

David M. Stark. *Preaching That Confronts Confederate Monuments: Religion, Anti-Racism and United States Politics*. Library of Homiletics 2. London and New York: T&T Clark, 2025. 200 pages. \$120.00.

Discussions over the removal of Confederate war monuments are politically and socially complex in the present U.S. context. Not everyone experiences the monuments in the same manner, nor is there common agreement over what Confederate war monuments represent. David M. Stark speaks into this dissonance, convincingly arguing that Confederate monuments preach a distorted gospel and require counter-preaching. Stark's *Preaching That Confronts Confederate Monuments* provides the historical and homiletical direction for proclaiming a gospel that helps respond to the distorted memory and values of Confederate monuments. Stark sees "preaching that confronts Confederate monuments" as "an essential tool for anti-racist work in the United States" (10). Preachers ought to provide a counter-message to Confederate monuments, because otherwise the damaging messages of the monuments prevail.

In the introduction, Stark demonstrates how the messages of the monuments not only misconstrue the past but also shape the present and the future in destructive ways, particularly for those outside of places of power. He calls for more than simply removing the monuments, as removal without deeper interrogation of the systems which created the monuments is insufficient. Removal without critical accountability is akin to covering up the systemic and institutionalized violence and racism they represent. Yet, "When interrogated with a critical and anti-racist perspective, Confederate monuments can provide vital information about the particular anti-racist work that is needed within a local community" (11). Chapter two deepens the argument that Confederate monuments proclaim a gospel of whiteness and promote the values of whiteness. Historical details surrounding the Lost Cause show these monuments as value-laden, steeped in whiteness, and skewing eschatology. The chapter contains descriptions and reflections on two sermons preached in conversation with Confederate monuments, followed by concrete questions and take-aways.

The third chapter examines Confederate monument dedication speeches, especially how these speeches misrepresent the past in relation to the present. Dedication speeches help contemporary listeners understand many of the intents behind those who placed the monument. Many speeches clearly articulate a theology steeped in whiteness which do more than remember historical events. Chapters four and five are case studies of the Silent Sam and Robert E. Lee monuments. These chapters begin with discussions of the dedication speeches and move to counter-proclamation before finishing with insights for preachers. While readers will learn much about these two particular monuments and counter-movements around them, preachers can also learn how to preach on monuments closer to their context with critical engagement. Chapter six engages several naming commissions, including their processes and outcomes. The chapter provides a brief history on naming commissions and includes a discussion of several naming commissions from higher education institutions. Stark describes how various stakeholders experienced and responded to naming commissions. Chapter seven foregrounds decoloniality and students' experiences preaching after visiting The Legacy Museum. Identity and place are prevalent themes in the chapter and the exemplar sermon.

Throughout the book, Stark draws from wells of liberating sources like critical race theory, womanist theology, postcolonial theology, and queer theory to challenge whiteness. While these provide theoretical rigor and prompt theological reflection, I found these intersectional sources especially helpful for deepening the conversation on value laden

monuments. The work is an exemplar for practical theology and homiletics on engaging particular contexts and situational factors.

In addition to providing a convincing argument for why counter-preaching is necessary, Stark offers preachers important direction for how to engage in a process of coming to terms with the presence of Confederate monuments and dominating ideologies. By taking readers through a theological process of interpreting monuments and their function, Stark models how to engage parishioners in a like process sermonically. The discussion of naming commissions may be particularly helpful for preachers to think through how preaching on Confederate monuments might lead to conflict and disagreement among congregational members. Stark offers readers better understandings of the roots of Confederate monuments which should allow preachers to enter the conversation with greater nuance and to engage in good faith conversations. Stark's careful analysis of how place and the past preach, and impact present preaching, is especially needed and profound.

Stark's writing is bold and inspiring without belittling opposing viewpoints. It is accessible to those unfamiliar with his source materials and will deepen understandings of those who have personally or professionally been following national or local debates over Confederate monuments. This is a book for all preachers and for everyone who studies preaching. Even if a church is not located near a monument, Stark reveals that every pulpit in America has a stake in countering the anti-gospel message of Confederate monuments.

Scott Donahue-Martens, Kingswood University, Sussex, NB