

“Acknowledge Those Who Work Hard among You”: The Absence of Women’s Work in Complementarian Seminary Curricula

At the height of this year’s outcry over Paige Patterson’s long pattern of sexism and mishandling abuse, it seemed like complementarianism might face a reckoning. For all the happy, mutually respectful couples who identify as complementarian, can a system that rests on women’s essentially submissive nature really keep them safe when something goes wrong? At a deeper level, can a system that bans women from participation in certain ministries of the church produce a sustainable culture of respect for women? The answer, it seems to me, lies partially in the way the theology is *applied* to “exceptional” situations by its boots-on-the-ground practitioners—pastors.

Patterson is not the only pastor—nor the only famous pastor—to set an example of misogynistic and dangerous appropriation of complementarianism at those crucial moments when a philosophical system is shown to be *ethically* viable or bankrupt. Whether he acted in line with some sort of “pure” complementarianism or not, systems like this one, that in practice are highly relevant to the lives of the whole church, do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are partially *constituted* by the actions of those who define their terms. Patterson, until recently, was one of those powerful evangelicals whose ministries and writings inform what complementarianism is, and his position as an educator gave him great sway over the formation of those who would preach and practice it all over the world.

Two weeks before Patterson was forced to resign as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, historian Beth Allison Barr responded to the situation with research on Southern Baptist (SBC) education published on her blog.[\[1\]](#) Positing that a failure to understand women’s place in Christian history was behind the toxic brand of sexism that eventually brought Patterson down, she looked at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) course catalog to find out what men were learning as they prepared to be pastors.

Barr found eight courses on history and four that mentioned women among the 148 offered that semester. She also counted content on women in the history textbooks being used, and found that 98.6% of primary sources (all but one) and 94% of the content of the secondary sourcebook concerned men.[\[2\]](#) Barr suggests that without any knowledge of women in church history, nor much of history in general, SBC pastors are left assuming that women play little or no role in Christian history and ought to play diminished ones in today’s church. In a chapter for a forthcoming edition of *Discovering Biblical Equality*, Mimi Haddad argues that disinterest in women’s history plagues the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in a similar way, leading to incorrect and androcentric assumptions among evangelicals. I provided research for this chapter on ETS conference and journal content, which forms part of the data reported in this paper.

I am further concerned that people are led to believe that complementarianism is “traditional”—a misconception that allows the inconsistencies at the heart of the system to be treated as longstanding spiritual mysteries instead of recent logical flaws. I expanded Barr’s project to

fifteen conservative seminaries, including SWBTS, as well as to all the history content published by the Evangelical Theological Society in the last thirty years. At each seminary, I investigate not just history, but all departments, as well as faculty. While I agree with Barr's contention that a lack of historical awareness contributes to sexism in the church, I further find that women's issues are systematically compartmentalized, women's academic work is ignored or suppressed, women faculty are not treated as equals, and academic interest in women is primarily directed toward the maintenance of male power. Across multiple disciplines, men are educated for ministry that both overlooks women's work and blames them for problems, while asking students to uphold a system of thought that is logically flawed and inconsistent with experience. The knowledge of God, meanwhile, is misappropriated as a possession of men, rather than a gift of the Spirit.

Methods

Women in History at ETS[\[3\]](#)

I read through issues of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* from 1988 through the first issue in 2018, counting all the history-related articles and reviews of history-related books. I did the same with conference programs from ETS annual meetings for the years 1998–2000, 2002–05, and 2007–17. ETS informed me that conference programs no longer exist for the meetings through 1997, in 2001, and in 2006. I excluded content from the Evangelical Philosophical Society, which shares meeting space and lists its sessions in the program.

Women in all subjects at Evangelical seminaries

Sample

For my sample, I chose the following fifteen Protestant seminaries with conservative views on biblical inerrancy. Broadly, they represent four streams of Reformation thought. I selected three Reformed schools, one of which is the only official seminary of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). The other two frequently educate PCA pastors. Both schools affiliated with the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) are on the list, as well as both connected with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). I included all six Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) seminaries and finally, two non-denominational schools. Bethlehem College and Seminary is important to any complementarian sample, as John Piper is its chancellor, and it maintains the most exclusionary admissions policies of any school on this list by banning women from all its graduate programs. Bob Jones University is a relatively close approximation of what I expected to find at the influential Liberty University Rawlings School of Divinity, with a far more manageable dataset. Bob Jones is certainly stricter in its views on gender than is Liberty, but is known for many of the same commitments to social and political conservatism and falls within a similar sector of evangelicalism. These schools vary in their attitudes toward women in ministry, though most state complementarian views.

- Westminster Theological Seminary, founded by dissenting professors during the Princeton controversy of the early twentieth century
- Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS), which educates a large number of PCA pastors

- Covenant Theological Seminary, affiliated with the PCA
- Trinity School for Ministry, affiliated with the ACNA, which ordains women to the priesthood (not as bishops) by local option, but is led by a complementarian archbishop
- Nashotah House Theological Seminary, affiliated with the ACNA
- Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, affiliated with the complementarian LCMS
- Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, affiliated with the LCMS
- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), affiliated with the SBC
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS), affiliated with the SBC
- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS), affiliated with the SBC
- Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS), affiliated with the SBC
- New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), affiliated with the SBC
- Gateway Seminary of the SBC
- Bob Jones Seminary and Graduate School of Religion, an independent fundamentalist Baptist school
- Bethlehem College and Seminary, founded as an expansion of Bethlehem Baptist Church's leadership training program

Curricula

For each school, I read through the most recent available course catalog, counting courses into five broad divisions:

- *Theology*, including systematic theology, ethics, apologetics, world religions, and philosophy
- *Biblical studies*, including Old and New Testament, archaeology, and hermeneutics
- *History*, including, because of the frequency with which it is the only history offered, historical theology
- *Practical topics*, including, but not limited to, homiletics, pastoral care, evangelism, spiritual formation, Christian education, and worship
- *Other*. A few topics, such as bioethics, creative writing, and homemaking, fall into the "other" category, and I have also placed women's studies, where distinct from women's ministry, in this section.

For each of these divisions, I counted all the courses that are either *on women* or *for women only*. I suspected from the outset that many courses that might refer to women or their issues would be about marriage and sexuality or would be limited to women, and I have separated these as far as possible from general curriculum courses *about* women. Of course, because schools usually release a new catalog every year, it is possible that all of these seminaries offer classes on women every second year that I did not count. I excluded internships, practica, independent study, and languages (except exegesis courses). Because some schools also offer degrees for licensing in

non-ministry fields, I also eliminated education, music, and counseling courses, where not explicitly directed toward congregational ministry.

Faculty

Finally, I counted the faculty, including adjuncts, at each school, deferring to the catalog when its list differed from that elsewhere on the school’s website. In the case of schools that offer undergraduate programs, these faculty are included, as many teach in both programs and I consider women teaching in the undergraduate program relevant to a school’s attitude toward women faculty. This also allowed me to report the highest possible figure for each school. The undergraduate programs offered at these schools are typically accessory to the school’s primary purpose as a seminary. The exception is Bob Jones, where the seminary constitutes a department in an otherwise established university; only religion professors are counted here, though they may teach undergraduate and/or graduate students. I counted as “non-adjunct” anyone at or above the assistant professor rank and visiting professors. I calculated gender ratios for each school and as a composite figure. I also consulted the Association of Theological Schools’ (ATS) reported gender distributions. ATS reports only full-time faculty in seminary/divinity school programs, so its figure cannot perfectly correspond to my composite total percentage for all faculty in undergraduate and graduate programs at these fifteen schools. However, it is worth noting that women typically make up a greater proportion of adjuncts than of tenured faculty—women with young children, in particular, are 35% less likely to land a tenure-track position than men in the same situation[4]—and for that reason I expect the ATS figure I report here would be higher if adjuncts were included. At the same time, the figure for these fifteen schools would be lower if only seminary professors were counted. Thus, while this comparison is not flawless, more data would not improve the picture for these schools, but only push the figures further apart than they already are.

Results

Table 1. The Evangelical Theological Society’s output of women’s history as a percentage of all history content, 1988–2018.

Evangelical Theological Society[5]	On history	On women’s history	% women’s history
ETS meeting (1998–2000, 2002–05, 2007–17): <i>plenary address</i>	9	0	0.00
ETS meeting (1998–2000, 2002–05, 2007–17): <i>workshop/individual paper</i>	995	21	2.11
<i>JETS</i> (1988: no. 1–2018: no. 1): <i>journal article</i>	98	2	2.04

<i>JETS</i> (1988: no. 1–2018: no. 1): <i>book review</i>	225	6	2.67
Total	1327	29	2.19

Table 2. Faculty by gender: at 15 seminaries, as a composite figure, and as reported by the Association of Theological Schools.

School	Non-Adjunct	Women	Adjunct	Women	Total	Women	%
Westminster [6]	29	0	44	2	73	2	2.74
RTS [7]	87	4	20	3	107	7	6.54
Covenant (PCA) [8]	21	1	6	2	27	3	11.11
Bob Jones [9]	21	0	5	0	26	0	0.00
Bethlehem College and Seminary [10]	16	1	12	2	28	3	10.71
Trinity School for Ministry (ACNA) [11]	23	3	n/a	n/a	23	3	13.04
Nashotah House (ACNA) [12]	11	0	5	0	16	0	0.00
Concordia St Louis (LCMS) [13]	58	0	n/a	n/a	58	0	0.00
Concordia Ft Wayne (LCMS) [14]	32	0	20	1	52	1	1.92
SBTS (SBC) [15]	113	6	4	0	117	6	5.13
SWBTS (SBC) [16]	103	9	n/a	n/a	103	9	8.74
SEBTS (SBC) [17]	84	3	22	2	106	5	4.72

MBTS (SBC) [18]	24	1	n/a	n/a	24	1	4.17
NOBTS (SBC) [19]	83	10	44	14	127	24	18.90
Gateway (SBC) [20]	53	5	116	11	169	16	9.47
Total	758	43	298	37	1056	80	7.58
Total reported to the Association of Theological Schools in 2017 [21]	3449	857	n/a	n/a	3449	857	24.85

Table 3. Courses and programs restricted by gender.

School [22]	Beliefs on gender	Enrollment in some courses restricted to men	Enrollment in some degree programs restricted to men
Westminster	Complementarian	Yes	<i>Yes: Master of Divinity (Pastoral Ministry track) and Doctor of Ministry (Pastoral Ministry and Preaching tracks)</i>
RTS	Complementarian	Yes	No
Covenant [23]	Complementarian	Yes	No
Bob Jones	Complementarian	Yes	<i>Yes: Professional Ministry Studies division (education for non-degreed working pastors)</i>
Bethlehem	Complementarian	Yes	<i>Yes: women are not admitted to any seminary degree program</i>

Trinity	None stated	No	No
Nashotah House	None stated	No	No
Concordia St Louis	Complementarian	Yes	<i>Yes: Master of Divinity, Master of Sacred Theology, and Doctor of Ministry</i>
Concordia Ft Wayne	Complementarian	Yes	<i>Yes: Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry</i>
SBTS	Complementarian	Yes	<i>Yes: Master of Divinity (Pastoral Studies track)</i>
SWBTS	Complementarian	Yes	No
SEBTS	Complementarian	Yes	No
MBTS	Complementarian	Yes	No
NOBTS	Complementarian	Yes	No
Gateway	Complementarian	Yes	No

Table 4. Percent of courses by topical grouping at 15 seminaries and as composite figures.

School [24]	Total	Practical	%	Theology	%	Biblical Studies	%	History	%	Other	%
Westminster	152	43	28.3	47	30.9	38	25.0	24	15.8	0	0.0
RTS	178	59	33.1	46	25.8	55	30.9	18	10.1	0	0.0
Covenant	68	40	58.8	7	10.3	17	25.0	4	5.9	0	0.0
Bob Jones	91	28	30.8	18	19.8	38	41.8	7	7.7	0	0.0
Bethlehem	40	16	40.0	10	25.0	12	30.0	2	5.0	0	0.0

Trinity	44	13	29. 5	16	36. 4	10	22. 7	5	11. 4	0	0. 0
Nashotah House	36	12	33. 3	6	16. 7	10	27. 8	8	22. 2	0	0. 0
Concordia St Louis	77	25	32. 5	16	20. 8	19	24. 7	17	22. 1	0	0. 0
Concordia Ft Wayne	162	38	23. 5	40	24. 7	40	24. 7	44	27. 2	0	0. 0
SBTS	259	137	46. 6	43	14. 6	55	18. 7	24[25]	8.2	0	0. 0
SWBTS	509	215	42. 2	80	15. 7	150	29. 5	35	6.9	29	5. 7
SEBTS	298	161	54. 0	62	20. 8	33	11. 1	37	12. 4	5	1. 7
MBTS	276	130	47. 1	36	13. 0	91	33. 0	19	6.9	0	0. 0
NOBTS	423	221	52. 2	52	12. 3	132	31. 2	18	4.3	0	0. 0
Gateway	246	135	54. 9	24	9.8	63	25. 6	24	9.8	0	0. 0
Total	2859	1273	44. 5	503	17. 6	763	26. 7	286	10. 0	34	1. 2

Table 5. Practical courses having to do with women or limited to women.

School[26]	Practical	On women	%	For women only	%
Westminster	43	1	2.3	0	0.0
RTS	59	0	0.0	1	1.7
Covenant	40	0	0.0	0	0.0
Bob Jones	28	0	0.0	1	3.6
Bethlehem	16	0	0.0	0	0.0
Trinity	13	0	0.0	0	0.0

Nashotah House	12	0	0.0	0	0.0
Concordia St Louis	25	1	4.0	0	0.0
Concordia Ft Wayne	38	0	0.0	9	23.7
SBTS	137	0	0.0	0	0.0
SWBTS	215	6	2.8	3	1.4
SEBTS	161	6	3.7	6	3.7
MBTS	130	0	0.0	0	0.0
NOBTS	221	17	7.7	12	5.4
Gateway	135	4	3.0	0	0.0
Total	1273	35	2.7	32	2.5

Table 6. Theology courses having to do with women.

School [27]	Theology	On women	%
Westminster	47	0	0.0
RTS	46	0	0.0
Covenant	7	0	0.0
Bob Jones	18	0	0.0
Bethlehem	10	0	0.0
Trinity	16	0 [28]	0.0
Nashotah House	6	0	0.0
Concordia St Louis	16	0	0.0
Concordia Ft Wayne	40	0	0.0
SBTS	43	0	0.0
SWBTS	80	0	0.0
SEBTS	62	1	1.6
MBTS	36	1	2.8

NOBTS	52	0	0.0
Gateway	24	0	0.0
Total	503	2	0.4

Table 7. Biblical studies courses having to do with women.

School[29]	Biblical Studies	On women	%
Westminster	38	0	0.0
RTS	55	2[30]	3.6
Covenant	17	0	0.0
Bob Jones	38	1[31]	2.6
Bethlehem	12	0	0.0
Trinity	10	0	0.0
Nashotah House	10	0	0.0
Concordia St Louis	19	0	0.0
Concordia Ft Wayne	40	0	0.0
SBTS	55	1	1.8
SWBTS	150	4[32]	2.7
SEBTS	33	1	3.0
MBTS	91	0	0.0
NOBTS	132	4[33]	3.0
Gateway	63	1	1.6
Total	763	14	1.8

Table 8. History courses having to do with women.

School[34]	History	On women	%
Westminster	24	0	0.0
RTS	18	0	0.0
Covenant	4	0	0.0
Bob Jones	7	0	0.0

Bethlehem	2	0	0.0
Trinity	5	0	0.0
Nashotah House	8	0	0.0
Concordia St Louis	17	0	0.0
Concordia Ft Wayne	44	3 ^[35]	6.8
SBTS	24	0	0.0
SWBTS	35	0 ^[36]	0.0
SEBTS	37	2	5.4
MBTS	19	0	0.0
NOBTS	18	2	11.1
Gateway	24	1	4.2
Total	286	8	2.8

Table 9. Other courses having to do with women or limited to women.

School ^[37]	Other	On women	%	For women only	%
SWBTS	29	14 (overlap of 2)	48.3	7 (overlap of 2)	24.1
SEBTS	5	0	0.0	1	20.0
Total	34	14 (overlap of 2)	41.2	8 (overlap of 2)	23.5

Discussion

Women in History at ETS

The Evangelical Theological Society's output of women's history is consistent across multiple datasets at just over two percent of all history content. Some of these concern married couples of whom the husband is the better known figure, and less than half are about individual female figures in history. In contrast to the mere twenty-nine articles, book reviews, and conference presentations on women in the whole history of the church, over the same period I counted 137 on Jonathan Edwards alone.

While a quick glance over any conference program for the past several years indicates ETS is quite interested in *gender*, it is not, evidently, much interested in women. There is plenty of

discussion on the theological foundations for preserving male authority and preeminence, and some tolerance of opposing viewpoints on *that* question. However, this reduces women to an abstract “role” in a discussion of what is proper to them in a generally essentialist framework. The reality of women’s work, faith, theology, and experiences is apparently irrelevant.^[38] Women matter academically insofar as the roles they occupy matter—justification and maintenance of gender hierarchy, rather than the pursuit of knowledge, are the major concerns. This is one among many manifestations of a fault-line problem in complementarian discussion of women: disinterested commentary on real women who have done something of value is rare. Rather, women are fawned over as a group for their “unique contributions,” or men are overly concerned that women understand how valuable their (technically powerless) input is. This anxiety to make women feel better may stem from unconscious guilt over the artificial power imbalance of complementarianism when compared with men’s experience of women. However, I suspect ignorance of the authority and influence women have exerted in, for example, such major events as the Council of Constantinople, the translation of the Vulgate, the clerical morality scandals of the eleventh century, and the theological and political affairs of the Reformation. Complementarianism assumes a circumscribed role for women that does not allow for the preaching, theological writing, and authority historical awareness would expose.

For men who assume they are preserving Christian tradition with complementarianism, women’s history is naturally a “special interest” topic—a concession made when there is nothing more important to discuss. If it is true that women participating in public ministry is a recent capitulation to modern culture, then women’s history is not likely to be of much interest to anyone other than women. On the other hand, if history about women were a more common topic of discussion, I imagine there would be a shift in complementarians’ perception of women’s abilities, the importance of their ministry to the whole church, and what may be said to be “traditional,” theologically and otherwise.

Women in all subjects at evangelical seminaries

Across all departments and all fifteen schools, courses about women constitute 2.2% of the total. These courses make up 0.4% of theology, 1.8% of biblical studies, 2.8% of history, 2.7% of practical topics, and 41.2% of “other” courses. The Women’s Studies department at SWBTS explains the high percentage in the “other” category, because at SWBTS it is distinct from Women’s Ministry (“practical”). However, this exposes the compartmentalization of “women’s issues,” as the department collects women’s history, theology of womanhood, and women in the Bible while being at least partially limited to women. Even those courses that are not technically closed to men are effectively labeled “non-essential” by their relegation to a special department with which no male degree candidate is ever required to interact. In this vein, of the eight schools that do not have any special “women’s degree,” five have not a single class on women. Among the other three, Westminster offers one elective course on the “role” of women in the church, and Bob Jones and RTS offer one and two, respectively, which study the books of Ruth and Esther. As at ETS, women themselves are a women’s interest, not essential to a man’s education, nor to a pastor.

Faculty

Rarely did a school volunteer its statistics for enrollment by gender, though racial and ethnic distributions were generally available. The exception is Westminster, which reports 82% male students.^[39] Publishing gender ratios among admissions information is generally an attempt by a school to appear welcoming to women. Equity, or even the appearance of it, is evidently not a priority for these seminaries. In fact, Bethlehem's published non-discrimination policy fails to mention discrimination on the basis of gender—a conspicuous omission, given that it is highly unusual.^[40]

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has the highest percentage of female faculty (18.9%), though it is worth noting that it also has the most women's ministry courses. Even this figure, significantly larger than that at most of the schools, falls six points lower than that reported for all schools accredited by ATS. Furthermore, more than half of NOBTS's female faculty are adjuncts, whom ATS does not count (see Methods). Taken together, these fifteen schools report 7.58% female faculty, with 20% of these seminaries employing no female professors at all. Counting only non-adjuncts, women make up just 5.67%, while ATS reports 24.85% female full-time faculty at schools it accredits—proportionally more than *four times* those at these fifteen seminaries. ATS also reports that 27.7% of those completing doctoral degrees are women.^[41] Furthermore, women at these seminaries are often teaching women's ministry, women's studies, counseling, or education. Women are rare on the faculty of departments that teach theological topics to men. In fact, Reformed Theological Seminary explicitly bans women from serving on its faculties in theology, practical theology, and biblical studies.^[42]

Even as it seems impossible for qualified women to gain a footing in departments these seminaries regard as central, those women who teach other women are often not required to hold the same credentials as their male colleagues who teach men. For example, 92% of RTS' male faculty is at least a candidate for a terminal degree, compared to 28.6% of the female faculty. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Distinguished Professor of Women's Studies has not received a doctoral degree, and even her bachelor's degree is totally unrelated to the department in which she teaches.^[43] The requirement that SBC faculty, in particular, affirm complementarianism no doubt shrinks the pool of highly-educated female candidates significantly, but I doubt the problem is limited to this. Rather, women are, again, a women's concern—auxiliary to the serious work of men and not particularly important. Rigor and credibility among women, and among those who teach them, are also not particularly important. The purpose of many of these courses is to tell women how to be the kind of inoffensive wives they believe men want.

What does this do for male students at complementarian seminaries? Men who train at these schools learn nothing about women academically, leaving them with the impression that women have been unimportant—indeed, unnecessary—throughout Christian history, that they do not contribute to theology, and that their pastoral care can be left to other women, who typically are neither paid nor trained. Because they are also not compelled to learn from female faculty in their graduate program, their field becomes, in their minds, a masculine one. They are never asked to see women as theologically astute or even competent, and certainly not as authority figures. Since most of these new pastors will go on to churches where women do not enjoy the

same rights and opportunities as men, many will never experience a female supervisor or even a colleague on the same level. They will never interact with women on an equal basis in a professional capacity. Women then matter as objects of male ministry or as assistants to men, but not in any capacity that does not refer to men. In fact, not a few complementarians have openly said that women were *created* for the purposes of men.^[44] Besides the implications for ministry, these problems perpetuate the male curriculum bias through those men who go on to teach at seminaries.

Special programs for women

Southern Baptist seminaries in particular are given to providing programs, and sometimes formal academic certificates, on how to be a “ministry wife.” There are classes for missionaries’ wives, pastors’ wives, and even seminary students’ wives. SBTS offers the Seminary Wives Institute—a non-degree program in which women take modified versions of a few seminary classes alongside courses on being a woman. Similarly, there are the Seminary Studies for Student Wives program (SWBTS), the Biblical Women’s Institute (SEBTS), and the Midwestern Women’s Institute (MBTS). However they may advertise themselves, these programs are not offered to provide any theological education, rather, they exist to teach women how to behave. Several courses concern “biblical womanhood,” a phrase that is loaded with decades of controversy but usually implies a dim view of working mothers. A large proportion are simply about being a wife, which means that this is perceived as a more delicate and easier botched project than being a husband (courses on how to be a good husband are exceedingly rare, although the question is raised in pastoral lifestyle classes at a couple of schools). This is in keeping with the general sense that to be a wife is to have a vocation, while to be a husband is to have an assistant. The woman, since the marriage is her job, for which she was educated, is far more likely to be blamed for marital problems, which is in fact what we frequently see from complementarians. Paige Patterson and his many defenders are this year’s best example, but anyone who has ever told a woman to submit in order to fix her husband’s bad behavior typifies this attitude.

Programs limited to men

Some seminaries ban women from the MDiv program entirely. LCMS seminaries do not admit women to the STM or DMin either, which may explain why it is so frequent that their female professors have no doctorate. Women at these schools are admitted to the MA for deaconess certification, in which are several courses about women that are closed to men. Bethlehem does not admit women to any of its graduate programs. Westminster and a few SBC schools have pastoral ministry tracks within the MDiv program from which women are barred. The most generous interpretation of this is that the school is making an effort to give future pastors an education totally focused on pastoring, whereas many MDiv programs also cater to academics and those going into a variety of ministries. However, in most of these contexts, advanced theological study is, practically, less important for women. Piper would prefer that no woman ever teach theological topics to men, so why would Bethlehem be interested in graduate theological education for women?^[45]

On the other hand, this is also a convenient way to keep women out of certain courses without explicitly stating that they are not allowed to register for them. For example, Westminster bans

women from the pastoral ministry track, and students outside this track from preaching classes. This is unfortunate for everyone involved, as it means that people who are qualified to be considered for ordination—men in the other MDiv tracks—have not taken a preaching class. A more common method of dealing with this problem is to have separate preaching or pastoral classes for men and women. The women’s courses, naturally, are not called “preaching;” there are a number of creative names for them. RTS offers the apparently identical “Exegesis and Homiletics” (for men) and “Exegesis and Communication” (for women). SWBTS offers “Expository Communication of Biblical Truth” for women, with a lower course number than its introductory preaching class. I am hard-pressed to see how “expository communication of biblical truth” can be defined as anything but preaching—but surely if it does not “count,” women could do it with male classmates in the room? It is almost as if they consider it immodest for women to speak about the Bible. Similarly, MBTS diverts women from “Pastoral Leadership” and “Introduction to Pastoral Ministry” to “Principles of Leadership” and “Introduction to Adult Ministry.” Even when women are admitted to the program, anxiety about what they are “allowed” to do necessitates ridiculous semantic distinctions—consonant with the anachronistic assertion that the Bible limits all “ordained ministry” to men.^[46] Some schools simply suggest women substitute an elective in place of preaching, in which case they are receiving a less robust education for the same degree. In any of these scenarios, men are never required to hear a woman preach, nor even to “exposit biblical truth.” This is just one way in which being made to feel “special” is part of these men’s professional (and spiritual) formation.

Practical vs. academic

A large majority (84.5%) of courses for or about women are either “practical” or “other.” In some sense, this is reasonable—courses about ministry to women are more pressing and varied, probably, than courses about womanhood as a theological topic, which is the only way in which women show up in other departments. On the other hand, this means there are no courses about female theologians, very few about women in history, and almost none about women in the Bible. The problem is less the lack of a course called “Theology of Women” or even “Women in Theology,” and more the total absence of a single seminar on a female theologian. Particularly in survey courses, the descriptions of which contain long lists of more or less obscure male thinkers, why is there nothing on the women martyrs, mystics, writers, preachers, and reformers?

Perhaps the most bizarre result of the gendering of theological education is that it is possible to take master’s level courses in homemaking at SWBTS, including one that advertises itself as an “intensive examination of the philosophic and personal aspects related to the professional Homemaking Specialist.”^[47] I admit I have no idea what a “professional Homemaking Specialist” is (a homemaker? a teacher of homemaking?), but my suspicion is that this is the result of a doomed desire to prove that “separate but equal” is a tenable way forward for graduate theological education. Homemaking is a worthwhile pursuit, but taking tuition money for graduate credit in its theoretical basis seems misleading, if not exploitative.

Why do SBC seminaries have so many courses on women?

SBC seminaries certainly have the most courses on women and for women. However, where “women” courses at my own school usually have to do with women thinkers, “women” courses

at SBC schools, and many of those I counted elsewhere, have to do with *how* to be a woman. Even the “Feminist Theology” class at SWBTS puts “biblical feminism” in quotes in the course description and mentions goddess worship as a major issue at play. The attitude is anxious and hortatory, devoting an enormous amount of energy to how women ought to behave and view themselves. Feminism is considered ruinous, and therefore women being educated for theological reasoning at the same level as men is dangerous. “Women’s studies,” contrary to the SBC’s revisionist take on the subject, is not a haphazard collection of every field’s dispatch *to* women, rather it is an interdisciplinary endeavor in which *women* interact with many fields. Yet since SBC faculty must affirm complementarianism, other viewpoints are suppressed and theology about women is necessarily didactic. At the graduate level, this is inappropriate.

The situation is slightly different in practical departments, where many courses concern how to minister to women. This is useful, though it is interesting that the same concern is not shown for men—women seem to be a divergence from the male norm covered by “general” classes. Even in practical courses, however, ministers are being educated toward essentialist assumptions about what women need or how they work. How is “Creative Writing for Women” different from creative writing for men? This and other classes, like “Evangelism for Women,” also imply that there are certain things covered in general classes that women are not allowed to do, or perhaps that men do not want to be bothered sharing “serious” classes with women.

Dearth of history

At almost every school, history plays a small role in the curriculum. Lutheran and Anglican schools are the exception; at both LCMS seminaries and Nashotah House history makes up about a quarter of the course catalog. However, both Lutheran schools list history as Historical Theology, as do RTS and MBTS. For the most part, courses in these departments seem to lean in the historical direction, rather than the theological. However, this exposes some lack of interest in history as a discipline that is matched at other schools. Across all fifteen seminaries, history makes up only 10% of the course content, just over half the figure for theology and less than a fourth of that for practical courses. *Women’s* history makes up only 0.28% of all courses. Women’s history is far more varied and interesting than are the roles women are “supposed” to play. Yet without courses on it or content within survey courses, the men who will produce the next generation of complementarian theology and practice are never asked to interact with the ways in which women have always stepped outside of those roles.

Conclusion

These data expose a number of problems. First, women are a special interest topic, unnecessary to a pastor’s education. Those courses that do concern women are largely practical; having to do with how to be a woman, what to do with women, and how women differ from men. Being a woman seems to be a predicament, one that diverges from the norm and requires special instructions. This extends to marriage, which is treated as a relationship for men but a career for women. Second, these seminaries are either unaware of or unwilling to bother with women’s *work* in theology, history, and biblical studies, and in some cases ban them from training for or engaging in it. Third, women professors, present in very small numbers, are often not required to have the same credentials as men, even as qualified candidates are turned away from those

departments that make up schools' core curricula. Women teach courses to other women that are supposedly important enough to confer graduate credit, yet the administration cannot be bothered to find qualified instructors. Finally, women matter academically only as they define a role distinct from men. This relationship is always presented as a binary, in which women flourish in some sort of "opposite" sphere. However, *norm* and *special interest divergence* do not form a binary. This relationship is rather like that between a body and its orbiting object. The *role* of "woman" is what is interesting, one that serves the interests of the normative male by truncating the development of the person who occupies it. Thus, we have dozens of seminary courses on how to be a woman, what is proper to women, or how women should relate to men, and none on what women have discovered about God.

Complementarian excuses for the story of Deborah are universally weak, so I do not expect that just knowing women's history would cause an overnight shift in attitudes toward women's ministry. However, since this is rarely, if ever, addressed in education, the myth continues that complementarianism is "traditional." What is in fact traditional is a philosophical system of rank patriarchy, and a long line of women who successfully acted in opposition to it for the good of church and society. The complementarian desire to promote ontological equality with teleological inequality is a new quest, one that seeks to preserve the conclusions of the patriarchal argument without the propositions on which they rest. The ontological inequality of men and women has always been a deep foundation of the theological systems of the church, arising not from the Bible but from philosophy. It is only very recently that anyone challenged this assumption, but both complementarians and egalitarians claim to oppose it. The difference is that egalitarians have followed equality to its logical end, while complementarians have not. As a result, nearly forty years from the inception of this debate, we see complementarians begin to shift in a more philosophically patriarchal direction, parsing what is minimally necessary and sufficient for the condition "ontological equality with men" while allowing gendered binaries and hierarchy to pervade theology and hermeneutics at every level. It is this confusion that allows for the theologically bankrupt (and historically ignorant) doctrine of the eternal (functional) subordination of the Son, as a temporary stopper for the hole in the logic. High-profile figures promote "masculine Christianity,"^[48] and recent theology has gone so far as to say that complementarianism and the gospel "are one,"^[49] both exposing not just the idolatry of gender, but a desperation to solve the unsolvable problem of complementarianism by doubling down on its position as a constituent pillar of orthodoxy. I suspect that within a few generations, as this untenable position continues to produce unstable, indefensible practice, those complementarians who have rested their hope in gender hierarchy will head for the truly "traditional" position of total philosophical patriarchy, while the others will move toward egalitarianism.

Welcoming women into theological education does not mean offering classes on how to support "real" theologians. Theology is a personal discipline, success in which comes from living, moving, and having one's being in the subject of study. The male claim to objectivity is a mirage. All theology is imprecise; there is no absolute knowledge of the infinite God who first made himself known by his freedom and lack of reference to humankind, then by his unsearchable incarnation, then by his individual indwelling of each one of us. We are his, not the other way

around. Since God's Spirit is in women as well as men, there is no privileged access to truth that comes with being male, and the enormous variation in theological viewpoints, even among men who could sign the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy, should make this obvious. Mere belief in biblical authority does not guarantee truth or unity because the Bible is not God. Rather, the Holy Spirit makes known what he will make known to whom he will make it known, and what is made known is never the full truth about God. Nor is any person infallibly the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. The whole church contributes to this work of love that has no goal but love and no end but love. To ignore women's contributions to this work is to fail in this work, because it is to claim that the work belongs to human beings.

[1] Beth Allison Barr, "Is There Hope for Evangelical Women?" *Anxious Bench* (blog), May 16, 2018, accessed August 29, 2018. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2018/05/is-there-hope-for-evan...>

[2] The books in question are *The Story of Christianity, Volume I* by Justo Gonzalez and *Readings in the History of Christian Theology* by William C. Placher.

[3] A brief summary of this research will appear in a chapter by Mimi Haddad in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 3rd edition (forthcoming).

[4] Data from the Survey of Doctorate Recipients (all fields) reported by Nicholas H. Wolfinger, "For Female Scientists, There's No Good Time to Have Children," *The Atlantic*, last modified July 29, 2013, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/07/for-female-scientists-...>

[5] All data collected from conference programs and journals. These are available online at www.etsjets.org.

[6] Westminster Theological Seminary, *2018–2019 Academic Catalog*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.wts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-2019-Catalog-v.3.pdf>.

[7] Reformed Theological Seminary, *Catalog: 2017-2019*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.rts.edu/Site/Academics/Courses/Catalogs/RTS-Catalog-2017-19.pdf>.

[8] "Faculty," Covenant Theological Seminary, accessed August 24, 2018. <https://www.covenantseminary.edu/academics/faculty/>.

[9] Bob Jones University, *Seminary & Graduate Catalog: 17-18*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.bju.edu/academics/resources-support/catalogs/grad-catalog-20...>

[10] Bethlehem College and Seminary, *2017-2018 Academic Catalog*, accessed August 24, 2018, <http://2uxt2berb3uz5oi1iq6uzjv0-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploa...> The female non-adjunct faculty member is the librarian; the two adjuncts teach undergraduates in non-theological fields.

- [11] Trinity School for Ministry, *Academic Catalog & Student Handbook 2017-2018*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.tsm.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-2018-Academic-Catalog...>
- [12] Nashotah House Theological Seminary, *Academic Catalog 2017-2018*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.nashotah.edu/sites/default/files/academics/5%20-%202017-2018...>
- [13] Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, *Academic Catalog 2018-2019*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.csl.edu/files/AcademicCatalog2018-19.pdf>.
- [14] Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, *2017-2018 Academic Catalog*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.ctsfw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Academic-Catalog-2017-1...>
- [15] Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, *2017-2018 Academic Catalog*, accessed August 24, 2018, <http://www.sbts.edu/admissions/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/09/AR-322...>
- [16] “2018-2019 Academic Catalog,” Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed August 24, 2018. <http://catalog.swbts.edu/>.
- [17] “Academic Catalog 2018-2019,” Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed August 24, 2018. <http://catalog.sebts.edu/index.php>.
- [18] Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, *2017-2018 Academic Catalog*, accessed August 24, 2018, https://www.mbts.edu/downloads/_current_students/seminary_catalog_17-18.pdf.
- [19] New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, *2018-19 Graduate Catalog*, accessed August 24, 2018, http://www.nobts.edu/_resources/pdf/academics/GraduateCatalog.pdf.
- [20] Gateway Seminary, *2018-2019 Academic Catalog*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://07fbc0072181791bed1-63fc6f11b2ad7905e74d76d8e23a9e05.ssl.cf2.ra...>
- [21] Most recent available data published by Association of Theological Schools, “Table 3.1-A Number of Full-Time Faculty by Race/Ethnicity, Rank, and Gender – All Schools” in “2017-2018 Annual Data Tables,” accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tab...>
- [22] Data for *Table 3* is available in each respective catalog; see notes on *Table 2*.
- [23] Covenant Theological Seminary, *Course Offerings 2017-2018 Academic Year*, accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.covenantseminary.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Course-Offer...>
- [24] Data for *Table 4* is counted from each respective catalog; see notes on *Table 2* and *Table 3*.
- [25] Southern Baptist Theological Seminary lists History courses under Theology and Tradition; this department has been counted entirely as history.
- [26] Data for *Table 5* is counted from each respective catalog; see notes on *Table 2* and *Table 3*.
- [27] Data for *Table 6* is counted from each respective catalog; see notes on *Table 2* and *Table 3*.
- [28] Trinity School for Ministry’s “Modern Theology” class includes feminist theology on the syllabus.

[29] Data for *Table 7* is counted from each respective catalog; see notes on *Table 2* and *Table 3*.

[30] Presuming that “Judges-Esther” and “Joshua-Kings” contain significant material on Esther and Ruth.

[31] Presuming that “Historical Books (Joshua-Esther)” contains significant material on Esther and Ruth.

[32] This counts two courses, each offered separately for Hebrew and English exegesis.

[33] Two courses; Hebrew and English exegesis.

[34] Data for *Table 8* is counted from each respective catalog; see notes on *Table 2* and *Table 3*.

[35] These courses are also limited to women students. Among other history courses, “Formative Influences in American Christianity” discusses “feminism and feminization” of the church in what appears to be a negative light, and the Renaissance and Reformation course assigns the writings of Marguerite of Navarre.

[36] A few women’s history courses are offered in SWBTS’s Women’s Studies department, which is part of a program that confers certificates and offers master’s and doctoral concentrations. See Discussion for more on this.

[37] Data for *Table 9* is counted from each respective catalog; see notes on *Table 2* and *Table 3*.

[38] For a revealing discussion of how this affects women’s experiences of ETS membership and participation, see Emily Zimbrick-Rogers, “‘A Question Mark Over My Head’: Experiences of Women ETS Members at the 2014 ETS Annual Meeting,” *A Question Mark Over My Head: A Special Edition Journal of Christians for Biblical Equality*, 2015. <https://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/A%20Question%20Mark...>

[39] Westminster Theological Seminary, *2018-2019 Academic Catalog*.

[40] “About,” Bethlehem College and Seminary, accessed August 27, 2018. <https://bcsmn.edu/about/#mission>.

[41] Association of Theological Schools, “Table 2.18-A Head Count Completions by Degree Program, Race or Ethnic Group, and Gender, Fall 2017” in “2017-2018 Annual Data Tables,” accessed August 24, 2018, <https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tab...>

[42] Reformed Theological Seminary, “General Information: Professor Ordination,” in *Catalog: 2017-2019*.

[43] “About Mary” Mary Kassian, accessed August 27, 2018. <https://www.marykassian.com/about/>. I was unable to find a biographical page for Kassian on the seminary’s website.

[44] This idea comes from Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 11. It is beyond my purposes here to dispute complementarian interpretations of these passages. However, it is worth noting that Paul contradicts himself in 1 Cor 11:8-9 and 12. “For a man is not $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ a woman...for a man was not created $\delta\iota\alpha$ the woman...” (8-9); “For just as the woman is $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa$ the man, so also the man $\delta\iota\alpha$ the woman” (12). This obvious parallel is obscured in almost all translations in order to avoid a contradiction, but it is more likely we who are confused than Paul.

[45] *Ask Pastor John*, episode 1149, “Is There a Place for Female Professors at Seminary?” John Piper, posted January 2, 2018, on *Desiring God* (blog), <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/is-there-a-place-for-female-profe...>

[46] Westminster Theological Seminary, *2018-2019 Academic Catalog*, 6.

[47] “School of Church and Family Ministries,” Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, accessed August 28, 2018. <http://catalog.swbts.edu/course-descriptions/school-of-church-and-family...>

[48] John Piper, “The Frank and Manly Mr. Ryle: The Value of a Masculine Ministry,” (sermon, Desiring God 2012 Conference for Pastors, Minneapolis, MN, January 2012).

[49] Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design* (Tain: Christian Focus, 2016), 166.

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