

André Resner. *Living In-Between: Lament, Justice, and the Persistence of the Gospel*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015. 132 pages. \$18.

The apocalyptic construal of gospel situates every Christian community in the gap between Christ's first coming and second coming, promise and its fulfillment (already and not-yet), so waiting for the latter with hope and faith. However, its existential reality is under the influence of the struggle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness, thus full of suffering, pain, loss, and grief in the community and the larger world. These realities bring about many theological questions about experiences that sometimes remain unsatisfactorily explained or even unaddressed. What and how should we as preachers speak to those who are crying, groaning, and sighing? In his honest struggle with these issues, Resner, drawing on his own perspective on prophetic preaching and the apocalyptic gospel, provides us with his brilliant and insightful meditations, reflections, and essays collected in this book *Living-In-Between: Lament, Justice, and the Persistence of the Gospel*.

This book is comprised of two main parts with four articles each. They deal with multiple means of speaking to the community and the world: 1) faithful lament, 2) unmasking the powers of evil in church and world, 3) establishing justice for the least of these among us, and 4) standing up to proclaim the truth of a Kingdom (8). The first part mostly relates to the task of preaching as *lament* for the sake of *strengthening* individuals and communities in the midst of suffering. The author acknowledges that unlike the modern age, when persuasive and often manipulative discourses prevailed, our postmodern age requires different forms of discourses. Therefore, he unearths one of the most significant but relatively hidden discourses, that is, lament as a form of proclamation. Reflecting on several Bible passages, Resner vividly illuminates lament from various angles. The author first asserts that the language of lament is honest language in the face of suffering, loss, and grief, to do the work of God in the world (18). Preachers are called to become *weeping* prophets to give a voice to people's tears, anger, hope, and expectation, living in the gap between painful experience and hopeful promise (28). However, preachers as weeping prophets should be cautious not to hope and expect for things that the gospel never promised. Rather, they are commissioned to see what God sees and recalibrate their hopes and expectations accordingly, putting the loss and grief within a new frame of perspective (36). Resner also suggests that preachers should cooperate and persist with the Holy Spirit in face of all creation's in-between-time predicament by crying, groaning, sighing, and breathing as different forms of lament (43).

The second part of this book explains our task of preaching as *justice-making and justice-keeping*, in alignment with God's predilection for justice, for the sake of *changing* the world as God's creation. While interpreting Bible passages through the lens of justice, the author asserts that preachers are called to become *protesting* prophets as well. Preachers need to be equipped with two crucial components of prophetic preaching: the preacher's working gospel and the hermeneutic of suspicion (or first naïveté-critical period-second naïveté) to see things differently (à la Tracy, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Heschel). In other words, every engagement with text and context should be done through the lens of the hermeneutic of suspicion, namely, a prophetic interpretive approach that trusts God is present, has not abandoned us, and is working toward ultimate justice and righteousness (66). In this sense, it is important to engage in the creative conversation between the preacher's working gospel, the biblical text, and the concrete situation (72). Resner then describes four possible paths for doing so (irony, indirection, soft-sell, and scribal traditioning) and indicates that prophetic preaching will eventually elicit heightened

awareness and possible incremental change (87). In a nutshell, prophetic/just preaching in a mode of lament is a participation in the Spirit's groaning toward redemption, an apocalyptic act to reveal the advent of the New Age, and an act of repentance, humility, and silent solidarity with all those who suffer and are afflicted.

The uniqueness of this book lies in its two-fold structure: lament and justice. At this point, readers may wonder if there is any chapter directly related to the third part of the book's title: *The Persistence of the Gospel*. In fact, it sets the overall tone of this book, which is in itself Resner's confessional response. Thus, the author implicitly provides us with *confession* as another postmodern form of discourse, along with lament. Though this book seems to be roughly organized to modern eyes, it reads as a perfect example of the beautifully harmonized mixture of theory and practice for our postmodern context.

I highly recommend this book for homileticians and preachers alike. Readers will benefit from Resner's embodiment of two modes of prophetic discourse. Moreover, they will gain a new insight by seeing how the author engages the text in each chapter from the perspective of the apocalyptic gospel and re-illuminates them with his fresh readings and interpretations. Indeed, this review reveals only a small portion of his wise, prophetic book. There is much more wisdom yet to be found by any readers who do a close reading of each of its chapters.

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