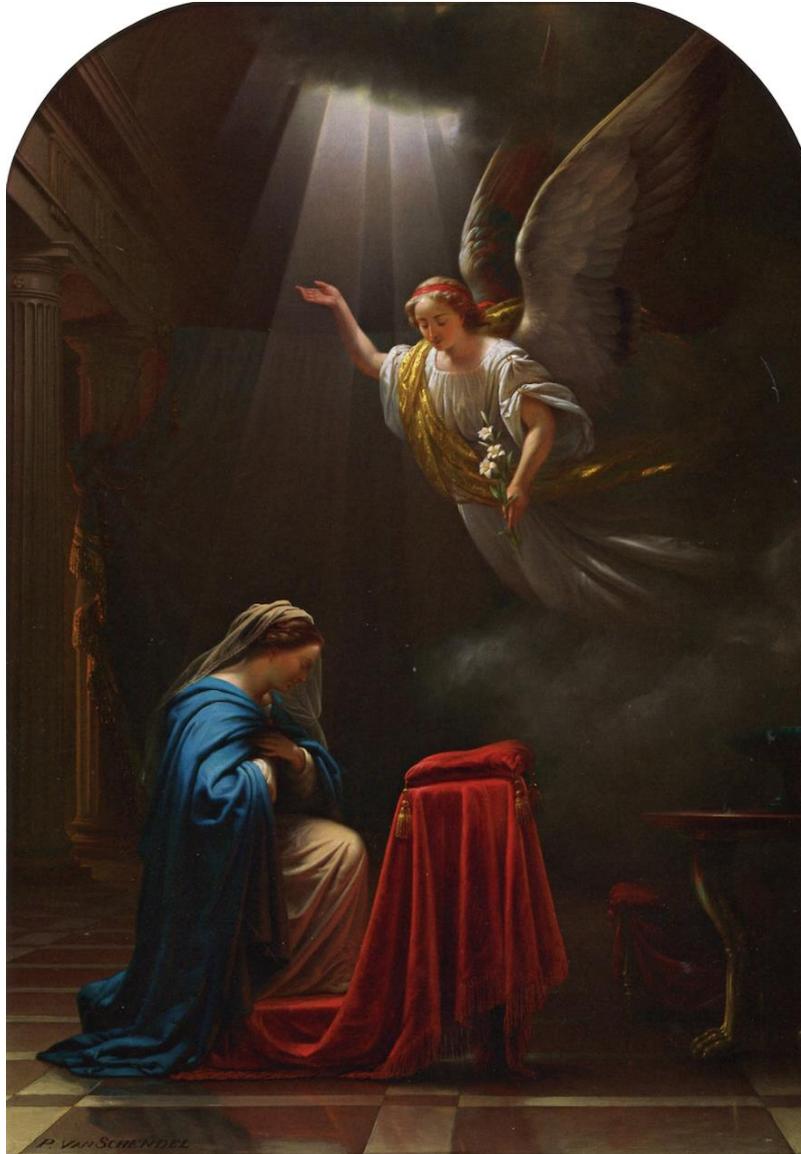


Biblical advice in the blogosphere: paradoxes of agency on two Evangelical American women's blogs



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Augustus 28, 2019
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Note: because the women that are the subject of this paper only use the King James Version Bible, I will be doing the same so as to not be caught talking across terms. Any scripture quoted in this paper will be from the *King James Version*, published by Zondervan Publishers in Michigan, Grand Springs in 2002.

Abstract

This bachelor's thesis concerns two blogs maintained by American Evangelical women, the blogs being *TheTransformedWife.com* and *AboveRubies.org*. The blogs are mostly advice about Biblical marriage and womanhood. This thesis considers what exactly the blogs communicate to their readers and how they communicate that. The first chapter concerns the establishment and nature of American Evangelical Christianity as well as Bible verses that concern gender roles. This is to examine where the stance of the blogs is based on. The second chapter contains passages from both blogs, selected with the help of 'passive virtues' by Mary Daly. The passages are analyzed with the help of Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically truth claims. The third and last chapter is a reflection on agency and how it is used in the context of the blogs. The thesis concludes that the stance of the blogs on gender roles stems from the Bible and the development of Evangelicalism in the United States. The blogs speak in authoritative tone that help them make their message convincing. Finally, the conclusion also points out some inconsistencies between the blogs' ideals and words and their actions.

Introduction

The topic for this BA thesis are blogs that are maintained by American Evangelical women; online spaces where advice is offered to Evangelical women on womanhood as the writers deem to be prescribed by the Bible. I will discuss these particular women later on, in depth.

What originally caught my attention was that these bloggers subscribe to the religious ideal that women are not to be given any religious authority, and are therefore not meant for positions in leadership, precisely because they are women. The bloggers simultaneously have a blog on the internet targeted at other women of the same faith, on which the writers state that women should have no authority, and that the only person who should have any authority (and therefore agency) are the husbands of these women. This results in the following two simultaneous situations:

1. These women believe that within the subset of their religion (Evangelical Christianity) women lack spiritual authority and that, because of this, women should have limited agency in their lives.
2. Which they then teach to other women, online, by which they inevitably exercise agency and assume religious authority.

While this paradox is what caught my attention, important as it is to showcase the religious beliefs of the particular women that write these blogs, it is the blogs in their entirety that are the focus of this paper; what is said on them, how they communicate to their readers, and what the ideals are of the women who run them. Relevant to this are the agency women create or display on their blogs, even in spite of their own positions, and how they attempt to influence the agency of their (female) audience. Their beliefs will also be discussed.

This is in line with the current position of the field. Religious science, at this moment, concerns itself with the lived experience of religious people and what influence religion has on their life in addition to the study of religious doctrine and more traditional topics. Birgit Meyer writes about this approach in her article *Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion*. (Meyer 2006, 5-6) In the introduction she outlines that the 'sensation' people feel when experiencing their religion is and should be an important aspect of the field. In short: How does religion make people feel, what does it make them, or forbids them to do? In this aspect, blogs are a good entry point; they are usually very personal and express the feelings and thoughts of their writer, sometimes more than the writer herself intends.

Two specific blogs will be used as a sample. The two are referenced on other Christian blogs many times, and they have stood the test of time; one close to ten years running and the other even longer than that. These blogs are *AboveRubies* run by Nancy Campbell and *TheTransformedWife* by Lori Alexander. *AboveRubies* is very well known and existed as a magazine before it was a blog (and it still is a printed magazine as well as a blog), with many women indicating online that they have grown up with it. *TheTransformedWife* is not as old or as established, but it is a particularly controversial blog (which garners it a lot of visitors); Alexander is doubtful of the use of women voting, the existence of marital rape, and places a heavy emphasis on submitting to the husband no matter what, among other polarizing topics.

To examine the blogs properly two approaches are used in this paper. The first is Critical Discourse Analysis, to examine how the bloggers blog; what exactly do they communicate to their audience, what is their main message and how do they implement this? To remain consistent in the analysis, particular terms that are used on both blogs will be used to select passages for reviewing more closely. Suitable terms, that will reflect the tone and message of the blogs, are found in the work of theologian Mary Daly. She lists these terms as passive virtues, (Daly 1994, 122) which will be expanded on in chapter two. For now, it can be noted that the terms are obedience, service, meekness and sacrifice, which occur on both blogs.

The passages are examined with the use of Critical Discourse Analysis, as stated above. The method chosen is the one described by Marianne Jorgenson and Louise Phillips from their book *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, printed in 2002. The book consistently came up in other papers on Critical Discourse Analysis, and there is a method outlined in it that is particularly effective in this situation. When discussing textual analysis, they outline a few different methods. (Jorgenson and Phillips 2002, 83). One of the methods is grammatical analysis. This, they argue, has two subsections; transitivity and modality. It is the last subsection of analysis that is the most relevant. A modality of text is the way in which the writer presents the information. This method is very relevant to the blogs, because it is their manner of transmitting information that determines how convincing they are. Since the blogs are written to explicitly convince their readers (which will be displayed in the passages) this is the reason that textual analysis is the most suited here. This method of close reading will also bring into focus the core beliefs espoused by the blogs, on how to be an ideal Christian woman.

The second approach is an examination of agency, and how agency is defined within this context. Here a comparison with the result of the Discourse Analysis will be made to examine how the bloggers use their agency to convince the readers of the blogs, and the blog's point of view. However, an attempt will also be made to see if the agency they establish on the blogs is completely consistent with these views.

This paper will be structured in the following way. Chapter one is dedicated specifically to the bloggers' religion, which is the foundation of their ideas, as both are Evangelicals. Additionally, some Bible verses will be explored that are especially relevant to the topic of this thesis; namely the blogs and the paradox, but also the strict gender division present in Evangelicalism and how it came to be.

The second chapter will start by briefly introducing the women and their blogs before moving on to the textual analysis—which is done with the help Critical Discourse Analysis. The texts analyzed are **passages** from the blogs that contain and expand on Mary Daly's passive virtues. The chapter will end on some closing remarks on the effectiveness of the blogs and possible inconsistencies found on them.

The third and last chapter contains a discussion on the notion of agency and poses the question on what effect the blogs might have on their audience. Mentioned in the discussion will be Saba Mahmood, who offers something like situational agency. This will be contrasted with compliant agency, a term devised by Kelsy Burke. Finally, Sara Bracke's warning on 'lenient' positions on agency will be used as a tool for comparison.

Finally, there will be a conclusion that will explain any findings and suggestions of what those might mean.

However, before I start my analysis, it is important to note why I find this topic so important. As a woman of a mixed Dutch and Iranian background, I am very appreciative of the opportunities I have had in my life, and I find it equally important that other women can have the same opportunities that I have had. I sometimes worry that religion might fence those freedoms in, and might put pressure on women to live their lives a certain way; specifically in the West where women currently have legal freedoms not enjoyed elsewhere in the world. I enjoy studying religions because they are interesting in and of themselves, but also because I really want to know how they shape women's lives and if they limit their opportunities.

And while the internet is by no means a 'new' invention anymore, I still think it is something to be thoroughly researched. It offers religion a different angle of connecting with people, in ways that are harder, sometimes, for the traditional methods of Religious Science to examine. It connects people who might otherwise have never met, and offers, more so than the

more conventional media like radio and television, an interactive experience on social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, blogs, and so on. Examining social media and websites from religious groups often results in gaining a lot of knowledge that would take weeks to uncover in conventional research because these new media are kept by and for insiders, by online communities. People speak very frankly, without trying to make their religion more ‘palatable’, (Hookway 2008, 96) because of the anonymity they might enjoy and because their audience usually understands their lingo. (Hookway 2008, 96) Comparing a personal blog like the ones I’m about to explore with the official website of for example that of the Mormon church,ⁱ the wording is usually not so mindful of reputation.

I want to make use of the opportunity of this access. Personally, I am somewhat worried about the contents of religious blogs and bloggers that will be discussed in this paper, and this worry is increased because the internet gives these bloggers a wider audience than they would have had in, for example, their local women’s group. The bloggers perpetuate views that they themselves would not call misogynistic, but to the public at large at least come very close to it. Some comments written by readers on the blogs are worrying, from young women giving up on promising careers or opportunities for education to sacrificing running water as an expense because their worldview perpetuates the idea that women do not need ‘fancy’ education and should not work outside the home (which in some cases leads to a small enough budget that running water is an unaffordable luxury).

I hope to gain (academic) insight in why these blogs are convincing to some women, and how they work, so that hopefully I can eventually better understand the bloggers as religious women.

Evangelicalism as a system of belief and as a political movement in the United States

An introduction to Evangelicalism seems to be the right place to start. To be able to understand the blogs, the religious foundation they are built on must also be understood. I will do so by discussing its conception and political history before moving on to some core theological standpoints that are crucial to the beliefs of the women's blogs.

Evangelicalism is a subset of Christianity, specifically Protestantism. It is not clear when exactly it came into existence, but the beginnings of the movement were possibly as early as 1739, when George Whitefield started preaching to large groups in open fields, which was new in the United States. (Stout 2017, §2) However, the true start of Evangelicalism (I mean American Evangelicalism when I say Evangelicalism) as we know it today, I would argue, was with the rise of preacher Billy Graham. (Wacker 2017) Graham was a preacher who managed to create a true revival in the United States, by going on a great tour. During the tour he would give impassioned speeches in support of his belief in God and Jesus Christ, and told his audience that they could leave their unhappiness behind if they just trusted in God and that God had a plan for everyone. He was so successful that he could tour the country for the next 50-odd years and still have every seat in the venue occupied. (Finstuen, Wills and Wacker 2017, 2)

Since Graham's first speeches this branch of Christianity has undergone many mutations, with a lot of local variants and subgroups that adhere to different dogmas. Today, the faith is, if not the largest, one of the most vocal religious groups in America.

Politically, Evangelicals have the reputation that they lean conservative, with some more moderately and others on the far right. The women I am discussing in this paper can be placed closer to the far right than the center; though it would be incorrect to say that all Evangelical women are on the far right. To the contrary, a survey done by Clyde Wilcox, which involved one thousand women, shows us that Evangelical women (women who identify themselves as Evangelical) were largely spread out on the political landscape. Of the thousand women, Wilcox could divide them roughly into four different categories politically. The largest group of the four was moderately liberal and moderately religious, who sometimes agreed with feminist statements. The second group was the most liberal. They were of the opinion that religion and politics should remain separate. These women also agreed the most often with certain feminist statements on the survey. The third group was rather conservative and mostly did not agree with the feminist statements on the survey. The fourth and smallest group, the ultraconservatives according to Wilcox, almost never agreed with feminist statements. While

this survey is obviously not the end-all authority on the political inclinations of Evangelical women, it does demonstrate that ultra-conservatism was not the norm with Evangelicalism when the survey was done. I give this information to indicate where the women are politically, and within their own religion, i.e. they were not the norm. They do not have the standard political opinion of others with the same demographic, but are an outlier even within the broader, Evangelical community.

Still, commonly speaking the gender division and belief of a ‘traditional lifestyle’ are characteristic of the faith—which has led to some of its notoriety. This structure has existed almost since the date of inception; it was even a point of rebellion against the established order; something that marked it other than the already existing faiths within America. (Bartkowski 1998, 99) Therefore, it is important to note that the blogger’s opinions are an extreme version of what is the norm, not a deviation from it altogether.

During the 1970’s, like Wilcox demonstrated, most Evangelicals had a politically mixed background. However, this soon changed. As the Evangelicals had no real leadership or political center around that time, this void was filled up with the most powerful or prepared group; which, as it often was and still is, was fundamentalist and politically very right-wing. (Schäfer 2011, 112) They quickly absorbed the under-organized Evangelical left while on the right, one of the staunchest supporters rose to national fame; this was Jerry Falwell. The left was essentially not loud enough to be noticed among the right majority. (Schäfer 2011, 113)

The reason most Evangelicals leaned right was because of the ideals promoted there. The right espoused a combination of Biblical legalism, piousness, and that conservatism that seeks to separate itself from the rest of the world for its own protection while simultaneously doing away with denominationalism, social involvement, and an acceptance of modernity. (Schäfer 2011, 113) By doing this it created a subculture with a set of clear rules stemming from a moral center, but that kept its connection to the wider public. The religion was all-encompassing, but its doctrine fit in with the surroundings of the nation; no laws had to be broken to adhere to them and it looked rather wholesome from the outside. (Schäfer 2011, 113) After all, objections to sexual freedoms were not rare, and a return to family values was not strange either against the backdrop of second wave feminism. A place could be found within the wider culture of the US at the time, and it became a place of counter-culture for those who were Christians and who opposed the new feminist ideals being introduced. It became a safe haven for people who wanted things to remain as they were.

This combination of wholesomeness, family values, but also acceptance of African Americans and other minorities meant that the Evangelical movement was appealing to a wide variety of people, who all found their welcome there.

The women most likely got involved in the Evangelical movement against the backdrop of this political formation. While I have not succeeded in finding out either Lori Alexander's date of birth, nor Nancy Campbell's, it is evident that they were already adults in the 70's, of which we've just seen were critical in forming the current political and doctrinal positions of Evangelicalism. Nancy Campbell's magazine, *AboveRubies*, has existed since in 1977. Lori Alexander has been married since 1980. I would say that they experienced the political (re)formation of the Evangelical political landscape, and based on the contents of their blogs, they chose the right-wing side.

I think it is important to briefly reflect on the main issues that came up during the feminist second wave. Both blogs are pointedly against feminism—as discussed more ardently than a typical Evangelical—and the second wave is what became relevant in the 1970's, when both women presumably joined the Evangelical movement. During the second wave the main feminist issues were equal pay, stopping automatic dismissal upon marriage or pregnancy, free information on sexuality and equal admission to educational institutes (though these are not all the issues raised). The movement received a lot of criticism in the 70s with the main counterpoints being that more women in the workplace would lead to more sexual promiscuity, moral decline and less job for men, who were the providers of their families. The new morals were seen as a threat.ⁱⁱ Much of this view remains on both blogs, which constantly warn their audience of the dangers of feminism. Biblical womanhood as advocated for on the blogs is being a housewife and a mother, which is endangered by women going to school or working outside the home. Second-wave feminism is essentially the antithesis to Biblical womanhood, at least in the way the bloggers believe it to be.

That is the political aspect, but the theological aspect of the religion is just as important. Despite all the different forms of Evangelicalism in the United States, there are still central tenants to the religion. There is a heavy emphasis on evangelizing—hence the name—through personal testimonies, which usually are carried out in impassioned speech (like Graham's). This can happen during one-on-one encounters to prospective believers, but also during conventions or during church gatherings to other believers to renew their faith. As they are protestant, a personal belief and spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ as the savior of humanity is central to their beliefs, and most only think salvation is possible through this belief in Jesus Christ. This also links to evangelizing; as a belief in Jesus Christ is the only hope for salvation, every effort

must be made to have others believe in Christ's existence as well. Herein they differ from other branches of Christianity, of which some belief salvation is also attainable through good works.

As hinted at in the section on politics above, Evangelicals believe in a strict gender division between men and women; God has charged men and women with specific, separate roles in life that pertain to Bible verses that are central to them. Men are providers and protectors, women nurturers. Men work outside the home "on the field" (Genesis 3:19), as punishment for Adam's sin of eating of the fruit. The punishment for women is to have children through painful labor and to have their husband as their 'boss'. They conclude this from the happenings in Genesis; at the creation of humankind, God created Adam first, and then Eve (Genesis 1:27). After they disobeyed him, he cast them out of paradise with the following words to Eve:

“¹⁶Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” (Genesis 3:16)

This verse clearly establishes a gender hierarchy within a marriage. Another, equally important dimension to the situation is added through Ephesians by Paul. Here, the husband is compared to Jesus Christ, and the wife to his church. Jesus Christ received direct instruction from God the father, and gave instructions to his followers (the church) on how behave spiritually. Ephesians 5:22-33:

“²¹ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

²² Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

²⁴ Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

Evangelicals often conclude that this means that husbands are—more or less—divinely inspired by God about their marriage, and responsible for the actions of their wives and unmarried children; like Jesus Christ was responsible for his church. As salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ, and a husband is like Jesus Christ, it is not so far-fetched to conceive that salvation of a wife is only possible for her through her husband. On a more practical level, this also means that women should not earn money by ‘working the field’, i.e. by having a job, because that is Adam’s punishment.

For Evangelicals, this means that to honor God with marriage, it has to be ‘Biblical’; within the confines I just described, based on Evangelical interpretation of scripture. The man is the head of the home, who is responsible for the spiritual state of his family. He is responsible for every decision his family makes; a sacred duty conferred upon him by being born male. He receives instructions by God, so he sets the course. Wives are called to obey, to submit themselves to their husbands, as are the children in the home. Usually this is not framed as something terribly unbalanced; Jesus Christ would not harm the church or treat it without respect, and a husband wouldn’t treat his wife like that either. In any case, through these verses, the gender hierarchy has been cast in such a way that there is something directly divine within the husband. To question him, is to question God. Wives should obey their husbands because they are the physical embodiment of God, and their decisions are infallible, because God is infallible. And even if a husband makes a mistake, the wife will still be blessed, because she’s obeying God by listening to her husband. (Alexander 2018, June 24)

This division of roles is not only relevant within marriage, but also in religious organizations at large. Marie Griffith, in her book *God’s Daughters; Evangelical Women and*

the Power of Submission, describes the Evangelical women's organization 'Women Aglow Fellowship'. This fellowship, though mostly organized by and existing of women, still had male advisors who had final say in the appointment of leaders and moral principles. (Griffith 1997, 156).

The paradox discussed in the introduction is created here. Evangelical women believe that only their husbands are spiritually able—and allowed—to teach on Biblical matters. (Alexander, June 1 2019) They conclude so from their interpretation of the Bible. The first relevant verse here is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35:

“³⁴Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law.

³⁵And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

The second, conflicting verse to this one is found in Titus 2:3-5:

“³The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

⁴That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

⁵To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

These two at first glance do not necessarily conflict. Older women who teach the younger women how to be a good mother and to do the household properly are not speaking on doctrinal issues within the church, but it is rather difficult to explain *why* some things need to be done in certain ways, without referring back to scripture. Why should a wife be obedient to her husband, if not for what is stated in the Bible? And what exactly is a good keeper of the home? This is explicitly explained in the Bible in, among other verses, Proverbs 31.

This conflicts with the idea that husbands are the ones to receive divine instructions from God, and with 1 Corinthians. Theoretically, a situation could be created where the older women instruct the younger, and if the latter have any questions, they should ask their husbands in turn. Practically, it's very awkward to execute this construction.

The bloggers also conclude from the Bible that in some circumstances, women are allowed to teach other women about biblical-adjacent topics. Theoretically this is

possible, but not practically, because the topic there are encouraged to teach in is also in the Bible. It's not possible to teach women how to be Biblical wives without referring to the Bible, which is, as just demonstrated, the domain of husbands.

In the next chapter, I will examine how the blogs communicate these paradoxical (and other) views to their readers, and in the third chapter I will explain how the paradox is constructed exactly, after my discussion on agency.

Rubies and transformation; essentials to Christian life?

The main Bible texts Evangelicals use to base their construction of gender roles and marriage on, have been laid out. I will now examine relevant passages from the two blogs I chose to determine their point of view. The blogs that I chose to serve as these examples are *AboveRubies.org* and *TheTransformedWife.com*. They are both well established and see a lot of traffic, and are referred to a lot on other social media.

AboveRubies is run by Nancy Campbell, a trusted figure in the Evangelical community where she has been active for years.ⁱⁱⁱ What gives her credibility is a combination of factors. Firstly, her home life is very much what she projects on her blog, with all of her children still within the faith and married the right way. Secondly, her husband Collin is just as religiously active as she is. He is the author of several books and a series of CD's and DVD's.^{iv} Thirdly, she publishes a magazine that features the articles she also has on her blogs, which has been in print for over 30 years.

The title of the blog is directly based on the Bible verse of Proverbs 31:10-31 (but I will only quote verse 11-13):

“¹⁰Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

¹¹The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

¹²She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

Lori Alexander's blog is not as old as *AboveRubies*, having only been active since 2011,^v but her blog has gained a lot of popularity due to her controversial posts.^{vi} She also lives a model Christian life with homeschooled children and a husband active in their faith, though he is not an author and instead works as an orthodontist. When examining his workplace website,^{vii} it becomes clear that he is a very religious man and so are his sons. As I have explained in the previous chapter, it is important that the bloggers' husbands are religiously credible, because they are ultimately responsible for their wives' ministry. Alexander justifies her blog specifically by referring to Titus 2:

“My ministry is based upon Titus 2:3-5 in which God commands that older women teach younger women to be sober, love and obey their husbands, love their children, be chaste, discreet, good, and keepers at home. If you would love to learn and grow in these areas and allow God's Word and His ways to transform your

marriage and your life, please join me as I teach you what I have learned from His Word, my own experience and mentoring many women, and most importantly, allowing the Holy Spirit to convict and transform you into the image of Christ.”^{viii}

To make a comparison on the form of their blogs; *AboveRubies* is visited more often and covers a broader range of topics, but *TheTransformedWife* offers an opportunity to test the reception of the blog better. Though, very important to note, Alexander does monitor the comments and she will sometimes not publish a specific comment if she does not like it.

Both of these blogs have ample entries to analyze; *AboveRubies* even shows what posts are the most popular (which are most suited for analysis), but as said before, *TheTransformedWife* allows comments. Importantly, both offer the option to search on the site for specific terms. *AboveRubies* seems to fall on the more liberal side of the two, while *TheTransformedWife* is very frank and not afraid to share advice that appears extreme to the average reader. The two blogs together should reflect a spectrum of opinions of Conservative Evangelicals.

The contents of the blogs were analyzed with the help of Critical Discourse Analysis. I choose to use the method as outlined by Marianne Jorgenson and Louise Phillips in their book *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, specifically concerning textual analysis and modalities of speaking. (Jorgenson and Phillips 2002, 83-84)

In their book they present different modalities of discourse, one of which is claiming ‘the truth’. In essence, what is remarkable about this way of speaking, is that the speaker claims to know the truth; never offering doubts or counterarguments to what they are saying. This modality seems abundant on the blogs; all advice is given in such a manner that conveys that the writer is claiming to speak the absolute truth on everything they write about, even if that is a wide range of topics like Bible texts or statistics about the general population of the US. Pertaining to the way information is presented specifically, that means that the bloggers never say: “According to my interpretation of the Bible,” or “I conclude from this passage”. Rather, statements like “the Bible clearly states here that...” followed by an interpretation, stated as fact. To use an example from the passages below; that there can be no peace when a husband is disobeyed, no arguments are given; no statistics, and not even an anecdote.

By writing in this manner, they are able to convince the readers much more; “Last year 40.000 couples got divorced due to women having affairs at the workplace,” sounds

much more convincing than “it has been suggested by some studies that workplace related infidelity has led to divorce.” To the average reader, this kind of unsubstantiated claim would be convincing, especially for someone she perceives as ‘on her side’ and older, who might conceivably know what they are talking about.

The way I determined which passages to analyze was by using four different terms, and to search for these terms on the website. These terms are from the list of what Mary Daly calls ‘passive virtues’. Daly, a feminist theologian, wrote in one of her articles “The Spiritual Revolution” the following list: ‘Charity, meekness, obedience, humility, self-abnegation, sacrifice and service’. Daly named these as the ideal virtues that have been internalized by Christian women, (Daly 1994, 122) which were to her a sign that sexism could be found within the Christian movement; women only internalized passive virtues, not active ones. She expresses in the paper that she suspects this is because women more so than men are taught that if they behave, they will get a reward in heaven. To get women to stay submissive, it is good to teach them that godly behavior is self-sacrificing. Oppression is good, because that way women will get to heaven. (Daly 1994, 122)

I thought these terms, or virtues, were perfectly chosen, because these terms are used very often on the blogs in the right context and capture their message; i.e. when the article is about being a good Christian wife. I will focus on the terms ‘obedience’, ‘service’, ‘meekness’ and ‘sacrifice’ because they encompass all of the terms used in the above quote by Daly.

The way in which I chose the passages is as follows for *TheTransformedWife*; I entered the terms in the search bar, checked all results (there are not too many to do so) and picked the passage that is most centered on the term itself, not the passages that just happen to have the term in it. If there were more than one, I chose the most recent one.

On *AboveRubies*, I also searched with the search bar, clicked on the ‘see more’ button that appears, then sorted the entries by popularity. I only considered entries by Nancy Campbell herself—others do also write for the website. As it is possible to see how many times a post has been read, I chose the one most read and most centered on the term.

Obedience

The passage I could find that contained this word on *TheTransformedWife* was in the post of October 12, 2017. (This is not the entire post.)

‘There is a false and destructive teaching about submission that is prevalent in our day and age as this one woman stated: *“Women do not want to submit because they don’t feel safe and they don’t feel that they can depend on the man. If men want women to submit, they need to make her feel safe (physically and emotionally) and they also need to be dependable in areas such as family income and finances. When these happen, a woman will naturally.”*

Our obedience NEVER depends upon someone else obeying the Lord. Never. As Theresa responded to this woman’s comment: *“A woman should submit to her husband because she loves God and is obeying Him and not live in disobedience to the word of God until she thinks her husband meets her requirements. Oh how I wish people could see and understand the beauty of submission in faith and obedience to God!”*’

On *AboveRubies* there were many more entries with the word ‘obedience’ in it. The entry that contained the word obedience the most, which was written by Nancy Campbell herself, was posted on May 7, 2012. (Again, this is only a partial quote.)

“We cannot run our homeland unless it is based on obedience. Titus 2:5 commands us wives to be obedient to our husband. We set the example for our children who [are, SD] to be obedient to us. When obedience is established in the home, the home runs smoothly. When a wife resists her husband, there is no peace. When children are not trained to obey, there is chaos! No mother can enjoy mothering disobedient children. No wonder many mothers don’t like mothering. They have children who are out of control.”

These passages reveal that both blogs believe that a wife should be obedient to her husband, because this is commanded by God.

Service

The post most relevant on *TheTransformedWife* was the one posted on June 20, 2017. Unhappily the post does not contain the word ‘service’ except for the title, “having a heart for service,” but it does use the word ‘serve’ quite a lot, as evident by this fragment:

“I asked her what she was doing this weekend and she told me she had told her husband that she was going to do anything he wanted to do and fix whatever food he wanted to eat. She knows how to serve her husband and make him happy.

[...] When he gets home at night, she makes sure a hearty meal is waiting for him. She knows he likes the home clean and tidy, so she’s always kept it clean and tidy.

[...] From the beginning of their marriage, he let her know that she wasn’t going to boss him around and as she has grown in the wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord, she has grown to be the kind of wife the Lord requires.

Her husband and home have always been her priority. This is the way it should be for all of us. It’s few husbands who would want to leave a wife who are treated by their wives the way my sister treats her husband. She knows what he prefers so she tries to please him in this area. Make sure your husband is a priority since you were created for him.”

There were many posts with the word service in it on the *AboveRubies* blog, which is not strange since the word is used often in the context of a ‘church service’. There fortunately are some blog entries that are specifically based on the concept of service. I chose the one posted on 12 May 2014:

“I have been thinking about our great role of "serving" in motherhood. As a young mother I remember feeling "I'm just a jolly servant around this place." I was still filled with selfishness, and although I loved my children and loved motherhood, I still wondered why I had to be the servant.

As the years have moved on, I realize more and more that it is a privilege to serve. It is innately in us as mothers to serve. We only reject it because of our selfishness, and in the end we miss out. For God blesses us when we serve. We are fulfilled when we serve. We are born to serve.

Of course we all want to "serve the Lord." That's our greatest ambition in life. But, dear mother, when you mother your children

and pour your life into making your home a sanctuary for God, for your husband and children, and all who come in to your home, YOU ARE SERVING THE LORD! This is your service to Him.

Yes, I know it's hard work. But, Psalm 100:2 tells us to "*Serve the Lord with GLADNESS.*" That means "exceeding joy." The Hebrew for "serve" means "to work, to labor," the same word as "six days shalt thou labor."

The one who serves will be blessed. Don't expect to be waited on. Be happy to serve. Even as Jesus, the Son of God, "*did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life*" [Matthew 20:28]."

One of their core beliefs has been expressed in these two passages; a wife is created for her husband, to serve him.

Meekness

I found several entries on *TheTransformedWife*, but there was one, the most recent, that included a definition (of a sorts) of the term itself, which made me select it. It was from June 24, 2019:

"If we are pleasant, we will live a life of meekness. Meekness is softness of temper; gentleness; forbearance under injuries and provocations. We don't get angry easily but are gentle with our husbands and others even when we think they are being unkind since we are called to forbear one another in love (Ephesians 4:2). [...]

We are longsuffering and forbearing one another in love. This is so opposite of what most in our culture are willing to do. As soon as trials come into their marriage and they are having to suffer and forbear with their spouse, they walk away. However, godly women will live in subjection to their husbands with godly behavior even when their husbands are unkind or living lives that are not pleasing to the Lord. They will adorn themselves with meek and quiet spirits and they will "not be afraid with any amazement" (1 Peter 3:6) because they know that God is good and His plans for them are good."

AboveRubies also offers an article dedicated to meekness, posted on 25 May, 2014:

“Do you think it's weak to be meek? Perhaps you could try being meek for a week! Meekness is not for weaklings. Meekness comes from a soul that allows the Holy Spirit to work His grace in her heart. Meekness (to be humble and lowly) is a beautiful thing. God actually states that *"He will BEAUTIFY the meek with salvation"* (Psalm 149:4).

Meekness brings sweetness to relationships and the atmosphere of the home. It reveals the character of Jesus who is meek and lowly (Matthew 11:29). On the other hand, the opposite of meekness, which is stubbornness and pride is an ugly thing. It destroys marriages and wrecks the atmosphere of the home.

Does meekness make you feel miserable? No. Isaiah 29:19 tells us that the meek INCREASE THEIR JOY in the Lord, plus a load of other blessings.

Samuel Thodey writes states [sic] that "Meekness is that calmness of spirit which grows not out of reliance on self, but out of reliance on God . . . Christianity is a discipline of humility. In making men Christ-like it makes them meek."

Ask the Holy Spirit to work a spirit of meekness in you. It will bring such blessing to your home.”

Meekness is clearly a positive quality, not being meek is very detrimental to a woman’s marriage. If you are meek, a reward from God is in order even if your husband, the ‘object’ of your meekness, is not Godly.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice occurs very often on *TheTransformedWife*, but the most suitable post is from April 12, 2019:

“Will God not fill her up with great happiness and joy knowing that the foundation she is building may be with a great and worthy sacrifice, but when done well, with God and His will at the center of it all, it produces far greater eternal value than any other career? What career can compare to growing up two, three, five,

nine, or even thirteen little souls who will be glorifying God together with you for eternity?

[...]. There is little in this world of any lasting value that is not won with hard fought sacrifice. Women are going into careers in droves, sacrificing the best years of marriage, family and baby making for some elusive dream of doing something important and worthwhile with their lives, all the while not considering that perhaps the most worthwhile things they can be [sic] do is to seek the things that God blesses. Does God say he blesses careers? Hard work, yes, but on women in careers God is silent. No blessings are promised, But for the full-time mom with her little brood under her watchful eye, her caring hands and loving work, such things God has asked of us. What God asks and promises, He will abundantly bless those who do things His ways.”

‘Sacrifice’ also occurred many times on *AboveRubies*, but I did succeed in finding several posts that explored the term itself. On December 30, 2011, she says the following:

Talking together about motherhood with a few women recently, one lovely mother said, "Oh it's so hard. It's such a sacrifice!" Immediately, my daughter, Evangeline replied, "What are you sacrificing?"

“When we confess that motherhood is a sacrifice, we are saying that there is something better that we could be doing and we had to give it up for the sake of motherhood! That is a lie.

Motherhood is the highest calling God has given to us. It is our LIFE. It may be challenging, but any worthwhile career is challenging.

This dear mother is committed to motherhood and when she was confronted with what she said, she immediately recanted her words. It's just that we are programmed by society to think that it is a sacrifice.

We need our minds renewed to God's way of thinking, to think truth instead of deception.”

These entries clearly state that having a career outside of the home is not guaranteed to be blessed by God, but staying at home is. Taking care of her children is the highest calling for any woman.

The main message of the blogs has been discerned as well as their ideals; that of a wife who puts her husband and sometimes children before herself, a Biblical ideal that is the best way of life for all (Christian) women. The next chapter concerns the question of agency, and what can be said about it within the context of the blogs.

Agency defined and applied

Because this paper mainly concerns what the blogs are communicating, and the manner in which they communicate, the matter of agency is important. What is the strategy the blogs employ to convince their readers? Before that can be answered, agency must first be defined in this context.

So, what is agency? While there undoubtedly are many definitions, I will approach this with the help of mostly Saba Mahmood as well as Kelsy Burke and Sara Bracke from a Gender Studies perspective. This is necessary to really determine what influence gender has on agency and how it exercises that influence.

In her book *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Mahmood tries to find exactly where agency—for women specifically—is located and what it looks like. Unlike the topic of this paper, she speaks on agency in the specific setting of the Middle-East, but her definition and thoughts on the topic are so widespread now and so thoroughly defined that I do still think they are relevant.

In any case, in her book she discusses the way women who seem—at first glance—to be able to exert very little power over their religious lives somehow still manage to create one area of their life—a religious area of their life—where they have relatively more freedom and choice than they do in their day to day lives. In that area they often have a special role within a religious setting that lends to them some freedom and power. In this context, she says about agency the following:

“Agency, in this form of analysis, is understood as the capacity to realize one’s own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective). Thus the humanist desire for autonomy and self-expression constitutes the substrate, the slumbering ember that can spark to flame in the form of an act of resistance when conditions permit.” (Mahmood 2004, 8)

According to Mahmood, it is dismissive to think that women have no agency when (religious) submission is required from and enforced on these women in their normal life.

In making her argument, Mahmood defines two kinds of freedom; negative and positive. Negative freedom occurs when there is nothing in the way to decide your own course, an absence of limits imposed on the individual. (Mahmood 2004, 11) Positive

freedom occurs when a will can be established to navigate those limits that are universally or near universally set (for everyone). (Mahmood 2004, 11). Of these definitions, positive freedom seems the more attainable; working around obstacles rather than not having them at all. Mahmood cautions her readers not to get too stuck on either of them, though:

“[...] I want to emphasize the concept of individual autonomy that is central to both, and the concomitant elements of coercion and consent that are critical to this topography of freedom. In order for an individual to be free, her actions must be the consequence of her “own will” [...] rather than [...] coercion. [...] Thus, even illiberal actions can arguably be tolerated if it is determined that they are undertaken by a freely consenting individual who is acting of her own accord.” (Mahmood 2004, 11)

With these words, she argues that the choice to navigate restrictions in the first place, as well as the way to do this, must be chosen by the woman herself; otherwise, there can still not be any autonomy. Freedom can be attained even with the most limited of choices, but only if one of the options is something that the woman who chooses really wants.

When phrased this way, there can still be some agency even in the most restricted of circumstances. To use my own example; if I can only choose what toothpaste I will use, I can still have agency if I choose one of them for my own reasons—like taste or function. If I make the choice because one of them is cheaper and I can’t afford the other one because I do not have enough money for it; that is not agency. (Mahmood 2004, 12)

Another important (for this paper) point that Mahmood makes, is that agency and free will is situational. She uses a very good example in her text to demonstrate this, which relates to the experience of women of color versus that of white women. (Mahmood 2004, 13) I have a similar example. One of my good friends is originally from Iran, but married to a Dutch man. She has taken his last name, something that happens less and less in the Netherlands and might be seen as old-fashioned and non-feminist by Dutch women. However, for her it was a feminist choice; in Iran a woman keeps her own last name because she belongs to her father’s family for her entire life (the first name of the father is even written in everyone’s passport; a father is as much an identity marker in society for his children as they are for themselves). By taking her husband’s name, she could do away with tribalism. She used her agency to secure her

own will and that she and her husband and future (now existing) children all belonged to each other. In line with this is Mahmood's cautioning of her readers that agency does not always look like subverting expectations or 'breaking free.' (Mahmood 2004, 14) She warns academics especially that agency cannot follow a set course and may appear to be, as she says, 'passive and docile'. (Mahmood 2004, 15)

Kelsy Burke takes the notion of agency in another direction. In her article "Women's Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions: A review of four approaches" Burke, as the title suggests, differentiates four approaches women can have to agency within a religious setting. Burke identifies these as resistant, empowerment, instrumental and compliance (Burke 2012, 124) Compliant agency in particular she defines as going along with a religion, because the practicing of a religion is a goal on its own. Therefore, women who do not resist in any way do still display agency. (Burke 2012, 127-129) The core of her argument can be found in this quotation:

"Resistance, empowerment, and instrumental approaches to agency depend upon a notion of autonomy, that is, that individuals act for themselves. Yet compliant agency reveals that agency perceived as autonomy is inadequate when faithful individuals do not strive to be completely autonomous – they strive to act not for themselves, but for a divine God.

[...]Amy Hoyt (2007) demonstrates how Mormon women comply to traditional gender roles to fulfill duties dictated by a divine female, the Mother in Heaven. This ensures that they will become goddesses after death. Autonomy should not be the only criteria for agency when religious persons believe in God's will in addition to (or instead of) their own. Compliant agency attempts to overcome the shortcomings of other approaches to agency by taking seriously the nature of religious women's beliefs and practices within a specific socio-historic context." (Burke 2012, 128)

Burke does warn that if this theory is applied too liberally, every single choice can appear to be agency, which makes the term lose meaning. What is important to note is that Mahmood's focus as opposed to Burke's is more on the will of the women themselves rather than the will of God.

Sara Bracke reflects on the topic extensively in her article “Female Religious Agency.” (Bracke 2008, 61) She appears to agree somewhat that agency is situational, but differs from opinion with Mahmood substantially in her wider review of the concept. She explains that she feels that, though women have agency sometimes, no one must forget that agency can exist on a scale, and that a group of women having some agency—perhaps more than the investigating academic expected—is not sufficient to stop all review of their situation as a whole. (Bracke 2008, 62)

However, now that it has become clear that it’s not as simple as having agency or not having agency, the topic of this paper muddies the water even more. What if you have agency, but decline to use it? Is that agency as well?

This unique situation could only appear in the Western world, where women already have legal agency. The theological position of Evangelical women has already been discussed in the last chapter, but here I would like to discuss the implications of this position when held—and presumably executed by—religious women.

I would argue that there is some form of agency, but only if the women are viewed from an outsider’s perspective. I will expand on this, starting with my arguments that they have agency.

On the one hand, legally, the women have a lot of agency compared to the rest of the world as United States citizens. On an intersectional level they are quite privileged; they are white, heterosexual women with what appears to be an above-median income. They appear to be healthy. They are educated. There is no denying that the women who write these blogs have the capability and opportunity to make many, many decisions on a daily basis. I would classify these decisions as three different kinds of decisions, the first of which are practical.

Simply put, this means that they decide what they will write about, in what way they will phrase their review of the chosen topic, and when they post their stories. They also decide with whom they will interact once the stories are placed. They decide what affiliate links—on which I will expand later—are used on their website and on which server it is hosted.

Blogs are an interactive medium, which allow the bloggers more control over their writing than conventional written media like books or journals. I have witnessed—though unfortunately have no proof—that when the message itself was brought over in a way that, for example, Alexander didn’t intend, she would go back and edit the text when the comments underneath a post indicated confusion on the part of her readers.

She also tries to offer the information in a way that is consistent and will 'fill in a gap' when there is a request for a certain topic. In this way, a narrative is easily maintained. If it is really necessary, an argument can be explained more in depth in the comments as well.

Because I have only seen this on *TheTransformedWife*,^{xv} I cannot speak to the way *AboveRubies* handles this (as they do not have comments under the articles), though I have read articles where Campbell starts the article with "I am often asked..." Or "Many mothers wonder..." indicating that she also responds to a need. (Campbell, November 2014)

This ties in well with the second kind of decision, which is spiritual. When the women write a post that touches upon the role women should have in society (which they often do), they must also decide which piece of scripture is used to support their underlying argument, otherwise it would just be their opinion and not the opinion of God. Here lies the problem I have explained before: They could just write on keeping house without referring to Biblical principles, but they choose not to. There are many internet blogs dedicated to showing its readers how to clean a bathroom, how to feed children, and how to cook without having any form of religious tone, so it is, technically possible to dedicate a blog to homemaking without making reference to scripture. However, the women perceive their way of life as 'under attack' and therefore must defend their choices to be homemakers because they believe that is the life God has chosen for them. So, the paradox comes not into play just because of the blog (where they give spiritual advice, without their husband as cosigners), but also because the women perceive their blogs and their ideologies as under fire.^{xvi}

This results in them defending their way of life, by using scripture. This might be a little 'murky' in general; how far may a woman go in defending her choice to follow scripture without teaching about this same scripture? The situation becomes even less easily condoned or rejected because the scripture they share is often on how to be a Biblical woman and why they feel that this kind of scripture clearly shows (and is believable) that women should all live their lives in the same way they do.

This is a good moment to talk about the third kind of decision; I would call these social ones. The messages they use on their blogs are not just explanations of why being a wife and a mother is Biblically sound or a good way of living, but they also explicitly write these messages for other women. Titus 2 comes into play, as it were. So, their message on agency is that women should take a hard look at their own life and see if

they are not appropriating agency that they should not have in the first place. One of the core ideas is that women should not work.^{xvii} In the US, a woman can usually find some form of paid employment. However, the blogs advocate to not make use of this opportunity, and to instead stay at home. The way they justify this advice is by saying it is based on the Bible.

At first glance this might not appear to be very impactful. An internet advice blog has no real power in swaying its audience, no physical, social or economic influence in the daily lives of its readers. However, I do not think this advice should be underestimated. Because their advice is so heavily rooted in scripture—a large influence in the audience's life, and brought in an authoritative tone—as discussed in this paper before, their interpretation and advice become important.

By doing so, they directly limit the agency of the audience, because where at first a woman perceived herself as having agency, she now no longer has that (at least in Mahmood's definition). Where at first, she perceived herself to be able and allowed to work, it is now an affront to God. Even if she keeps working because she must financially support her family, she thinks doing this is against the will of God. Because this is no longer her choice, her will—whether to work or not—but God's choice, the blogs have directly taken away agency from their reader.

By Burke's standards; the will of God is apparently such that a woman can no longer do something she previously did, or would do, if she wants to obey that will.

I would conclude that the agency the audience is offered is reduced when the bloggers convince it of the soundness of their arguments by employing the discussed strategies. While legally and socially, the audience does not have a reduced agency, their agency has been limited because as Mahmood proposes, the options that her own will allow her have been reduced.

I would be remiss if I did not mention some inconsistencies. The bloggers advocate that women should not work, but by advocating this on their blogs they make money through affiliate links and by selling their books. Affiliate links are recommendations for online shops. A hypothetical example could be that when Alexander writes on what gardening gloves she uses, she links to the online shop where the reader can buy these gloves, on her website. If a reader makes a purchase through this link, Alexander earns a small commission. A less hypothetical example is buying something on Amazon after having been linked there by clicking on her book. Even if her book itself is not bought, she might still receive commission.

AboveRubies needs no explanation; it has a section where items can be bought.^{xviii}

While this is by no means a full-fledged career, it does mean she has to spend more time on her blogs than is justified for just teaching other women, taking away time for her children or husband. This shows that their actions are not wholly consistent with their philosophy.

Conclusion

Now that theology has been discussed, the blogs have been explored and the question of agency has been determined, I will draw conclusions.

The gender roles so strictly adhered to and encouraged on the blogs stem from both the historical formation of Evangelicalism itself, and the personal development and opinions of the bloggers. These gender roles are in large a motivation to write the blogs, so that women can be helped in living according to these God-ordained roles.

The blogs employ a particular tone of speaking to convince their audience(s); they often speak as if they have the absolute authority on these matters, which is, according to Critical Discourse Analysis, truth claiming. Because their target audience reads their blogs in good faith, this makes their influence stronger.

This modality of speaking, as well as the contents of the message, has a direct influence on the agency of the audience when agency is viewed through a gender studies lens. While the audience keeps the agency she had in a legal and social matter, her free will has been impeded because she has been convinced that options she had before, are now no longer options because her faith does not condone them. While this might, from the outside, not look like a large issue, it certainly will be a large issue for the women herself.

There are a few remarkable conclusions that can be drawn from my research. The first of these concerns the contradiction between the actions and the words of the bloggers. The bloggers claim women have no spiritual authority; this is based on their interpretation of scripture. By making this claim and explaining why they make it, the bloggers teach about scripture, which they have already concluded that they may not do because they lack spiritual authority.

They also invalidate their own advice by not cosigning their posts with their husbands, so their blogposts are pointless when referencing scripture because they have no authority to do so.

Moreover, their advice is pointless in another way; according to their own arguments, women have to listen to their husband and not to anyone else (the bloggers) on Biblical matters. This means that from the bloggers' point of view, their audience should not listen to them except when explicitly mentioning non-Biblical topics. This excludes most of the content of their blogs.

It is important to note that while the bloggers firmly stay on the more 'feminine' side of doctrinal issues—they do not write posts on the nature of Jesus Christ or how the way a man should divide his time between his work and his family—they do sometimes toe the line. One example is when they write about dealing with a pagan husband and what shape their own religious education as wives should be. (Alexander, April 2019) They are incredibly knowledgeable on the Bible and quote it very often, and demonstrate that they are Christians in their own right. Still, there are few confrontations on them overstepping because they never approach masculine topics straightforwardly.

In any case, doing this thesis has taught me much, and I have enjoyed it. Perhaps in the future more research might be done that can delve deeper into the influence of social media and Evangelicalism. Although blogs are a good research topic, social media like Facebook is more important because it reaches a much larger audience. The intersection of blogs, appearances at conferences and published books is also very relevant; writing books and making speeches increases the believability of the speaker. This would also allow persons like Debi Pearl to be examined, who does not have as much of a presence on blogs, but makes a lot of video logs and has written several very relevant books.

In any case, there remains a lot to be discovered; I can only hope I may contribute to this in the future.

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Front cover image: *The Annunciation*, Peter van Schendel, date unknown.

ⁱ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/?lang=eng>

ⁱⁱ According to my mother, who was a young woman at the time and heavily involved in second wave feminism. Also see: Françoise Coste, 2016. "Women, Ladies, Girls, Gals...": Ronald Reagan and the Evolution of Gender Roles in the United States', *Miranda*, 12 | 2016, Online since 02 March 2016, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/miranda/8602> ; DOI : 10.4000/miranda.8602. In this article you can see Ronald Reagan's point of view on feminism, which showcases the main concerns conservatives had very well.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nancy Campbell. "Who are the Campbells?" *AboveRubies*, Juli 2013. Last accessed June 1, 2019.

<http://aboverubies.org/index.php/home/about-the-campbell-family>

^{iv} His biography: <http://aboverubies.org/index.php/blog/blogger/colincampbell>

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^{vi} Shari Puterman. "Meet The Transformed Wife, whose 'working mom' chartrocked the word", *USA Today*, December 18, 2018. Last accessed 1 July, 2019.

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^{vii} <http://www.alexanderandsons.consulting/about-us/who-we-are>

^{viii} <https://thetransformedwife.com/about-2/>

^{xv} <https://thetransformedwife.com/living-with-a-pagan-husband/>. The explanation is expanded on by Alexander in her comment on the 26th of April at 7 PM. Quote: "it's only through God's power working through you, Deborah, BUT a wife never has to submit to evil desires. She obeys God over her husband. You had every right to let him leave if he left and call the authorities if he was physically abusing you."

^{xvi} This is not without reason. It is important to note that for all their efforts, neither blog only enjoys respect and status. Because of the, for the 'regular people', extreme points of view, the blogs attract a fair amount of ridicule. Again, for *TheTransformedWife* the amount of ridicule is worse. One example of a so-called viral post on *TheTransformedWife* is the one called Men Prefer Debt-Free Virgins Without Tattoos (Alexander, July 16). The title is fairly self-explanatory, and the post was read by a lot of people. This eventually developed into a meme, an 'internet joke' as it were, to the point where there are t-shirts for sale with the title of the post on it. (see: <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/men-prefer-debt-free-virgins-without-tattoos>) *AboveRubies* also receives criticism, though this is usually more nuanced, on their stance of male headship and often accused of wanting to go back to the 1950's. (Freemethodistfeminist, 2010)

^{xvii} Lori Alexander. "Has God Called Women to be Independent?" *TheTransformedWife*, July 9, 2018. Last accessed 30-6-2019. <https://thetransformedwife.com/has-god-called-women-to-be-independent/>

^{xviii} <http://aboverubiesbookstore.mybigcommerce.com/>