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"Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Context" - Book Review

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Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey, eds., *Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Contexts* (Sydney, Australia: Australian Pentecostal Studies, 2009). 312 pp. \$40.00 paperback.

Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Contexts, volume three of the Australian Pentecostal Studies Supplementary Series, is a collection of essays “stimulated by a passion to see the next generation of Pentecostal and Charismatic (PC) women, along with Christian women in all church and denominations, provided with the opportunity to follow the leading of the Spirit and flourish in ministry” (10). Armed with this passion, the contributors to the volume hope that their essays will “play a part in changing the way women think about themselves and the way the church as a whole thinks about women in its midst” (12).

In chapter one, Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey, the editors of *Raising Leaders*, frame this collection in terms of the experiences of women pastors, noting that many of the book’s contributors have first hand experience instructing women ministers as professors and pastors. Chapter two, Cheryl Catford’s “Women’s Experiences: Challenges for Female Leaders in Pentecostal Contexts,” offers a broad survey of the sociological, theological, cultural and familial barriers that stand between women and the ministry. This is followed by Shane Clifton’s rousing, hard-hitting essay entitled, “Sexism and the Demonic in Church Life and Mission,” a standout effort. Clifton attempts to dismantle “common sense” notions of gender difference, standing against the “demonic biases of patriarchal individuals, churches and cultures” (69). Clifton’s essay is a refreshing counter to efforts by complementarian writers such as Mark Driscoll, John Piper, and Wayne Grudem.

Chapters four through six, Jacqueline Grey’s “Models of Women’s Leadership in the Bible,” Kevin Giles’s “Jesus and Women,” and David M. Parker’s “Women in Ministry and the Home: Sampling a NT Perspective,” discuss biblical perspectives on women in ministry. Chapters seven, eight, and nine tackle theological issues related to the godhead and women in church leadership. “The Trinity Argument,” by Kevin Giles, argues that hierarchical notions of the Trinity are not only outside of orthodoxy, but contribute to hierarchical notions of gender. “Talking about a Male God and Pastor’s Wives,” by Shane Clifton and Kate Tennikoff, addresses the balancing act performed by those who confess a traditional Trinity (father, son, spirit), while attempting to expand metaphorical language about God to include a god that transcends gender. “Imaging God, Embodying Christ: A Pentecostal Contribution to a ‘New’-matological argument for Women in Ministry,” by Lisa P. Stephenson argues that the outpouring of the Spirit (as recorded in Lucan literature) removes “dualistic constructions of male over female” (189), freeing women to pursue ministerial callings on equal footing with men.

Next, “The Contribution of Women to Pentecostalism,” by Mark Hutchinson, presents a selective history of women’s contributions to the global Pentecostal movement, with a focus on Australian Pentecostalism. Chapter eleven, “The History of Feminist Theology,” by Anne Tuohy discusses the feminist theologies of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Judith Plaskow, and others, while chapter thirteen, “Spirituality in a Feminine Voice: On Feminine Spirituality,” by Robyn Wrigley-Carr and Matthew Del Nevo, argues for a distinct kind of “feminine” spirituality. The twelfth chapter, “Communication and Expectations:

Differences between Men and Women Explored,” by Lily Arasaratnam, explores different communication styles employed by men and women, particularly in Westernized contexts. The fourteenth chapter, “Mentoring Women” by Jennie Bickmore-Brand and Claire Madden, gives practical advice for raising women leaders through mentoring relationships, and Jacqueline Greg and Kristi Rigg’s “Seeds for the Future: Raising Women Leaders,” gives concluding thoughts, personal testimonies, and additional advice for women seeking to minister.

The authors of *Raising Women Leaders* attempt to walk a very fine line between the church and the university. They employ academically authoritative disciplines (sociology, theology, communication theory) for the betterment (defined in this case in terms of gender equality in church leadership) of the Pentecostal/charismatic church. The in-between status of the collection makes it difficult to categorize and evaluate in academic or ecclesial terms. The book would benefit academically from a more rigorous theoretical approach, including a chapter that is dedicated to the discussion of gender and gender theory (distinct from feminist theory/theology). In addition, many essayists do not explicitly tie their topic to Pentecostal-Charismatic communities, leaving it to the reader to make such connections. At its best, however, *Raising Women Leaders* is an ecclesially-minded book that includes practical advice, concrete examples, and testimonies from women ministers. Unfortunately, the volume is priced at forty dollars, which will probably eliminate it from many church reading lists.

Despite these concerns, *Raising Women Leaders* provides scholars of global Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions and women in religious leadership food for thought, and gives churchmen and women opportunities to think about the call to minister beyond traditional gender roles.

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