

A BOOK REVIEW
“TELL HER STORY”/“HOW WOMEN LED, TAUGHT AND MINISTERED IN THE EARLY CHURCH”

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TITLE OF BOOK: *“Tell Her Story”/“How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church”*

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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

This is a marvelous Book which refutes the belief that only men were the leaders of the early church and that only men had important roles in Scripture and the early church. In this Book, our Author, Dr. Nijay Gupta (a hugely talented and respected theologian, seminary professor and Christian Author, whose credentials are beyond challenge) engages in a painstaking, extensive study of Scripture and of church history in order to identify, and tell the stories of the many wonderful women who have had important roles in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Author, thereby, refutes the belief that “women weren’t even there” when it came to the leaders and important figures in both Testaments. To quote the Author: *“For centuries, the church has focused its interest on the male leaders of the early church-as if women weren’t even there. In fact, some seem to think that women weren’t there in the rooms where important things happened. But there is ample evidence inside and outside the New Testament that women were actively involved in ministry, at the frontier of the gospel mission, as respected leaders in the church, and even as primary leaders of household congregations.”*

So, the Author allows for the important women of Scripture to tell (actually he tells) their marvelous stories in this Book. In my opinion (i.e. the opinion of your Reviewer) this Book is a MUST-READ BOOK for any Christian Pastor or Leader or Church Board Member of a congregation which is struggling with the issues which relate to what the proper roles for women should be in their congregation, particularly the roles of preaching or teaching from the pulpit or in small groups, or in the “authoritative levels”, if you will, of the congregation. This Book joins many others, which I have reviewed, and which deal with these important, apparently still controversial issues.

WHAT IS THE AUTHOR DOING OR TRYING TO DO WITH WHAT HE IS SAYING?

I think that the “First Impressions” part of this Review makes the Author’s purpose for this Book pretty clear. However, let’s explore the contents of this Book in more detail. Our Author notes that many Christians are of the belief that women have, at most, played minor roles, if any roles at all in the Ancient Biblical histories of the Hebrews, Jews and Israelites, and certainly in the early church. In this Book, he seeks to refute this belief, and related beliefs that women were always relegated to only insignificant, home relates roles in Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. In seeking to refute these beliefs of the

denigration of women's roles, in both the relevant social cultures and the relevant religious cultures, our Author uses extensive Biblical and Extra Biblical research, which is described at length in this Book.

In identifying the causes for his interest in the roles of women, our Author first notes the passages of Romans 16:1-15, wherein Paul extends greetings and COMMENDATIONS to twenty-six people (one of the longest lists of people in the New Testament other than the genealogies in Matthew and Luke) over one-third of whom were women. "Paul's comments, titles and descriptions (of these twenty-six people) are all positive, so he was honoring each of them publicly, praising them as MODERN LEADERS. Ponder that for a moment: more than a third of the people on Paul's list were model Christian women, including those recognized as Leaders in the Roman churches and Paul's mission: Phoebe (vv.1-12), Priscilla (v. 3), Mary (v. 6), Junia (v.7), Tryphena and Tryphosa (v. 12), Persis (v. 12)....This is nothing short of astounding....none of Paul's comments are focused on their domestic duties..." So, our Author ponders the question: If Paul, publicly by way of his massive and massively important letter to the Romans, held in such esteem women who were leaders and workers in the early church, how can we rationally conclude that women held only minor, insignificant roles in the early church, if any roles at all?

In trying to deal with this question, and others relating to the history of the roles of women, both in the relevant social cultures (i.e. the Hebrew, Jewish, and Greco-Roman cultures) and the history of the early church, our Author asked other questions: Are no women of importance mentioned in the Bible, and did women perform no significant roles in the Ancient Near Eastern Cultures of the Bible? So, as described in his excellent Introduction to his Book, our Author broke his research, and his discussions and conclusions into two main parts:

- 1) BACKGROUND: In the First Part of our Author's Book, and as background to the main discussion, he begins with DEBORAH (Judg 4-5), because of the important role she played in Israel's history, followed with a discussion of Genesis 1-3 (Scripture's vision for man and women, and how sin unraveled that harmony that God had created), and then followed with a picture of the Greco-Roman world of the first century, especially the lives of women (leading to a conclusion that there is a misconception as to how women, particularly upper class women (class being more important than any other factor in defining roles), navigated a world of Roman patriarchy), as, in fact, surprisingly women (particularly upper class women) were associated with positions of power in the world of Roman patriarchy.
- 2) THE WOMEN LEADERS IN THE EARLY CHURCH: In the Second Part of his Book, our Author looks at the many named women leaders that are discussed in the New Testament (e.g. Phoebe, Prisca (aka Priscilla) and Junia), and, "as a bonus" explores the "hot topics" like Paul's prohibition texts (1 Tim. 2:11—15), and the household codes and the use of "submission language" for women (e.g., Col. 3:18-4:1).

The Author's hope is that "when we really understand the world in which Jesus and his followers lived, and what the New Testament *actually* attests about women leaders in the churches, **it will become clear that women were there; they were welcomed and supported by apostles like Paul, they were equipped and trained for ministry leadership, they ministered to leaders, they were on the frontline of the gospel mission and faced hardships because of it-and some became heroes and legends.**" (emphasis added) While consideration of the so-called "prohibition texts" (e.g. 1 Timothy 2) and the "submission texts" of what are called the "New Testament Household Codes" (e.g. Colossians 3:18-4:1) is not the primary focus of the Author's Book, in the concluding chapters of his Book our Author uses the contents of the earlier Chapters (i.e. the stories of the prominent women in the Old Testament and early Church) as a background for his conclusions that: **"What Paul's most famous prohibition text** in 1 Timothy 2 and the household

codes show us is not a unilateral prohibition of women teaching or acting in independent leadership and authority in the church (but rather)...these texts are about harmony and unity in the church and also about offering respectable witness to the wider world. We ought not to take these commands as universal Christian laws, any more than we ought to have slaves today just because some of the early Christians had slaves and called them to obey.” (in the “Postscript”, Page 201)

While the above parts of this Section of this Report adequately summarize the Author’s positions, what he wants to accomplish with his Book, and the contents of his Book, some readers might desire to have a more complete outline of the Book’s contents. THEREFORE, THE FOLLOWING PARTS OF THIS SECTION OF THIS REVIEW ARE OFFERED AS TOTALLY OPTIONAL READING FOR READERS WHO WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT THE AUTHOR IS SAYING IN THIS BOOK.

IN MY OPINION, YOU, DEAR READER, DO NOT NEED TO READ THE FOLLOWING PARTS OF THIS SECTION OF THIS BOOK REVIEW, WHICH SUCH FOLLOWING PARTS ARE A VERY, VERY BRIEF OUTLINE OF SOME OF THE IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS OF OUR AUTHOR. I HAVE MADE THIS OUTLINE FOR MY PERSONAL USE, BUT I INCLUDE IT IN THIS REVIEW FOR WHATEVER USE IT MIGHT BE FOR YOU,

IN VERY BRIEF OUTLINE FORM, SOME OF THE (AT LEAST FOR ME) MORE IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS OF OUR AUTHOR ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1) CONCLUSIONS FROM GENESIS:

- a. Creation Order/Man Created Before Woman (pages 25-26): The question comes up as to whether Adam, the male, has a higher creation status because he was created first. This question arises from the ancient practice of *primogeniture*, which afforded special privileges to the first-born, particularly the first- born male. This does not seem to be either expressed or implied from the Biblical text. “Nothing in Genesis 2 clearly establishes male headship, female submission or unique male ruling authority. In fact, quite the opposite, man is not commanded to lead or guide woman; he is ‘united’ with her (Gen.2:24), and they become one.” Furthermore, in the Biblical story the first-born is not always favored. See Isaac, Jacob and David, all of whom were younger brothers given special blessings and privileges by God.
- b. Partnership: “There is no clear prerogative that man is given special command to rule or serve as leader over or above woman. On the contrary, he is seen as incomplete and lacking without *her*. Adam needed a partner, and Eve was provided as such.” (page 26)
- c. Genesis 3, The Unravelling or Undoing of God’s Good Work (pages 26-28): All the harmony, unity and innocence created by God is undone. While the cunning serpent succeeds in misleading Eve, causing her to believe that eating the forbidden fruit will give her special insight and divine wisdom, Adam is not absent, but is there next to her and, so, joins in the rebellion. They then seek to cast blame, Adam on Eve and Eve on the Serpent. While Genesis 3 states, as to the woman, that “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee”, it seems obvious to most interpreters that this “ruling” over woman is a problem created by the Fall or the Unravelling or Sin, not a blessing or a God ordained situation. So, Genesis 3 does not teach that men must rule and women must follow. “The ultimate redemptive hopes of Scripture and the gospel are not that man will find his rightful place as the head over woman. It is the good news that man and woman can be restored to a healthy

partnership where each one is given dignity and respect, and where each brings their gifts and wisdom toward a cooperative tending of God's world."

- d. Deborah (Pages of this Book: 28--30): Deborah took the partnership of man and woman, and its responsibilities, seriously. She did not have any clear desires to subvert, control or trick men (i.e. Barak). She carried out the work of her leadership role with focus, transparency and integrity.
- e. Partnership Ruined by Sin (Page 29): "... (A) faithful reading of the creation story (presents) a tale of harmonious partnership unraveled and frustrated by sin." This is the perverted world, still reflecting the male effort of men to rule over women, into which Jesus and His apostles and disciples stepped, a patriarchal social economy, one of which, first impressions notwithstanding, not all women fit the role of a quiet domestic life.

2) WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD (Chapter 3, pages 30 et. Seq.)

- a. Patriarchy: While there is no denying the fact that the ancient Greco-Roman world was a man's world, and that men had more power, at almost every level, over women, and it would, therefore, be of no surprise to think that Christian women would not have been present at elders' meetings in the early churches or have had any important roles in those churches, such was not the case.
- b. Social Class: Gender was not the only index of influence. Social Class was a very important index of standing in the Greco Roman world.
- c. Roman Household Codes: The standard operating principle was that the father was the pillar of the household, the "paterfamilias". Hence, the household codes in the Greco-Roman world revolved around the leadership of the paterfamilias. Women were expected to be wise and just, but stereotypes were present to the effect that women were simple minded and easily deceived. Their "celebrated roles" were as a supportive wife and nurturing mother. These virtues were projected onto the perceived "good women" in the Greco-Roman world. However, there were a number of exceptions as to the manner in which these Greco-Roman Household Codes, in practice, actually "defined the roles" for all women. In some cases, women would marry, but retain control over their own property and affairs, and they could own property and conduct business, without supervision of their husbands. So, one cannot say that "one size fit all".
- d. Taking These Situations Into Account in Our Reading of the New Testament: No wonder why, in approaching the New Testament and reading it in view of the prevailing culture of the times, we could not imagine a woman as having any role in a home church gathering, or speaking at such a gathering. They should be silent and quiet.
- e. Women Whose Roles Were Not Defined by Patriarchy: Roman people prized social class. While we can say that, in the Greco-Roman World, "men led and women followed" as being a generally true statement, the injection of "social class" into the equation adds a level of complexity to our consideration. Yes, patriarchy, paterfamilias, were the rules of thumb and generally prevailed, but upper social class women had surprisingly important, influential roles, and could even own property separate from a husband. Some upper social class women became important, hugely influential priestesses in pagan temples and of pagan deities. They oftentimes became "patrons" of such temples. Social Class was an extremely important factor in considerations of leadership and of how a person (man or woman) would be viewed by peers.

- f. Summary: in the Roman world where Christianity originated, we find a world “which was thoroughly patriarchal: men dominated the world; women were widely marginalized, ignored, abused, and taken advantage of. But that does not tell the whole story.... . In the face of evidence, we can only conclude that women of sufficient social status in the Roman world exercised a great deal of freedom and power with regard to business and social activities....(and that) women could bear significant influence in politics, business and religious life as well”.
 - g. Women in the Roman World Households: While women of an upper social class could exercise power and influence, by and large a woman’s role in the family was as a wife and mother and caretaker of the household. “As a wife, the good Roman woman was meant to be honorable, pious, sweet, dutiful, loyal, and chaste. As a mother, she was meant to raise her children with Roman values, honoring the gods and state leaders, and to contribute to the commonwealth.” (p. 97). But general myths and impressions notwithstanding, women were not always under the authority of their husbands and could have a *sine manu* marriage where she was not under the authority of her husband, and could own property and even have a significant “public role” in the household itself.
 - h. Women in the Priesthoods: Women of high social class standing could have hugely influential roles as priestesses in the cults of Roman deities. In these roles they were “treated along the lines of royalty or dignitary in their communities”.
 - i. Women in the New Testament: “When it comes to the women named in the New Testament, we know their names precisely *because* they were out and about doing ministry. They travelled long distances, sometimes without a husband. They wound up in prison because of their dangerous frontline ministry. They trained and instructed other leaders. They helped their churches make strategic decisions....” (p. 50)
- 3) WOMEN IN THE LIFE OF JESUS: (Chapter 4, pages 51, et. Seq.):
- a) Instrumental Roles: Women played very instrumental roles in the life of Jesus.
 - b) Mary: One of these was, of course, Jesus’ mother, Mary. See her significant “Mary’s Song of Praise” at Luke 1:46-55). Also note the significant role of Elizabeth, Mother of John the Baptist and Mary’s close friend and confidant. Mary’s song looks back on the long history of God’s faithfulness to his people and the fulfilment of his covenant promises. Mary’s Song resonates with the faith-filled songs of faithful and inspired women, Miriam (Ex. 15:1-21), Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10), and Deborah (Judg. 5:1-31). These are militant songs which exult the saving power of God.
 - c) Women in the Gospels: The Gospel of Luke, in particular, emphasizes the key, strategic roles played by women in the life and ministry of Jesus. (p. 57) Jesus cared about women, and spoke to them in meaningful ways (e.g. the woman at the well and the woman caught in the act of adultery and about to be stoned). He had Biblically meaningful conversations with women, including the woman at the well.
 - d) Women Ministered to Jesus: First, we have the story of the sinful woman, who came to the home of a Pharisee and washed and perfumed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her tears and hair (Lk. 7:37-39, and pages 60-61). A similar story appears in the Gospel of Mark and Matthew (Mk. 14:3-9 and Mt 26:6-13). Women came to the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus.
 - e) Women Disciples of Jesus: “Women were not part of the Twelve, but they were certainly part of that middle group” (a wider group that Jesus taught and interacted with). Some women helped support Jesus out of their own means, and funded his

ministry (p. 62). Mary Magdalene responded to the healing power of Jesus and stuck with him to the bitter end. She, together with another Mary, accompanied Joseph of Arimathea as he placed Jesus' body in the tomb, and, later, she and the other Mary returned to the tomb to anoint the body. The angel spoke with them, women, to announce that Jesus had risen. Jesus appeared to them, and he encouraged them, women, to go to the apostles and announce that He had risen. (p. 63, Mt 28:6-7 and Jn 20:18)

- f) SUMMARY (p. 69): How well do we remember the women before, after and around the Jesus who walked on earth? Women like Elizabeth and Mary paved the way for Jesus. Women like Anna proclaimed Jesus before he could speak. In his ministry, Jesus talked about women, he talked to women, he welcomed them into his ministry, he had deep conversations with women, he healed women, he received their anointing, and he invested in them the gospel witness of the resurrection. The Evangelists (in their Gospels) tell their amazing stories, if we have ears to hear."

4) WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCHES (CHAPTER 5, pps. 73-93)

- a. Not Our Kind of Church/Reading in Context: We cannot read our modern experiences with and expectations of our current day churches and their church services into our readings of the New Testament, particularly the Epistles. "The audience-stage dynamic was not reflective of the Christian assembly of the early churches." (p. 73). Group participation was more the order of the day. The "top-down" (pastor preaching to the congregation) structure of church service, which we experience, did not exist in the early Christian gatherings. These were more "gatherings" than they were structured services. Therefore, participants in these gatherings would often speak up. For example, see the references in 1 Timothy.
- b. Borrowing From Structures and Systems Of Already Existing Organizations: While Jesus gave the apostles and disciples the Great Commission, He did not give them a book of instructions about how to structure His Church. So, naturally the apostles borrowed from the organizational and operational systems of already existing (in the Greco-Roman World) organizations, such as the Jewish synagogues, which were smaller units connected to a larger whole (i.e. the Temple in Jerusalem). It should be noted that Gentile Christians would not have had knowledge of the workings of Jewish synagogues. Also relevant to the structures of early churches would have been the structures of Greco-Roman voluntary associations. Such as business guilds, cult associations (devoted to worship of some deity) and social clubs. Also relevant to the structures of the early churches would have been the structure of private households in the Greco-Roman world. "In that world, the household played a crucial role both culturally and politically as a microcosm of the wider society and imperial order." (p.77) As the households were run smoothly and efficiently, so went the empire, and vice-versa. That the people and leaders of the early churches, and the New Testament Authors were thoughtful about the house and household is obvious. There are many clear references to meeting in houses or domiciles. "Second, from the evidence in Paul's letters, the household was a potent metaphor for Christian life in community, not just in references to God as Father (which occurs in Non-Christian, Jewish literature as well) and Jesus as Son, but also in father language in relation to Paul (1. Cor 4:15; cf. Phil 2:22), the imagery of home building (Rom. 14:19; 15:2, 20; 1 Cor 3:9; 8:10; 10:23; 14:3-5; 2 Cor 13:10), the household management (1 Cor. 4:1; 9:17), and the characterization of the church as "the family of faith" (Gal 6:10 NRSV)." (p. 76). So, when we read the Epistles we must take into account the fact that "their

churches” and “their church services” were much different than what we experience today. Their churches were, by and large, small gatherings in dwellings or other locations, and their services were not “top down”, pastor preaching to a congregation type of service, but rather were much more “participatory”, if you will, with the gathered congregants participating in the meeting and discussions. So, if a woman spoke up and challenged a man, particularly her husband, this would, in the Greco-Roman World of early Christianity, have been considered to be a possibly scandalous event.

- c. Avoidance of Hierarchy: “When we read the New Testament, especially Acts and the Epistles, we get the impression that the early Christians intentionally avoided the pyramid leadership system, certainly rejecting any kind of human ‘ruler’ over the churches.” (p. 78) There was a “communal ethos” derived from a conscious intent to deviate from the cultural tendencies to establish a “power status of hierarchy.” “Paul, Peter, James and John placed the burden of Christian obedience on the whole community.” (p. 79) Even with respect to Paul’s pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus, “he doesn’t hold these leaders exclusively responsible for the well-being of the churches. His main addressees are the people of the churches, who have a responsibility to hear Paul out and take his instruction and teaching seriously, each and every one.” (p. 79)
- d. No Pastor: “From what we can gather (quoting another source), first century churches did not have a ‘lead pastor’ in ways that are common today.” (p. 81)
- e. Women as Leaders: “We know that women could and did serve as *diakoni* (leaders) in early churches (e.g. Phoebe)....It is important that we let that sink in—*women were active in the ministry of the church*. Now, many women were at home caring for home and family. But the complete picture we see of Christian ministry in the first century according to the New Testament informs us that wherever men were ‘doing ministry’ women were there doing it as well. That’s what is meant to be a part of the ‘diaconate’, and women weren’t treated as a secondary class of leaders.” (pp.s 80-81)
- f. Household Important In Early Church: Most first century churches met in private homes, the households of which had an already existing management structure (i.e. paterfamilias). This management structure would give the “churches” of the first century some stability in leadership. Paul, who had a missionary strategy, sought to convert the heads of households, and, hence, their entire household. “It was typical of the Pauline ministry approach in any given city to target individuals from higher social levels. In this way Paul was able to win homeowners, along with their entire households, for the gospel to set up a base of operations in the house for local and regional mission. (Pps. 86-87) “While householders were typically men, the classical paterfamilias...there were exceptions....not only that women were heads of households (which was legally permissible)...but there is evidence in the New Testament along these lines (and in some areas of the histories of the Roman World), women may have comprised up to 25 percent of the total householders” (p 87) For example Lydia was, apparently, a female householder who accepted the apostles’ gospel message, and her household was baptized (Acts 16:14-15), and “her home became a hub for the Philippian church (as evidence by the fact) that Paul and Silas accepted her hospitality at the beginning of their Philippian mission (Acts 16:15) and then went to her home at the end when they were released from jail, looking for the assembly of believers.” (page 87)

- 5) Chapter 6 (Page 94) WOMEN CO-LABORERS IN MINISTRY LEADERSHIP:
 - a. Exceptions to Men In Charge In The Roman World and In the Early Church: There were a lot of exceptions, in the Roman World, inside and outside of the early Christian Communities to the “men being in charge” situation. “Practically speaking, women were found *everywhere* men were, and they were welcomed and invited into leadership spaces in churches as well.” (page 94)
 - b. Romans 16: It is hard to overstate the eye-opening significance of Romans 16 for imagining what early Christian communities actually looked like. There Paul offered extensive greetings to friends and leaders in the house churches of Rome. He lists almost thirty individuals, at least a third of whom were women. An extraordinary number of women are spoken of and commended by Paul in Romans 16, including Prisca, Junia, Persis, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Nereus’s sister, and Rufus’s mother, and, of course, Phoebe, who was the person Paul trusted to carry his important letter to the Romans to the Christians in the churches in Rome, and, doubtlessly, to help discuss the contents of this complex letter with the people of these churches. (p.98) “Paul was explicitly commending women’s ministry and leadership...” .
 - c. Women Leaders in Philippi (pps 82 et seq.) : “As we turn to other cities and the New Testament evidence, women continue to appear in leadership roles and settings.” There are Philippian men and women who are mentioned in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. In fact, there are more names of women in the Philippian church than there are names of men. It is estimated that the early Philippian church consisted of no more than 30 people. “Given that small size it seems beyond doubt that the named women, Euodia, Syntyche, and Lydia were important leaders.” (p. 103.)
 - d. Women Leaders are Also Mentioned In the Churches of the Lycus Vallen, the Location of Three Key Cities in the Ancient World, Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. (Pages 107 et. Seq.)
- 6) CHAPTER 7 AND FOLLOWING CHAPTERS: Beginning with Chapter 7 (“Phoebe, Paul’s Trusted Proxy), which begins on page 113, the Author identifies, and discusses the roles of women in the early churches, and the stories of KEY WOMEN FIGURES who are mentioned in the New Testament, particularly Paul’s Epistles. These include:
 - a. Chapter 7/Phoebe: Phoebe was selected by Paul as his trustworthy courier for his letter to the Romans. Paul commends Phoebe as a respected Macedonian church leader, a *diakonos* (Rom. 16:1). In Paul’s Romans 16 commendation of Phoebe he makes much of her benefaction and support of him. (p. 118). In the ancient Roman world, letter carriers played an important role, not just in carrying a letter to its intended recipients but in helping to mediate its contents with those recipients. (p. 121). The letter carrier would act as a form of proxy for the sender, “representing the sender”. When it comes to Phoebe, scholars “recognize that she would possess a kind of apostolic agency, operating on Paul’s behalf in Rome, especially since she was going to stay in town and could ensure a clear understanding of Paul’s messages and potentially bring back a response or report on how the churches were assimilating his teachings.” (page 122). Paul knew that this letter to the Romans was a hugely important letter that was essential to his mission. He had never visited Rome, but knew that it, as the imperial city, would be a hub of Christian mission and Christian communities. He knew that, as people travelled to Rome, the churches there would be representatives of the Christian faith to many people. Secondly, this letter would be an introduction of Paul, who had never been to Rome, to the people of the churches of Rome, and it served as the introduction to Paul’s gospel message, and his

apostolic ministry to the Gentiles. “Paul would have placed this letter into the care of someone he trusted with ‘apostolic’ wisdom and shrewdness. In a way, Paul was sending Phoebe as an ad hoc apostle, a Cenchreaen ministry delegate to operate on his behalf.” (p. 123)

- b. Chapter 8, Prisca (Priscilla), Strategic Church Leader and Expert Teacher (beginning at page 128): Prisca (Priscilla) and her husband, Aquila, are mentioned in Romans 16 (16:3), and elsewhere in Paul’s letters (1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19) and Luke’s account of the apostolic spread of the gospel in his book of Acts (Acts 18:1-4, 18-27). They travelled, oftentimes with Paul, from city to city. While Paul was with Prisca and Aquila in Ephesus, he wrote the letter we know as 1 Corinthians. (p. 131) It was during their time in Ephesus that Prisca and Aquila encountered and taught Apollos, the travelling evangelist from Alexandria. They seem to have been central leaders in the Ephesian Christian community. (p. 132) When the decree of the emperor Claudius, which evicted Jews from Rome, expired, Prisca and Aquila returned to Rome. Perhaps, Paul encouraged them to return to Rome as a part of Paul’s vanguard to establish a firm footing for his gospel in Rome before he continued on to Spain. In Rome, Prisca and Aquila hosted a Christian assembly in their home. They eventually left Rome and returned to Ephesus according to 2 Timothy 4:19. They were house church leaders (p. 132-134). While in Ephesus Prisca and Aquila instructed Apollos, a learned man from Alexandria, who had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He was highly intelligent and eloquent. He was a gifted and passionate evangelist (p. 136, and 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-5; 4-6). Priscilla and Aquila detected gaps in the knowledge of Apollos and took it upon themselves to pull him aside and give him further instructions. Prisca is mentioned first, before Aquila, in this episode. It seems that she might have taken the lead in the instructions of Apollos. (page 136);
 - c. Chapter 9 (beginning at page 141) “Junia, Venerated Apostle and Imprisoned Hero”: Junia was actually imprisoned in the awful prisons of the empire because of her missionary activities and her assistance rendered to Paul. Life in such prisons was dreadful for men, and likely much worse for women. She is a real hero of the Christian faith and is celebrated by Paul in Romans 16.
- 7) CONCLUSION (Pages 152, et. Seq.): Rather than to argue about or discuss some of the finer points of theology, including the ones to the effect that “women cannot do that”, or “women shouldn’t do that”, our Author found it to be “incredibly clarifying to look at specific *people* in God’s good news story, and how the biblical writers actually reflect on those people.” Therefore, beginning with Deborah of the Old Testament (who was used by God in very important functions, even though good men were available), and continuing forward into the New Testament and the stories of Mary, Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, other women who were important in the life and ministry of Jesus, Prisca (i.e. Priscilla), Phoebe and many others, most of whom are commended by Paul in Romans 16, our Author describes the ways in which may incredible, intelligent, brave women have, in the highly patriarchal, male leadership, paterfamilias Greco-Roman world performed hugely important roles in the advancement of the gospel and God’s kingdom. Our Author further concludes that Paul celebrated women who advanced the gospel and Christian ministry and were of great assistance in his missionary work, and that the so called “prohibition texts” (1 Cor 11, 1Tim 2) have been wrongly used to restrict the roles of women in Christian ministry in that none of these texts use the same language, and “...appear to be situation-specific teachings having more to do with harmony and unity in the church, and less to do with ‘gender roles’”. (p. 156) “Paul was a living contradiction (of the defining of “gender roles”). “He sent Phoebe *away*

from home to do apostolic work on his behalf. He instructed Nympha to take responsibility for having the Colossian letter read (and presumably obeyed) in her church. He partnered with Prisca and Aquila in city-to-city missionary work, treating them as equals in leadership. In fact, there is good reason to believe *she* was the more active partner (i.e. more active than Aquila) in ministry.” (p.155). Our Author further notes, in his Concluding remarks, that Paul relied on numerous women leaders and coworkers in his mission, many of whom are identified and praised by him in Romans 16 (p.150), and further notes that, perceptions notwithstanding, some women exerted great influence in Roman society.

- 8) WHAT ABOUT...? (THE SO-CALLED PROHIBITION TEXTS): Our Author goes on at length to try to respond to the “what about” question as to the so-called “prohibition texts”. An outline of his responses to this “what-about” question, in which he focuses on 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (the most important and most often cited prohibition text) is outlined as follows:
 - a. Advice as to How Timothy Should Handle a Serious Problem in the Ephesian Christian Community: Paul was seeking to concentrate on describing how the people (men and women) in the church in Ephesus should work towards the common good. His advice is first given to men to make peace and not be hostile to one another. Out of respect for God they should worship as one. “Next Paul appeals to women in the church with a more extensive teaching”.
 - b. Need for Humble and Modest Attire: Women should dress with a humble and modest attire. (At this point, I am going to add my personal note. In Ephesus, wealthy women or women of the upper social classes were inclined to flaunt their positions with jewelry, flashy clothing, and elaborate hairstyles. Since Paul’s messages (as well as those of the other Epistle writers) were almost always filled with admonitions that everyone, rich and poor, weak and powerful, are equals in the body of Christ, he admonished women who were accustomed to flaunting their position and wealth with jewelry, hairstyles, etc. (and in some cases men) that they should dress and act with humility. This is my personal note, not one of the Author.)
 - c. Women Should be Calm, Quiet, and Respectful Toward the Men Who Are Present, and are “Saved Through Childbearing”: Our Author seeks to refute the conclusions that these passages of 1 Tim 2 stand for the permanent, in all churches, everywhere for all time position that women should play no executive function in church because they are flaky, gullible, and hasty by nature, with their proper place being to care for family in the home or in the teaching of children, but never men, and certainly not in preaching from the pulpit. Our Author’s “...reading of this text in short form (is that) Paul instructed Timothy to shut down destructive patterns that were forming in the Ephesian community, fueled by outside false teaching that was making inroads in the church....(with some women)....(being)...convinced that they held some superior wisdom and were directly challenging the churches leaders (most or all of whom were men).” (p. 165). “Paul wanted to put a stop to ‘the battle of the sexes’ in this community. Women who had fallen prey to false teaching should not disrupt the church gathering...” (p. 165).
 - d. No Universal Application: “We need to stop treating this text as if it is something Paul taught to everyone everywhere. THERE ARE ENOUGH PECULIARITIES IN THIS PASSAGE TO SAY THAT PAUL NEEDED TO COMMUNICATE THIS TO *THIS* EPHESIAN COMMUNITY AT *THIS* TIME, AND UNIVERSALIZING IT SHOULD *NOT* BE AN UNQUESTIONED ASSUMPTION. (pages 165-166, emphasis added).
 - e. Pastoral Epistles: It would be unhealthy and unwise to treat the so called “Pastoral Epistles” (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) “..as comprehensive instructions for clergy or a

universal guide for all churches.” (p. 1166) In fact, our Author concludes that the label “Pastoral Epistles” is an incorrect one, and even one which was not given to these letters in the early Church.

- f. Further Arguments: Our Author poses additional arguments, some of which have been offered by other scholars. For example, he points out Paul’s rather confusing use of the verb “*Authenteo*”, a Greed verb which was far from general in its usage, and does not appear elsewhere in known literature or Paul’s writings. As used here, it seems to mean the “Usurpation of Authority” over men by one upon who Authority has not been conferred.
 - g. What Was Going On In Ephesus: Some Scholars are of the belief that a form of very disruptive to the existing social order of Ephesus “women’s liberation movement” was going on in Ephesus. Others approach the situation in Ephesus as it relates to the Ephesian patron deity, Artemis. Ephesians hailed her as the greatest of all deities, hence Acts 19:28, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians”. The cult of Artemis promoted a message of female empowerment, fixated as it was on this wild, warrior-like goddess. The cult was deep into the story of the Amazonian women, who, according to legend, founded Ephesus. In other words, the story of Ephesus was a remarkable one of the founding by women, without need for men, of an important city in the patriarchal Roman World.
 - h. Conclusion: “What I see happening in 1 Timothy is that Paul was telling his colleague and apprentice Timothy to impose a kind of lockdown on the Ephesian church because of the infectious spread of false teaching that especially preyed on women and made aberrant teachings about marriage. Women who had taken it upon themselves to overpower male leaders were told to step back and take the posture of learners rather than teachers. This was not because of some genderized deficiency in their mental, didactic or leadership capacities.” The Author goes on in his Conclusion about 1 Timothy 2, at pages 180-181 to outline his conclusions to the effect that these passages do not constitute some form of universal, for all churches everywhere, for all times prohibition against gifted and qualified women from teaching (including of men), preaching or holding executive positions in church ministry. These passages do stand as warnings against disruptive conduct (by men and women) in church gatherings, and the teaching of false doctrines (by men or women), or the exertion of unwarranted, un-conferred usurpation of authority by men or women in church gatherings or church matters.
- 9) WHAT ABOUT THE SUBMISSION TEXTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT HOUSEHOLD CODES (pps 182, et. Seq): How can our Author reconcile the “submission” of women to men, wives to husbands provisions of the Household Codes (Col 3:18-41; Eph 5:22-6:9; 1 Tim 2:8-14; 6:1-2; Titus 2:1-3:8; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7) with any thinking that Paul would have promoted women leaders or teachers, when he told them to be submissive? When our Author “...studied these passages in their historical context and paid more attention to what they say-and don’t say-about women as members of households” he reached conclusions about the “seemingly prohibitive nature” of these passages. Some of his conclusions are outlined as follows:
- a) Colossians 3:18-4:1 as a model: Colossians 3:18-4:1 is his model for this studies which are described in this Chapter, as it is similar in language and content and style to the other household code passages. He admits that “there is no getting around the fact that the terse commands and directions of these texts are very off-putting to read. It’s not just about wives being submissive; Paul also tells slaves to obey their masters

in everything. How could Paul, the great apostle of Christian liberty, write such conformist nonsense?” (p. 183)

- b) Proper Household Management in Roman World: “...Paul was drawing from widely recognized social language from the Greco-Roman world about proper household management.” “...These household statements are about power and control—who has the power and how to maintain order in the house. This specific social construction does not trace back to the Old Testament or Hebrew tradition, it should be noted. Rather, it is grounded in ancient Greek philosophy regarding ideal human life and politics, the individual and the city.” (p.183) The writings of various Greek and Roman philosophers reflect the belief that husbands/men must control the households and that, while women had their place, power and control was vested in the husbands/men. (pps. 184-185).
 - c) Reflecting Then Prevailing Social Standards: After examining the views of other scholars, our Author concludes: “The fact that the New Testament contains Greco-Roman-style household codes *at all* means that the writers (i.e. Paul and Peter) were borrowing from culture, and that early Christians reinforced, to at least some degree, household relationships according to wider cultural expectations. They wanted to maintain the respect of their neighbors as best they could (Rom 12:18; Gal 6:10; 1 Pet 2:12). But there is a key point to be made here...the *differences or divergences* from Aristotle and others are deeply meaningful...”. (page 187) Paul appears to have been caught between the values of the surrounding culture and social order and the new freedoms which were happening in Christ. (My Note: Was he caught in the “already but not yet” era?) Note that several of the commands and expectations of Colossians 3:18-4:1 are set in the context of “regard toward ‘the Lord’”, meaning that the paterfamilias is not the “ultimate authority”; “there is a sovereign who watches over the behavior of all, including the head of household.” (p. 187) Additionally, generous virtues are promoted, including love and gentleness. Therefore, While “Greco-Roman codes tend to focus on *obedience*, the New Testament codes also reinforce care and compassion, (and)..there is genuine concern for the well being of the parties with less, little or no power; Paul was concerned with protecting not only their bodies but also their hearts (Col 3:21).”
 - d) “Submission”: The Greek word *hypotasso* which is interpreted as “submission” in the New Testament household codes, refers to “organizing oneself under the power; authority or leadership of someone else....For example, Christians ought to be ‘subject/submissive (*hypotasso*) to rulers and civil authorities (Rom 13:1, 5; Titus 3:1) There is a sense of respect that comes from this verb, and also compliance, but it is not exactly the same thing as ‘obedience’.” Wives, as Christians, must act according to conscience, not simply blind obedience like a robot or pet....New Testament writers would not have expected wives to ‘submit’ to any directives from their husbands that would be considered sinful or harmful to themselves or others...‘submission’ was not absolute.” This is made obvious by Paul’s instructions to both wives and husbands about their respective bodies, instructions which would have been revolutionary in the Greco-Roman world. (p. 188-189).
- 10) POSTSCRIPT ABOUT PROHIBITION AND SUBMISSION TEXTS (pps 201 et. Seq.): “**What Paul’s most famous prohibition text** in 1 Timothy 2 and the household codes show us is not a universal prohibition of women teaching or acting with independent leadership and authority in the church. Rather, these texts are about harmony and unity in the church, and also about offering respectable witness to the wider world. We ought not to take these commands as

universal Christian laws, any more than we ought to have slaves today just because some early Christians had slaves and called them to obey.” (p. 201)

APPOLOGIES FOR THE LENGTH OF THIS OUTLINE, BUT, AS NOTED ABOVE, YOU, THE READER, DID NOT HAVE TO READ IT. THIS OUTLINE IS OFFERED PURELY FOR READERS WHO WANT A MORE COMPLETE EXPLANATION OF WHAT OUR AUTHOR IS TRYING TO SAY WITH HIS BOOK.

HOW SHOULD I, THE READER, READ THIS BOOK?

As is always the case, the Answer to this Question depends on the Answer to a more basic Question, that being: What do you want to get out of this Book, or, better stated, why did you approach this Book in the first place? If you just want to be aware of the Book, and of what it contains, and to put it on your shelf as a possible Reference Text for future studies or writings, then you can just read its “Contents”, and its “Introduction”, and the “Conclusions” which follow most of its Chapters, and then, if you are concerned with the Author’s conclusions about the so-called “prohibition texts” such as 1 Timothy 2, or the “wifely submission” texts of New Testament Household Codes, then you can read the Book’s final “Postscript”. If you read these parts of the Book, you should then be pretty aware of its contents and know whether or not you want to delve, more deeply, into the Book or parts of the Book. On the other hand, if you have approached or acquired this Book in order to truly understand the Author’s conclusions about the roles of Women In Christian Ministry, then, SORRY, you must carefully read the entire Book, and do what I have done in the above Section of this Review, which is to outline the Book’s contents. Of course, you might also just rely on my Outline which appears above.

IS THIS BOOK ONE WHICH SHOULD BE IN THE TEI LIBRARY OR BE USED IN ANY TEI OR ECLI CLASS?

In your Reviewer’s opinion, this Book is a must have for the TEI library, or for the Section of the Library of any Christian Study Center which deals with the questions relating to the proper roles of Christian Women In Christian Ministry, marriage, the home and society particularly the questions: (1) “Are the proper roles for women in Christian Ministry restricted by the so-called ‘prohibition texts’ such as 1 Timothy 2?” and (2) “Are all matters of the marriage or home subject to the ultimate control of the husband/the male requiring ‘submission’ by the wife?” and (3) “Do the New Testament Household Codes, such as Colossians 3:18-4:1, put the husband in ultimate control of all matters of the home and marriage?” and (4) “Did Women perform any significant roles in the early church?, and (5) “Are women somehow biblically subordinated to me?” This Book is a valuable resource to be used in writings about, or discussions about any of these questions or related questions. THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT BOOK.

Insofar as using this Book, in any TEI/ECLI Class, it is your Reviewer’s opinion that it would not be useful as a text for any of these classes, but it would be a very useful resource to be used in any seminars or group discussions relating to any of the questions posed in the preceding paragraph or any related questions.

I would add one final Note. In this Book our Author again reminds us that one cannot read one of Paul’s Epistles and conclude that God has, through Paul, stated a Command which Universally applies to all Christians, or all Churches, everywhere, for all times and under all circumstances, without having a complete understanding of the historical context which surrounds what Paul has said. Is he saying “Thus Sayeth the Lord”, or is he addressing a specific situation which was impacting his mission of spreading the gospel? Is he giving advice about how to deal with a given situation, or is he expounding a God Given Mandate?

Thank You, Dear Reader, For Putting Up with This Review

Dan Simon