

The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth

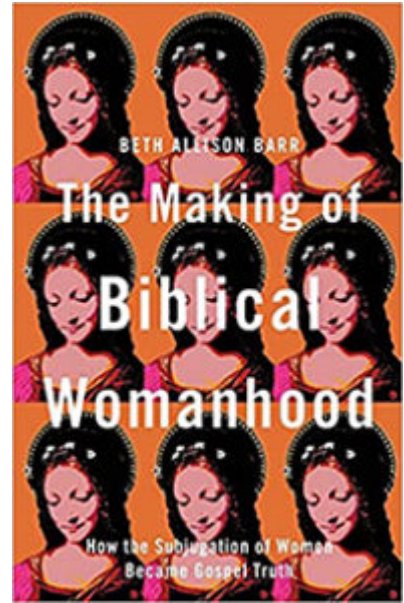
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The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth

By Beth Allison Barr (Brazos Press)

Beth Allison Barr grew up in a Southern Baptist church in a small Texas town. She was taught and believed complementarian theology—the idea wives are subordinate to husbands, and women are not to be in leadership over men in the church.

Like many in Southern Baptist life, 2016 and 2017 were a turning point for her. In 2016, a video surfaced in which presidential candidate Donald Trump bragged about sexually assaulting women. His evangelical supporters—Baptists in Texas among them—explained it away. Evangelical support for Trump troubled Barr, as it did Beth Moore, because of its relation to complementarian theology.



As a medieval historian on the faculty at Baylor University, Barr came into contact with stories of Christian women leaders that contradicted what she was taught about women’s subordination being a fact of church history. Her study of history led her to question even her own church’s stance on women’s leadership in the church, culminating in 2017 with Barr’s husband being let go from his position there over the issue. Barr weaves this story—how it developed and the pain associated with it—throughout the book.

Barr builds her argument against complementarianism through a chronological examination of how readers, interpreters, translators and preachers of Scripture have understood the role of women and their relationship to men throughout Christian history.

The book reads like a shot across the bow, until the next to last chapter, at which point the whistling cannonball lands square on the deck of the complementarian ship. As Barr sees it, complementarianism is worse than a misreading of Paul, an application of worldliness in the form of patriarchy, and a denial of historical realities—as bad as those are. Complementarian arguments have developed to the point of threatening the core of Christian

theology.

Barr doesn't shrink back from taking on prominent Baptists and evangelicals, such as Owen Strachan, Russell Moore, John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Nor does she hold back criticisms of the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and the English Standard Version of the Bible.

Barr's account of the rise, development and current state of patriarchy and complementarian theology is not likely to change committed complementarians' minds. Those looking for proofs for an egalitarian reading of Scripture will find some. The book's greatest contribution, however, is its potential for generating conversation and debate. Whether a person is complementarian, egalitarian or something else, the position ought to be a thoroughly studied one.

*Eric Black, executive director, publisher, editor
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