

David Lose. *Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World—and Our Preaching—Is Changing*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. 112 pages. \$15.91.

David Lose has written a marvelous book of contextual-theological import for preaching. Simultaneously drawing on yet actually refocusing his analysis of the postmodern context from *Confessing Jesus Christ*, Lose succeeds in *Preaching at the Crossroads* in helping preachers to see the ongoing homiletical-theological impact of postmodernity, secularism, and pluralism. Yet the impact of the book goes beyond the refining of preacherly practice; it also engages the laity to take up the theological task of identity construction as well. In this sense, the book portends a conversational vision for doing theology in preaching.

The book is made up of six chapters divided into three parts corresponding to the topics indicated above. The introduction sets the scene: preaching is at a crossroads that requires a careful rethinking of our task theologically and practically. Chapters 1 and 2 are devoted to postmodernism. Here readers conversant with Lose's earlier work will find familiar treatments and themes: we preach where a hegemonic modern world crumbles and a new perspectival, metanarrative-free postmodern world emerges. The response to postmodernism in chapter 2 includes the possibility for reinstituting a kind of operative theological center for the practice of preaching as a humble, yet bold confession—a rehabilitation of an older exegetical notion of *Sachkritik* understood as content—or theological criticism, here at the service of a perspectival, postmodern hermeneutic. Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to secularism. Here, Lose's analysis breaks new ground in that he moves past the impasse of the old secularization thesis. Secularization is specifically a problem for the loss of transcendence, not the sacred in general as attested by our vibrant religious pluralism. Chapter 4 therefore posits a view of preaching that understands itself not offering objective truth but hopeful transcendence *in the midst of ordinary life*—a homiletical vision that includes a renewed sense of vocation and seeing God in the everyday. And yet some of the most original contributions in this work come in final two chapters devoted to pluralism, which Lose sees in largely digital terms. The problem of pluralism is not so much new, but has a new force in the age of the internet. In a time when pluralistic religious options are available in the media as never before, the discretion of the user rather than the duty of the church member becomes key. Preaching must meet such digital pluralism where it is: with a Biblical story, yes, but one offered in a digital-interactive, perhaps even homiletically conversational way.

Lose's work is to be applauded. He has started with his already insightful readings of the postmodern situation and built upon them here in new ways. In the process, his added focus on secularism and pluralism allows him to engage important literature that touches on the rapidly changing Euro-American religious landscape and a new digitally charged pluralism. It means, for the field of homiletics, that culture and media criticism should not merely inform homiletic theory as they often have over the last fifty years, but homiletical theology itself. More importantly, Lose revisits the conversationalist and collaborationist models of homiletics (McClure and Rose in particular) and teases out a vision of postmodern preaching that engages congregations as engaging in a *theological* identity construction and not solely hermeneutical participants.

Of course, there are still important questions to ask of Lose. Sometimes it seems like the radical nature of chapter 2's postmodern Bible is skirted rather than confronted. *Sachkritik*, ironically, might end up occluding the otherness of the *text* in the name of claiming a unified

center (think of the term's Bultmannian source!). Such an approach at the level of Biblical interpretation runs the risk of actually thwarting postmodernism in the name of confessionalism, in the sense that every center runs the risk of merely reinscribing a new margin. An even deeper question would be this: the postmodern move naturally extends to the scriptures themselves, not solely at the level of a plurality of interpretations, but to a more radical *questioning* of a given text's authority. Here, a "center" could be used to avoid wrestling with the very authority issues that have proven so problematic for postmodern critiques of language and power. *Sachkritik* certainly should not simply be a stance by which we shield the Bible itself from criticism and thus import premodern commitments under a postmodern guise.

Even with the above critiques, I strongly recommend the book for preachers and homileticians alike. In fact, I intend to adopt it as a text to help frame my introductory course. Preachers will benefit from Lose's careful integration of context and homiletical theology—especially those who are called to preach along the modern/postmodern boundary that Lose describes with deep pastoral discernment in the final chapter. Teachers of preaching will find a knowledgeable and reliable guide to negotiate the new crossroads that Lose has so carefully sketched: a theological vision of preaching at the intersection of the postmodern age's strangely welcoming secularism and digital pluralism.

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