

Pastor Stef's Book Review – November 2016

I don't have a subscription to *Cosmopolitan* or read the magazine, but it is pretty difficult not to know of the existence. If you have stood in line at any grocery store you have seen the glossy covers of busty women and the headlines promising you "77 New Positions" to spice up your sex life. (Really, how many positions are actually humanly possible?) Then I heard about Sue Ellen Browder's book ***Subverted: How I Helped the Sexual Revolution Hijack the Women's Movement (2015)***.

Browder's book takes us on a trip from the beginning of her years as a journalist for magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, to the death of her husband of forty years. But the book *Subverted* is also part confession and part testimony of how Sue came to faith in Jesus Christ, and how he changed her thinking about marriage, abortion, sex, children and work. She is now speaking out against many of the positions she once supported.

Sue's newfound faith in Christ led her to the Catholic Church, causing some reviewers to summarize the book as "from *Cosmos* to Catholic." (This also leads her to extremely conservative views on contraceptives). Sue's conversion into the Catholic Church was the most disappointing part of the book for me, not because I don't think Catholics are Christians, but because much of her reasoning for becoming a Catholic is faulty. She makes comments about discovering that the Protestants were missing books in their Bible and that this is because Martin Luther "threw them out." (p. 166). Even a simple google search would prove this to be untrue. The reality is that the Catholic Church officially *added* books (Apocrypha) to their Bible *after* the Reformation during the *Council of Trent* in 1546 AD. She also quotes some of Martin Luther's less than flattering remarks about women (p. 177), but fails to acknowledge that these are from his *Table Talk* (meaning, off the cuff) and not from his theological works (not that this totally excuses him). As well, she fails to acknowledge the cultural norms of this time period. Many Catholic writers made similar (and even worse) remarks about women. For instance, Thomas Aquinas, one of the Catholic Churches most respected theologians, taught that women were defective men, imperfect in both body and soul. Aquinas' ideas led to the premise behind canon law that said women were inferior beings to men. In fact, Luther began the process of elevating women, much more than did the Catholic Church of his day, by affirming their roles as wife, mother and house keeper as holy vocations, rather than seeing the nunnery as the only "holy" thing for women to do.

Despite sloppy and simplistic church history, there is no doubt that Sue Ellen Browder has embraced the Christian faith and that her relationship with Christ is real and has made her speak out against many of the things she once supported. *Subverted* gives you an insider look at how *Cosmo* doesn't report reality, but creates reality. (e.g. Many of the "confessions" in the magazine and the statics about what people do are simply made up). Browder includes a chapter on her appearance on Oprah and the agenda and exploitation of people she experienced while on that show. Some of the chapters do slow the story down too much, at least from my perspective - especially when she gets into the back story behind *Roe vs Wade* (1973) and the history and politics behind the abortion movement (although I'm sure some people will find this quite interesting). The book is a wonderful testimony of how Christ is continuing to change people's lives and, through them, fight back against darkness.