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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Virginia Rajakumari Sandiyagu SAB, *Women as Eyewitnesses to the Christian Kerygma. The Galilean Women in the Redaction of Luke: An Exegetical Study of Luke 8:1-3*, Bengaluru: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2017. Pages: 551. ISBN: 978-81-933745-0-4**

The book is an exhaustive study of Luke 8:1-3. It is a modified version of the author's doctoral dissertation. The author identifies the previous studies of the scholars on the text (Lk 8:1-3) as incomplete. For example, some of them emphasized the role of the women of Galilee as serving at the table in the life of Jesus and those with him during their missionary journey, and some others found them as "followers" of Jesus and still others wanted to present them as "disciples" of Jesus. Unlike the previous findings, the author in the book presents Galilean women as "eyewitnesses" of Christian Kerygma.

This book is a unique contribution to the world of biblical research. Luke 8:1-3 was overlooked for centuries because of its genre as a summary or as it is a text dealing with women and their association with Jesus and his companions, which was not a very welcome topic of study by the hierarchical Church. The author has successfully brought into light the most probable meaning of the text and thus establishes the significant role of the women in the life and ministry of Jesus and the early Church. As Luke uses some peculiar expressions to present women characters in his narrative, he is sometimes labelled as "anti-feminist." However, a sincere attempt is made in the book to clarify the misinterpretations of certain expressions used by Luke by a detailed study of the redactional features of the text. By presenting women as eyewitnesses to the events of Jesus' life, as well as to the events in the early Christian community the unity between Luke's gospel and Acts is established in a commendable manner.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part consists of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the limits of the text and establishes the unity of the text. The immediate and remote contexts

are identified to locate the text in the general structure of the Gospel according to Luke. The author concludes that the text is having broader contexts beginning with Lk 4 till the story of the Pentecost in Acts 2. The unit manifests the presence and activities of women, extending beyond the stories of Jesus' death and resurrection, namely, their presence in the first community in Acts. This text is not simply a summary but is a transitional text which summarises the previous episodes and facilitates the following narrative, which extends up to the beginning of the early church (39-58). The second chapter deals with the text-critical issues of Luke 8:1-3 in order to arrive at the most probable meaning of the text (57-86). In the third chapter linguistic and syntactical issues are analysed and the chapter concludes by presenting a syntactic structure of the text and in that structure women are identified as being in company of Jesus just as the twelve (87-120). The fourth chapter deals with the redaction-critical study of Luke 8:1-3, in which the most probable sources of the text are identified (121-169).

In the second part there are three chapters in which five characters mentioned in the text are studied in detail, namely, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, ἕτεροι πολλοί, (many others), and οἱ δώδεκα (the Twelve). The author observes that Mary Magdalene was not a sinner who was forgiven by Jesus. She is one of those who were healed by Jesus from severe sickness, which may have led her to dedicate her life in service to Jesus (173-230). Joanna and Susanna are identified as the eyewitnesses in the Galilean ministry of Jesus and the mention about "many others" in the company of Jesus indicates a larger group of women disciples involved in providing for Jesus and his disciples (231-271). The Twelve are usually with Jesus to accompany him from place to place. Into this setting Luke places the women of Galilee not only as his travelling companions but also as eyewitnesses of the deeds of Jesus (272-295).

The third part which consists of two chapters, deals with the comprehensive study of the role of the women of Galilee in the gospel according to Luke. The first chapter analyses the word διακονέω and argues against the tendency of interpreting the service of women as table service and establishes that Luke is presenting them as benefactresses. The study further highlights the women as disciples of Jesus in the full sense of the word against the tendency of certain authors who argue that Luke does not consider the women as disciples (296-347). The second chapter tries to prove that Luke intends to depict the Galilean women as eyewitnesses. The women who were with Jesus in his Galilean ministry are proved to be

eyewitnesses in Galilee. They are also presented as eyewitnesses of the crucifixion in which men disciples are found to be absent. The author also analyses various verbs of seeing used by Luke and shows that the intention of the evangelist is to highlight the aspect of personal and first-hand experience of the women at the crucifixion, burial and the empty tomb. This section is followed by an analysis of the actions of the women in order to prove their personal presence at the cross and the tomb. This makes clear to the reader that the Christian Kerygma which is intertwined with the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, has its roots in the eyewitnesses of the Galilean women who became the first messengers to the eleven and all the rest. The next section attempts to demonstrate that the Galilean women were present with the eleven and Mother of Jesus in the upper room and that on the day of Pentecost, they too became the recipients of the Spirit that was promised through the prophecy of Joel. In the final section the author argues that the women of Galilee were not mere witnesses but eyewitnesses (348-477).

I appreciate the author for taking up a daring step of bringing into light the significant role played by women disciples in the life and ministry of Jesus and the first Christian community by a scientific and critical study of Luke 8:1-3. This book can of course enlighten the Church in general and especially those who are in authority to promote women participation in the ongoing mission of the Church.

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