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Lectionary Preaching Workbook, Series 4: Cycle B

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Series IV, Cycle B Lectionary Preaching Workbook
John Brokhoff
Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing Co., 1993
294 pp.

At the beginning of this book there is a brief introduction which touches upon the history of the Revised Common Lectionary; also in Sections marking the beginning of each of the seasons in the church year is a 2 to 5 page discussion about the meaning, observance, preaching goals and theology of that period, which may be of some use to those unfamiliar with the church year.

In an effort to be brief and to the point, Brokhoff's style seems dogmatic in places. The use of sexist language in this book is offensive and impairs its readability.

The week to week sections dealing with the assigned lections have a defined format. Where there is a discrepancy between the designated texts for a particular week, only the texts from the Common Lectionary are utilized. The structure used to present the material for each Sunday begins by listing the specific texts for the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Common Lectionaries, which is helpful in seeing where these agree and differ. Then general background material for each of the three lessons is provided, followed by the designated "Psalm of the Day", the "Prayer of the Day", the "Theme of the Day" and a short description of how it is addressed in the three lessons. After these are the longer sections on "Theological Reflection" and "Preaching Possibilities".

The section entitled "Theological Reflection" focuses on certain words in the texts upon which the writer comments. "Preaching Possibilities" is organized around a key statement or question followed by the subsection defined by a "Need", then an "Outline" of possible ideas to deal with the "Statement" and "Need". One text may have a series of these units.

The background material is very basic, particularly for those who have been studying and working with the lectionary over a period of time. Those who like to draw connections between the texts may find the "Theme of the Day" part of the study to be of some interest and use. In the "Theological Reflections" and the "Preaching Possibilities" sections there are some interesting quotes included. However, as in the background material on the lessons, Brokhoff includes material which is already well understood such as an explanation on "Covenant" (pp. 109-110). Thus, one has to read through a lot of material containing familiar information to discover the thought-provoking gems that are included here and there.

While there are common threads running through the material concerning each Sunday's texts, nevertheless, this *Preaching Workbook* provides a rather limited consideration of the texts. Rather than exploring a variety of themes, directions, possibilities and responses which the scripture lessons can provide for a thoughtful and probing reader, Brokhoff has focused on

familiar understanding and repeats the themes and ideas in the various sections of his presentation. Personally, I did not find this resource all that helpful for sermon preparation.

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Dry Bones Live: Helping Congregations Discover New Life

Robert H. Craig and Robert C. Worley
Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992
128 pp. \$9.99 U.S.

Craig and Worley have completely revised their original work, *Dry Bones, Breathe* (Chicago: Center for the Study of Church Organization Behavior of McCormick Theological Seminary, 1978). They see a need for members to be less passive, to see the congregation as “a covenant people called by God to be actors in their faith communities and in the world” (p. 2). Those who are leaders are to support this by having “a facilitating style or set of processes to help members live out commitments to the church” (p. 2). One way of accomplishing this is through “transformational change theory”. “Values are applied to understanding, through participatory processes, in order that constructive change may result. Such activity is not merely rational but mobilizing, full of mandates that require accountability” (p. 3).

What does this mean? In other words, the authors assert the usefulness of questionnaires, or “survey instruments”, in the congregation as a means of understanding and empowering mission, of revitalizing the church. To this end, they study what role vision should play in ministry; the responsibility of parish leadership in shaping the ministry of the congregation; and the interaction necessary between the members and the leadership. They provide examples of how to develop and use such surveys to aid the naming of, and achieving, vision and mission.

One of the strengths of this book is that it not only examines setting up initial surveys, but also shows how important it is to share the results with the participants, and to work beyond the initial self-assessment to set goals, train, obtain resources, evaluate progress, and refine ministry. We are bombarded with questionnaires every day, and wonder if our answers really make any difference. Craig and Worley demonstrate how to silence these doubts, by keeping the leadership in constant communication with the members. The writers offer a convincing argument that showing the members that their opinions count will make them more active. This book