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Texts for preaching: a lectionary commentary based on the NRSV, year A

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around the world, but if you are looking for depth and insight beyond the familiar you will need to look elsewhere.

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Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV, Year A

Walter Brueggemann, Charles B. Cousar, Beverly R. Gaventa,
James D. Newsome
Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995
589 pp.

This volume completes the trilogy. *Texts for Preaching Year B* was published in 1993, *Year C* in 1994, by the same authors (although J. Clinton McCann replaced Walter Brueggemann in *Year C*). Among the plethora of lectionary resources, this set is certainly superior, and perhaps even the best.

This third volume continues the pattern of offering exegetical-expositional and thematic resources for preaching and teaching the lectionary texts. Each of the four readings—the Old Testament, the Psalm, the Epistle and Gospel—for each Sunday and important festival, including Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and All Saints, is treated.

A valuable feature is the introduction to each set of readings. It sets out thematic thrusts of the lessons in terms of their interrelationships and, when applicable, the context of that moment in the church year. On occasion these thematic thrusts suggest possible sermonic movements, e.g., Easter Day: "The readings from Ps. 118 and from John 20 honestly face *the reality of death*...Prominent in the texts is the announcement of *God's deliverance from death*...[T]he Easter texts enumerate *several responses to God's deliverance*." These introductions are a great help in unifying the often disparate readings, and open the possibility for occasional homilies which take up three or even four of the lessons. This can be done by way of a common theme, or by allowing each lection to be a phase in a developing theme, or by discovering how each lection is a movement in a narrative-like plot.

The danger of such ambitious sermons, of course, is a thinning of biblical and theological substance. Here the excellent exegetical-expositional treatments of each individual lection are indispensable. The authors are recognized biblical scholars (Brueggemann and Newsome of the OT, Cousar and Gaventa of the NT) and always cognizant of the ultimate homiletical goal of their work.

While we need to be reminded that no lectionary resource (including this one) can substitute for a quality commentary, nevertheless this and its companion volumes are valuable because they are deliberately intended for preaching and teaching, briskly and productively gathering mind and imagination to focus on just this set of lessons at this time of the church year.

As users of the Revised Common Lectionary are aware, each cycle offers in Propers 4 through 29 (the post-Pentecost season) both a set of paired OT-Gospel readings and a set of semicontinuous OT readings. *Texts for Preaching* follows the semicontinuous pattern—which is the pattern adopted both by the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

An index of all the cycle A texts, in biblical order, is included.

In your list of lectionary resources for preaching and teaching, put *Texts for Preaching* at the top!

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Preaching To A Church In Crisis: A Homiletic For The Last Days Of The Mainline Church

John Killinger

Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing Co., 1995

123 pp.

The near-Buttrickian tone of this book's subtitle immediately ignited my interest; as I read the introduction, my imagination was soon captured as well. With ever-increasing anticipation I savoured its description of the "almost unbearable" stresses on clergy and the petty "agitation" rampant among congregational members nowadays, which have meant that "the incidence of clergy breakdowns, resignations, scandals, and firings has risen dramatically in recent years" (9).

My growing sense of hope for relief reached its zenith when I read, "This book is my attempt to say something to [those clergy] who have called or written about their troubles in ministry...and [address] what it is like to preach in times like these" (10). Instantly, I wondered whether this book might prove enlightening to the variously designated Protestant 'curia' currently cloistered around the 'magisterium' of Bibby, Percy & Mead, Inc.!

Following the introduction, the book's three chapters discuss, respectively, the "disintegration" of the church and reasons for it ("The End Of An Era—And The End Of The Mainline"); the "enormous cultural shift" parishioners continue to endure ("The Sensibilities Of The Saints"); and