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# The Days Are Surely Coming; Turning Obstacles into Opportunities (2 books)

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## **The Days Are Surely Coming: Sermons for Advent, Christmas & Epiphany**

Robert A. Hausman

Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing Company, Inc., 1994

109 pp.

## **Turning Obstacles into Opportunities: Sermons For Lent and Easter**

Rodney Thomas Smothers

Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing Company, Inc., 1994

86 pp.

The sermons found in these two books are all based on the First Lesson texts of Cycle C. That fact is about all they have in common.

Hausman's book has many commendable features. Many of the texts are from Isaiah (all from the Hebrew Bible), which I appreciated. I also liked the eucharistic emphasis included in most sermons, although usually it occurred only in the last few paragraphs of the sermon. The sermon on Isaiah's call (Isaiah 6) was well done. His point that our age has lost the sense of awe struck a responsive chord.

There were a few footnotes in what were quite scholarly sermons, and I was frustrated by some unreferenced quotations or specific statements, including several by Martin Luther.

While he utilized appropriately the light/darkness theme in several sermons, I thought there was perhaps too much repetition of a given theme in such a short series of sermons. I was not sure if I would appreciate hearing so much on the same theme over a limited number of weeks.

I also missed the use of anecdotal material in Hausman's sermons, until I felt I had an overdose of such stories in Smothers' book. Here we had far too many personal stories, especially ones that included "some other clergy person". I would be concerned about such use of personal material. This second book lacked the scholarly references of the first, and indeed, seemed to demonstrate a naive or uncritical view of scripture.

Perhaps these two different styles were chosen on purpose. Hausman is a Lutheran; Smothers a Methodist. In the end, I wonder why such books of sermons at all? These would not be particularly good for devotions. Pastors would be ill-advised to pluck one or two chapters out for their own sermons. Maybe the benefit of these books would be, that after reading them, a pastor would say: "Hey, I can preach as good or better than that myself!"

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