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Australian Psalms

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Two Books from Australia

The Lutheran Publishing House in Australia has developed its book publishing business considerably in the last few years and are now producing many fine books. Two books sent recently for review show the high quality of workmanship and editing, as well as content. Although primarily published with the Australian church scene in mind, both are very relevant and useful to our situation in Canada.

AUSTRALIAN PSALMS

BRUCE D. PREWER

Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979
Pb. Pp. 128.

This book of modern psalms and poems by Prewer, a parish pastor of the Uniting Church of Australia, makes fascinating reading. The author certainly has succeeded in his desire to make the Christian faith relevant to the Australian scene. Many of the psalms seem to exude the strong perfume of the eucalyptus gums as they withstand the shimmering heat of summer, to say nothing of the noisy laughter of the kookaburras and the "conversation of the blackbirds."

Besides his original psalms, Prewer has included a number of "transpositions" of Biblical psalms. In these, "the setting is transposed from Israel to Australia, and from B.C. to A.D. times," according to the author.

The first part of the book contains psalms of praise which are so contemporary that one easily gets caught up in a growing crescendo of joy. After reading his transposition of Psalm 148 I felt almost compelled to jump up and shout, "Three cheers for the Lord!" There is some sensitive feeling and good theology in two beautiful poems on Baptism and Holy Communion. The book is worth its cost for these alone.

The second section is called "The Shame and the Glory." It begins with an excellent poem called simply "Holiness" which touches our unholy consciences in regard to native rights, world hunger, political expediency and the lifeless image of the church and then points us to the holiness and mercy of the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." It continues with poems on penitence and depression and other problems of living and consistently leads us back into the loving arms of a caring Heavenly Father. Of course, a Canadian may miss some of the

subtleties of the Australian allusions. For example, in his poem "When" which begins:

Lord, when my prayers are like a gibber plain,
and my soul like spinifex —
drench me with a downpour of mercy!

References to a "gibber plain" (a dry, stony desert area common in parts of Central Australia) and to spinifex (coarse grass which grows on desert sand dunes) immediately conjures up an image of barren desolation.

In the third section of the book dealing with times and seasons the reader will enjoy many fine aids to private and public devotions. Aussie allusions in some, however, will diminish their usefulness for this part of the world. For instance, the psalm, "On Christmas Eve," which speaks of dry grass "crackling under footsteps like crisp paper" and the "scent of pollens on a warm summer wind" can only have curiosity value for the shivering Canadian shoveling snow. Nevertheless, the many psalms and poems sensitive to the issues of today and expressed in real down-to-earth language make this book worth getting.

PRAYER RESOURCES FOR DAILY WORSHIP

DAVID A. SCHUBERT

Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1979

Pb. Pp. 128.

For someone who is looking for a good little book to bring fresh stimulus to his prayer and devotional life, this book is worth considering. It not only presents a simple liturgy for family or private devotion for each day of the week and for particular occasions, but it also offers a great variety of brief prayers from various sources in history which have stood the test of time. The book also contains listings on suggested themes, prayers and Bible readings for worship through the Christian year.

Prayer Resources is prefaced with an extract from Luther's "A Simple Way to Pray" and this has obviously been the inspiration for the organization of this book. It is one of the most useful books on prayer resources I have come across recently. David Schubert is a teacher at Concordia College, Adelaide, South Australia.

Adrian M. Leske