



Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement

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Kathryn Joyce's fascinating introduction to the world of the patriarchy movement and Quiverfull families examines the twenty-first-century women and men who proclaim self-sacrifice and submission as model virtues of womanhood—and as modes of warfare on behalf of Christ. Here, women live within stringently enforced doctrines of wifely submission and male headship, and live by the Quiverfull philosophy of letting God give them as many children as possible so as to win the religion and culture wars through demographic means.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement Details

Date : Published March 1st 2009 by Beacon Press (first published January 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9780807010709

Author : Kathryn Joyce

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Religion, Feminism, Politics, Christianity, Sociology, Gender



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From Reader Review Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement for online ebook

Kate says

This book was fascinating but an emotionally exhausting read. I grew up in a family which, while not technically Quiverfull, held very similar beliefs. I am very familiar with a lot of the names, organizations, and publications mentioned in this book, and was raised to believe many of the same things. So when I say this book is upsetting, it's because while I read it I relived certain moments of my childhood that I thought I had moved past. Apparently I haven't.

Sarah Kathleen says

I learned SO MUCH about Quiverfull from this book and IT IS ALL TERRIFYING. I first heard about Quiverfull because of the Duggars. I saw their show for the first time, and looked them up on Wikipedia. It all spread from there, as so many things do. Ever since then, I thought the Duggar women were adorably ignorant. I would watch their show ALL the time and just be like "oh, isn't that cute? They're being oppressed and they don't even realize it! One of those girls is totally going to rebel and wear pants and use condoms and start a revolution in that family." Now I know better.

Quiverfull is a movement that keeps women ignorant, but the thing is they know about it. They choose to be oppressed because "that's what God wants." One of the men profiled in the book speaks at a conference where he holds up a nine year-old girl as an example for her peers. That nine year-old girl doesn't know how to read. BUT she already knows how to raise children, so that makes her complete illiteracy not only okay, but a goal for parents of girls.

Quiverfull is one of the most eye-opening books about religion I've read, and I am a huge nerd for this kind of stuff. It's slow to start (it took me almost a week to get through the first 50-60 pages), but once you're through the background stuff it really picks up. It's really horrifying, reading about the people who believe in this crap.

Naida says

I was really looking forward to learning more about the Quiverfull movement and the patriarchal structure that supports it. It is the opposite of everything that I believe in so reading this was pretty much a "know your enemies" sort of thing...

I found this book to be very academic and not quite what I expected. For a movement that professes to have tens of thousands of followers, it was very light on 1st person accounts. When she finally does interview a woman in the movement the book becomes much more compelling. I only wish she had spent more time on the individuals who are in the movement and less time detailing the church type structures that support it.

Tamora Pierce says

A very clear, readable book about the rise of separatist Christianist movements which emphasize wifely submission to the husband as the wife's way to gain eternal glory, the husband's leadership as family priest, and the rearing of large families as gifts to God and a way to take the world back from gays, feminists, and liberals. Without pretending to be a believer, Kathryn Joyce has met with and attended meetings of many of these small, fundamental American Christianist sects (which are beginning to pull away even from the churches where they began, calling them as being "non-Biblical") to form multi- or even single-family church cells, practicing homeschooling, courtship (a boy must gain a father's approval before he can approach a girl with a view toward marriage dating), husband priesthood in the home, and feminine submissiveness. Joyce attended seminars and retreats in which this feminine submissiveness was taught, and she attended world conferences in which faiths with the view of increasing white, Christian populations with such families would enable all Christians, including Catholics, to take back Europe and the Americas from non-whites.

It's a very scary book by the time you reach the end, yet Joyce is never sensationalist or alarmist. She gives the history of the growth of America's Christianist right following WWII and goes on from there, only getting into the day-to-day rules and existence of the women's submission and birth aspects in the second half of the book. Most of the time she lets the leaders, particularly the women, speak for themselves. This is no rabble-rousing supermarket book: this is a thoughtful, well-researched, intelligent study that I recommend to anyone who is interested in what is going on with the Christian right and what is going on with the women who are entering the marriages in groups like the Dominionists' and the most fundamental of the Assembly of God and Baptist sects, not just the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints and the Quiverfull Christianists.

Sarah says

This book was enlightening, to the point of actually being terrifying. It actually scared me more than any horror movie I've ever seen. The author doesn't put much of herself in this book, she just lets those who live this frightening lifestyle talk. And talk they do.

I wasn't surprised by much in this book, not the acceptance that domestic violence is always the woman's fault, not the casual racism, not the creepy incestuous father-daughter relationship. But it was almost overwhelming to see it all put together, to see the spiritual, emotional, and physical violence culminated.

This should be required reading for everyone who lectures gay people and feminists on how we should just work harder at getting along. These people know no compromise, and you can't compromise much with people who believe you should be executed or whose opposition to your movement is entirely based in lies about what you stand for.

Overall, a bone-chilling must read for all women, feminist or not, just to see how scary some people can be.

Adam Omelianchuk says

Kathryn Joyce's *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* is an exposé of sorts on a curious theological trajectory among conservative Protestants who seem to believe that raising large families—with

the man as the head of the household—is the means for taking America back to its Christian roots. As an Christian who finds any theological justification for hierarchical gender roles to be mistaken, I was curious to see what Joyce, an outsider from a secular persuasion, would have to say about those who take up the banner of “complementarianism.” Not surprisingly she focuses on the fringes the evangelical/fundamentalist landscape where such extreme views are taken to be normative:

- A woman may not work outside the home in any capacity.
- Women should abstain from developing intimate female friendships so as to safeguard the highest levels of intimacy for her husband alone.
- A woman is to view her husband as God’s ordained representative to whom she must entirely submit. If a woman fails to submit and is deemed unrepentant by her (male) pastoral leaders, she is subject to church discipline.
- A woman ought to stay with an abusive husband and try to “win him” with submissive behavior.
- A woman should be ready and willing to gratify her husband’s sexual desires at any time.
- Couples should have as many children as biologically possible so as to fulfill God’s commandment “to be fruitful and multiply.”
- Any form of contraception or natural planning is absolutely forbidden.
- All sex acts ought to be performed with the intention of being open to the possibility of conceiving a child.
- Families ought not to send their daughters to college.
- Homeschooling is the only moral option for educating children.
- A woman’s contracts or promises may be nullified by her husband or father as she has no moral or legal right to autonomous self-determination.
- A woman must be courted by a suitor by first seeking her father’s permission/blessing. Dating is absolutely out of the question.

In my experience, few if any who hold to a complementarian reading of gender roles abide by such strict moral standards. Joyce’s storytelling does not seem to note the fact that many self-styled complementarians—their biblical interpretation notwithstanding—function as practical egalitarians who see their marriages as instances of equal partnerships. In this sense, Joyce’s portrayal is unfair. Nonetheless, I think she paints a fair picture of what it looks like to take “complementarian” exegesis to its logical conclusion: a blinkered culture of patriarchy that exemplifies male domination at all levels.

Readers will be scandalized by the teaching and behavior of Doug Philips, RC Sproul Jr., Michael and Debi Pearl, and many others, but one will wonder why there are no citations, no footnotes, and no bibliography. Joyce’s book is seriously lacking by way of needed documentation so discerning readers can go to the horse’s mouth and warn those who under the influence of such teaching. Alas they will have to take her word for it, which may good enough for some, but hardly helpful for others.

Jessica Valenti says

I loved Joyce’s article on the Quiverfull movement and so far the book isn’t disappointing either.

Amy says

This book ties together a lot of small threads I’ve been concerned about for the last decade or so. I’ve seen

friends and family members dip in and out of various forms of fundamentalism, patriarchy, and Quiverfull ideology, and as someone on a different axis of spirituality and religion entirely, I've tried to read up and understand where these ideas come from and what the ultimate vision is for this lifestyle.

Quiverfull is chilling. The accounts from the women she interviews seem hollow and ill-informed; at best they seem to be trying to self-convince that it's worth trading in their individuality for perceived safety, and at worst, one sees evidence that these young women have been grossly undereducated in homeschools so that they are unable to detach themselves from this movement without grave consequences. I have heard from a family member about their family's 200-year-plan for dominion, and reading about its genesis in Doug Phillips' teachings makes me mourn for the future of their daughter, by all accounts a bright young lady-- but we are kept at a distance, not being part of this movement.

Joyce does an excellent job of remaining objective while reporting on some very tricky details of this American subculture. Where one would want to jump up and object, Joyce simply reproduces the words of the speaker in full and lets the reader draw his or her own conclusions. If you've heard of this movement and want to dive deeper, this book is an excellent, well-written resource that I can't stop thinking about.

I finished this book on the American celebration of Independence Day, which is not insignificant. The leaders of the patriarchy movement look to this nation's founding fathers as a source of truth. I believe those men would blanch at the misogyny perpetuated by the patriarchy movement and hope that some brave sons and daughters become erudite enough to point it out.

Lynn Joshua says

I have been part of the homeschooling movement since the early 80s and am familiar with every name in this book. I have watched over the years in dismay as good principles have often been taken out of balance and some teachings have become extreme and oppressive. I was really hoping to read an in-depth critique of the Patriarchy movement from an insider. It's a bit difficult to read even a much-needed criticism from someone who thinks all religious believers are backward and ignorant. She doesn't understand the basics of faith, sacrifice, or giving up your own desires to serve others. She also seems a bit confused about certain theological ideas. (Really, is she surprised that many religious believers eschew birth control? Is she not familiar with church discipline? She must know that most churches do have standards members must abide by or be asked to leave. For example, Cheryl Lindsey was continuing to teach at conferences on how to have a good marriage while secretly carrying on an affair.)

However, the author is correct in pointing out that things are terribly wrong in some of these circles. The Christian teaching that the husband is the head of the home is to work in harmony with the Bible's instructions to both to walk in true oneness of mind, heart, and purpose, including a willingness of each to defer to the other. The Pearls and others have done so much harm in teaching that only women should "submit" or defer to men. Such out of balance teaching has lead to the notion that the father is the center of the home and the intermediary between God and his family; and the belief that a female must always be under the complete control of a man, and a daughter should not attend college or even be allowed to leave home until the father transfers her from under his authority to that of her (selected by Daddy) husband.

If you can get past her view that all large homeschooling families oppress women, this book illustrates how dangerous it is when one scriptural principle is emphasized to the extreme while the ones that temper it are ignored.

Cassandra says

First of all, I made the mistake of not reading very far into the description of this book. I saw Quiverfull pop up a few places on the internet and it sparked my interest. My church is anti-abortion but does not have a clear stance on birth control.

Well... the book is more about the subtitle than the title. It is titled Quiverfull but doesn't spend much time analyzing the Quiverfull movement. Instead, it focuses on the subtitle of the book, "Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement." The first section of the book looks at wives' roles and beliefs about wives inside the patriarchy movement. The second section focuses on mothers. The third section (the shortest in the book) takes a look at daughters who are raised in Patriarchal families.

I was hoping for more information about the Quiverfull movement and an analysis in the light of Scripture. Instead, the book describes various beliefs of the Patriarchy movement. The author does not attempt to make an argument on the right or wrongness of the beliefs, merely how some church leaders and members interpret and live out the beliefs. Of course, the members that the author chose to highlight are those who abuse the belief system, who take advantage of their wives. The few who are happy/content to believe in patriarchy and a quiverfull lifestyle are presented with an overly large dose of skepticism. It seemed as if the author's attitude was that "this could never be true. No woman could be happy in a marriage like this. She must be faking it."

I was interested to learn two very important things about the author, both of which made me question her feelings that come across throughout the book. First, the author is not a Christian and is open about that. Therefore, it is hard for her to understand people following Scripture. The author never attempted to analyze the Patriarchy or Quiverfull beliefs in light of Scripture. She analyzed the beliefs from the viewpoint of a non-Christian feminist. This affects the way she discusses various lifestyle choices.

Also, I don't believe the author is married. Though she did not come out and say in her book that the idea of wives' submission is ridiculous, the sentiment came through. It's hard to listen to someone criticize marriage roles when she has not or is not experiencing them herself. It's like taking parenting advice from someone who has never been a parent.

Basically, the book did not offer criticism in light of Scripture. The criticism was from a feminist viewpoint, more of a "how can any woman live like this?" That type of criticism doesn't mean anything other than someone's opinion.

Renee says

I have a friend who can't stand the Duggar family. You know the family I'm talking about? The one with 19+ children...and counting. They have been featured on The Learning Channel giving us all a glimpse into their unusual lives. My friend is disgusted by them. She said so. I have never really understood her animosity towards them. After all, they're not hurting anybody. Why not live and let live? Why judge so harshly? And anyway isn't it all sort of sweet and wholesome?

Well, after reading *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement*, I think I understand her feelings a little better. This book offered a different insight into Quiverfull families (those are families who have as many children as God gives them and who see men as leaders and women as helpmeets). This is the "woman submit to your man" crowd. The book focused mainly on how women fare in this system - as wives, mothers, and daughters. Chilling.

I read this book at the same time I was reading *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. What a contrast! Two completely different belief systems at work. Two completely different feelings as I completed each book. After reading *Lean In*, I felt motivated and powerful and excited to teach my daughter about what I had learned. After reading *Quiverfull*, I felt sad... and sort of scared. Good Lord, I hope the Christian patriarchy movement's quest for dominion over the earth through the excessive birthing of "soldiers in God's Army" never reaches fruition.

As far as the book itself goes, at times it was a slog to read. It was hard to keep the names of all of the leaders of the movement straight. It also felt a little repetitious at times. But I'm glad I read it. Now I understand.

Stefanie says

Have you ever attended a Christian church service and wondered why the gender imbalance (mostly women?) So have several Evangelical pastors and - voila - a marketing scheme to bring men into church by giving them ultimate power and a 1950s family is created.

Kathryn Joyce, a secular feminist, gives a balanced view into the lives of families who have chosen to be "quiverfull" - having as many children as they biologically are able (cf The Duggars on television.)

The economic, emotional, and financial impact of this decision is described as well as the gender defined roles within this philosophy. Many people are drawn into the movement through homeschooling, house-based churches (that have an emphasis on moral behavior. aka holiness), and at-home birth literature. The ultimate goal of the patriarchy movement is to restore women to wives and "helpmeets" - being single and or childless is said to be a rare vocation from G_d. College is not recommended for women and even the men are encouraged to focus on vocational or home-based businesses. Devout members wish to return to an Agrarian society.

The weakest part of the book is the section on the children (specifically daughters) of this movement - mostly due to the fact that the eldest children of this movement are now just entering adulthood.

It would be interesting to delve into the lives of the leaders of this movement; do they practice what they preach? What are the economics of this business of patriarchy?

As a single, atheist, scientist this book scares me - what if I did not have the loving and encouraging parents of my birth and instead was in a world where housework and child rearing were the only options? What about men who don't seek marriage or children?

Challenging economic times and rapid change induce fear-based philosophical movements (in my opinion.)

Christian patriarchy easily returns to a time when roles were clearly defined and the guide post to behavior was the King James Bible.

Melki says

"Can you call your husband 'Lord'? If the answer is no, you shouldn't get married."

Holy mackerel! Where do I even begin?

This is one of those books where I started writing down every sentence that pissed me off, but had to stop because I was using too much paper.

The movement, in case you've never heard of the Quiverfull, is a conservative Christian fundamentalist faction that stresses **the necessity of building large family dynasties, generations of families with six, eight, ten or more children to raise a godly seed for Christ and the salvation of America**. The group also has strict **guidelines for how men and women should behave**. They take their name from *Psalm 127*: **"Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate."** And they are quite literally **building an army for God** where children are used as **weapons of spiritual war**.

It may seem silly and inconsequential now, but it is estimated that the **Christian right ranks could rise to 550 million within a century**. That's 550 million voters . . . voters who want to harken back to the "good old days" - **not of the 1950s but the 1700s**.

... Eve had a feminist heart . . . an inclination to disobey, to subvert authority, to rebel, to not submit.

And **SUBMISSION** is the key to Quiverfull attaining their goals. A woman shall be **a submissive wife who bolsters her husband in his role as spiritual and earthly leader of the family. She understands that it's her job to keep him sexually satisfied at all times, and that it's her calling as a woman to let those relations result in as many children as God wants to bless her with**. Women are to *ask permission* from their husbands before doing virtually *anything*, from making a household purchase to volunteering to bring a covered dish to a church supper. (The kind of man who wants to spend his life micromanaging his wife's days, I can't even imagine.)

Women's attempts to control their own bodies--the Lord's temple--are a seizure of divine power.

Forget about abortion - they want *contraception* banned! And men, in case you think this is just a *female problem*, LOOK OUT!

They want to ruin your hobbies!

And then there is the problem of women being coerced by their churches to return to and stay with abusive men. . . . **godly women can bring lost husbands to Christ through their submission**. One woman, whose husband tried to kill her, was encouraged by Debi Pearl to **reverence** him by **refusing to bring the stories**

of his abuse to their church.

WTF?

Says Pearl, "**When God puts you in subjection to a man whom he knows is going to cause you to suffer it is with the understanding that you are obeying God by enduring the wrongful suffering.**"

Keep in mind that this advice is coming from the woman who coauthored the reprehensible *To Train Up a Child*, a book which advocates that infants be swatted with twigs when they reach for forbidden toys.

I could seriously go on and on about the crimes and sins of these monsters and their hordes of ~~heaven~~ hell spawn. And maybe if these people decided that the world was too evil for the likes of them, and formed their own little enclaves, or hutches, if you will, where they could breed like rabbits and sing hymns all day, there'd be nothing to get upset about. BUT . . .

They want US to play by THEIR rules. They want to reshape our belief systems to conform to their narrow-minded vision, they want to control what you do with your wombs and genitals, they want to cram their ideas into YOUR children's brains (after they get done swatting them with twigs, I guess), and their long range plan is to fill vacancies in the House and Senate and the Supreme Court with their minions.

Be afraid.

Be very afraid.

Lois says

I was intrigued by the title of this book. I read several reviews, both pro and con, and thus I had to read it for myself, keeping an open mind. First, let me state my position. I sit squarely on the fence, barbed wire notwithstanding. After reading this book, I am even more ambivalent.

In a nutshell, patriarchy is a branch of the home schooling movement and a twig of evangelical churches. Patriarchy is by definition the fundamental belief that the man is head over his wife and Christ is the head over the church. (Eph. 5:21) I have no problem with that. (Just for fun, google patriarchy sometime, and start reading.....very thought-provoking!)

In the introduction, Ms. Joyce explains what aroused her interest in writing this book. The first event was the Southern Baptist 1998 statement that wives were to graciously submit to their husbands. The second event was when pharmacists started refusing to fill prescriptions for contraceptives based on morality. Kathryn Joyce describes herself as a "secular feminist who writes about religion." Therefore, I read the book through that lens, cringing when she used terms like antiabortion, pronatalist, anticontraception and even religious right. Generally, labels turn me off because of who's defining them, and there is no shortage of places the author's verbage gets in the way. For example, in a profile, she makes reference to the biblical woman wearing modest, feminine dress, and avoiding sex and dating before marriage. Her tone seemed to mock this as weird or undesirable.

Joyce does a good job of explaining the various components of patriarchy: male headship, female submission, vision, quiverfull, agrarian lifestyle, etc. None of these issues arouse any suspicion of being

strange or questionable, particularly in the Christian home school community. We're pretty used to seeing large families, many of which dress their daughters in home-sewn jumpers, carry the new baby in a sling, bake bread from fresh-ground grain, and make their own soap. I remember 10 years ago I called all the differences degrees of conservativism. Whether children watched movies, attended dances, celebrated Christmas or whatever, all of these were individual family choices. It was the world that looked at us homeschoolers as strange, because we had the belief that parents should have control of their children's education. We expected snide comments and criticism from the world. In this book, it is evident that a growing chasm exists between different factions of the Christian homeschooling community. This alarms me greatly, as I will explain later.

What makes patriarchy (and its evil cousin patriocentricity) unique from the usual man being head of his family, is the amount of authority granted to the man by God, as they see it. Not only is the man head of his family and his wife a submissive helpmeet, but he is prophet, priest and king. In other words, God only speaks to the man. He leads the family worship, raises up his godly seed, and the woman doesn't act, think or speak without his explicit instruction or approval. The man is completely responsible for his family's spiritual welfare, and as long as his wife and children are in complete obedience to his lordship, they will be saved. A thread of legalism runs through everything they do. Joyce recognized and showed the cookie cutter families that she encountered. Reading this book, one would think there is rampant abuse as well. I will withhold judgment on that, as I personally know many families who fit the profile who are not abusive by any stretch. (Some people think teaching your children to do chores is child abuse. I do not agree.) The only abuse that PROBABLY is prevalent is spiritual abuse. In a complete patriocentric family, the man has the role of Christ, by which his family is redeemed and sanctified.

Sometimes I felt Ms. Joyce painted with a broad brush, categorizing any large home schooling family with its own business, harp-playing daughters, entrepreneurial sons as patriarchial. She devoted almost half of the book to Doug Phillips of Vision Forum, a leader and founder of this movement. I already had serious reservations about many of his teachings, and reading more about him and his beliefs confirmed my thoughts. She left no one out. To her credit, she personally interviewed many of the leaders, their wives (I'm sure with their husband's oversight!) and people who had left that lifestyle. She cites her sources, many of which came from the patriarch's own publications and web sites. She includes Michael and Debi Pearl, a brute in my opinion, who has actual instructions on the use of the rod (PVC pipe is one "training tool.") Bill Gothard, Voddie Baucham, Geoff Botkin, Nancy Campbell, RC Sproul Jr., and the pioneer of the modern homeschooling movement Mary Pride, are all researched. I found myself exclaiming, "No, not them too!" every time one of my favorite teachers or speakers was mentioned. Again, Kathryn Joyce, being a feminist, would probably NOT understand the concept of biblical submission, so I took each account with a grain of salt. She didn't criticize as much as present the evidence, so that the reader could discern. I appreciated that. It is difficult to address all the issues in this book, because there are so many: the biblical mandate to populate the world demographically to advance God's kingdom, adult daughters remaining at home under their father's authority until she is given in marriage, reconstructionism, home churches, Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy, and not allowing wives or daughters to attend college or work outside the home. Yes, much, much legalism in the name of biblical authority.

The bottom line for me is this. Every Christian homeschooler, who wants to recognize what is going on around them, should read this book. This is already a divisive issue among churches and home schooling groups. My alarm comes from the idea that human authority takes precedence over the work of the Holy Spirit in the believers' life. Every cult has an authority figure with a bloated sense of self-importance, who preys on the weak, the helpless (the submissive????) who allows no disagreement or questioning. Two verses of scripture come to mind. (As a woman, I want you to know I study the Bible myself, and my head heartily approves of me. It blesses his heart when I share with him what God has been teaching me.) The 14th chapter of Romans deals with principles of the conscience. Verse 4 says: "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand." And Gal. 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, the is neither male

nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." I think those under patriarchy are under the law, and not under grace. Whereas many areas of the Christians' life should be between him and the Lord, patriarchy says that unless you homeschool, unless you disciple your children in exactly this way, unless you have 6 or more children, you are living in disobedience. In their view, a family with no children, or two, are living in sin. I heartily recommend this book.

K. O'Bibliophile says

While it wouldn't make as eyecatching a title, this is less "*Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement*" as it is "*Poking My Nose In a Few Places Related To the Christian Patriarchy Movement*." I think that's what you expect, though.

The problem is that the book wavers between focusing on a few, big names and organizations, and trying to give an overview of a movement that has as many variations as, well, every other thing ever.

What rubbed me the wrong way was how the language used often equated the book's super-conservative, super-religious-and-legalistic subjects with generic conservative people, and even more how "homeschoolers" = "these particular very conservative/religious/etc homeschoolers." (Full disclaimer--I was homeschooled. Like everything else, there's a spectrum of people and beliefs.)

It would have been to the book's advantage to highlight that, actually, since the point was to look at what is essentially a parallel society. "Homeschooler" often seemed to be used as a synonym for the entire conservative religious patriarchy submissive women thing, especially when the topic wasn't related to schooling.

The other thing is, a lot of it read as "I am studying these brain-damaged creatures, let me tell you their 'opinions.'"

"The critique...[is a] response to materialism and capitalism, which itself has co-opted women's liberation rhetoric ('Who says you can't have it all?') in the service of selling pantyhose and long-wear mascara. But 'materialism,' to conservative Christians, doesn't mean corporate greed and commercialism but rather is code for secularism and socialist leanings."

...Except it *does*. I mean, it could mean the latter as well, but "conservative" (again, there's that equating a large label with this smaller group) Christians, you know, speak and use regular English, too. But it's small things like this, with no explanation or source, that pop up throughout the book and make it clear how the author feels.

Or this:

"[a neonatalist specialist] who argues that pregnant women should carry to term even fatally flawed pregnancies, certain to result in stillbirths, as a 'God-honoring' way to demonstrate care

and respect for the fetus."

Obvious takeaway: geez, how ridiculous is it that some people will continue a pregnancy even when they're not going to have a baby! Their religious conviction that their unborn child deserves respect is so wacky!

Whether the author meant to show that the doctor was, perhaps, more strict, or something, doesn't matter, because that's not what's actually *written*.

Later in the book, she posits that the infamous Andrea Yates' (mentally ill, drowned her 5 children) mental illness was "likely exacerbated" by teachings from a particularly fundamental preacher. Don't think for a moment I'm defending the preacher--ew, no.

But there's no source, no evidence, nothing beyond "this guy says this stuff and had communication with her and LOOK! Yates was mentally ill and killed her kids! Tada!"

The concluding chapter was a glimpse of what could have been: the author's interactions with a family that falls within the movement, but who are portrayed as real people and not legalistic Puritans. The book ends with "I went in expecting X, but I actually found Y, and here's why they're keeping getting stricter."

If only there had been some indication. There are a few parts where the author participates in gatherings or finds the women she meets nice, but overall the book had that feeling of "enlightened researcher vs. close-minded caricatures."

Regardless of that, the book also suffers from some disjointedness. There are so many possible things it could have focused on that some get a close look (sometimes too close, like the chapter-long chronicle of one woman's life and break from a fundamental church) and some...don't.

Part of it is also that the focus varies between ultra-conservative misogyny and the more genial sides of the movement. Again, I know why (*overview!*), but again, it causes disjointedness (*overview of everything!*).

It is, I think, a good way to figure out what you'd want to learn more about. It's the book equivalent of rubbernecking (I'm guilty of that, I picked it up after being dumbfounded by the website "Raising Homemakers") and it's hardly balanced, but fascinating nonetheless.
