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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
109 pp.

Turning Obstacles into Opportunities: Sermons For Lent and Easter
Rodney Thomas Smothers
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 ser-
mons, 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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