

Cláudio Carvalhaes. *Liturgies From Below: Praying With People at the Ends of the World*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020. 359 pages. \$29.99.

In *Liturgies From Below*, Cláudio Carvalhaes positions worship, which is integral to the life and mission of the church, as by its very nature a subversive act. In the preface of the book, Sudipta Singh rightly points, “Worshipping God is itself an act of rebellion, as Empire demands to be worshipped alone” (xi). Singh continues, “Worship inspires and anoints the community to translate this mission into radical social transformation in the here and now by enabling the agency to turn the world upside down. In worship, we celebrate the spirituality of resistance and reconstruction” (xi). Elsewhere, writing about prayer, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel says this: prayer “is meaningless unless it is subversive” (xi). *Liturgies From Below* reminds us of this simple but profound truth that both liturgies used in worship and prayers are subversive acts that speak truth to power. *Liturgies from Below* is a prayer book designed with the intent to be used in worship, and it provides an alternative “to both the traditional prayer books of Christian liturgies and neo-Pentecostal cultic prayers” (5). Most importantly, the prayers included in this book, according to the author, are what come close to the gospel mandate that we are called to identify with the poor and abandoned of the world.

This book is the result of a project called “Re-Imagining Worship as Acts of Defiance and Alternatives in the Context of Empire,” which was organized by the Council for World Mission during the years 2018–2019 (7). The gathering consisted of pastors, activists, artists, students, and others from a wide variety of backgrounds from four different countries: Manila, Philippines; Johannesburg, South Africa; Kingston, Jamaica and Scicli, Italy. The group consisted of 100 participants who walked alongside people and communities experiencing extreme poverty and oppression and allowed their experiences to be the catalyst for creating liturgies. “To pray is to change,” and that is what happened to the participants who immersed in the daily struggles of these people living in the “ends of the earth.”

The book captures the significant elements of worship such as the call to worship, prayer of confession, assurance of pardon, and more that are relevant for Sunday morning. It also offers liturgies regarding baptism, Eucharist, and other services. The topical prayers such as prayers offered for healing as well as responses to mourning and anger experienced by worshippers are great resources for the congregation. They also benefit individual believers experiencing different seasons and realities of their life. I particularly resonated with the prayers of the people which expressed frustrations and anger when God seems silent to their pleas. The prayers in this book are also timely in that they voice the concerns of people living and experiencing marginalization in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic.

Congregants and congregations treasuring and conversant with the use of liturgy in worship will truly find this book a great find, even when the approach of listening and incorporating the voices and prayers “from below” that have been muffled for centuries will challenge and question the way liturgy and worship has been traditionally understood.

Liturgy, as the work of the people not only in worship but also in its design, is truly exemplified in this project. The raw honesty with which these prayers are crafted in their address to God is, in my view, the single most important aspect of this book. I truly commend the work that has been done in compiling the prayers that have made this book a valuable reality.

Born and raised with the sung liturgy in the Church of South India and now serving a congregation that blends liturgy and other contemporary forms of worship, I look for liturgical resources that enhance worship in my context of first- and second-generation immigrants of

Asian Indian descent. This book is a great find for several reasons. It creates awareness among congregational members in my context to the plight and struggles of faith communities and others living under the oppressive powers of the Empire. It builds solidarity with the disenfranchised and oppressed by resourcing the struggle of their very lives as liturgically illuminating. Finally, the collection of prayers challenges readers to “stand in the gap” as intercessors on behalf of the oppressed around the world as well as in their immediate surrounds, and to offer their struggles to the One who hears, understands, and answers our prayers.

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