to colonialism and imperialism. I think that this is a crucial topic for both the church and society at large in the twenty-first century.

Finally, the book has no sample sermons, developed or preached in a postcolonial key. The inclusion of some homiletic outlines and manuscripts is crucial to any book on homiletics, particularly to one that seeks to give voice to the voiceless.

In spite of these constructive criticisms, *Decolonizing Preaching* is a crucial contribution to contemporary homiletic theory. This is a book that you must acquire, read, and wrestle with right now.

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