Suzanne van Geuns and Pamela E. Klassen

Chapter 2
Promiscuous Affiliation: Evangelical Women, Biblical Mediation and Digital Infrastructures of Conversion

Jenn's blog features many flowers, drawn in soft pinks and watercolor greens, with the occasional nightingale, and is framed by a header with a quote from the Epistle to Titus 2:4–5. These two verses from the New Testament show up on the blogs of conservative Christian women with some frequency, enjoining "young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." In the sidebar, directly above various advertisements for candles and spa sets, Jenn's homemade daily Bible reading plans provide a guide for reading the entire Bible in one year. Jenn writes that she is "just your average Texan momma" blogging to "glorify God" and allow women to "find Biblical truths" as they read how Jenn herself applies the Scriptures to her life and circumstances.[1] What the flowers and the biblical citations do not directly reveal is that by visiting Jenn's blog and reading about her life, a user potentially also contributes to her bank account. Her blog has an "affiliate link" to Walmart embedded in the text, so that if anyone purchases something online from Walmart afterward, Jenn receives a small payment. Even if the purchase happens weeks afterward and the visitor never clicked anything on the blog, Jenn is paid by the companies of which she is an affiliate, as they reward her for bringing these customers, no matter what they purchase, into what is known in the online advertising industry as the "conversion funnel."

In this chapter, we take as our focus North American Evangelical Christian women's confessional production, by which we mean a wider Christian emphasis on testimonial witness as both a missionary and an entrepreneurial mode of address.[2] Jenn's blog is one of thousands of examples of white Evangelical wom-

1 Jenn, "Stuff About Me," *Is It Monday, Yet?* (blog), n.d., accessed April 16, 2017, https://mondayfollowssunday.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_7.html. For blog posts that do not indicate a publication date, citations will include a 'accessed by' date.

2 Pamela E. Klassen, *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary's Journey on Indigenous Land* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 41–48; Kathryn Lofton, *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110608755-003

en's online writing and self-presentation.[3] This chapter analyzes the blogs of more than thirty U.S. Christian women, published between 2008 and 2016. While the bloggers in our analysis generally do not mention any denominational affiliation, they claim an implicitly universal Christianity in which they—women who write about being wives, mothers, and being "sold out" for Christ—hold fast to the Bible in a culture that does not. Bloggers test "worldly philosophies" against the "real world of eternity" in homeschooling their children, lament "rudeness and misunderstanding" from people who do not see the blessing of having very large families, and reiterate that they are "set apart" or "pioneers" in a culture that rejects Christian values.[4] As a form of confessional production

3 It is impossible to estimate how many conservative Evangelical women's blogs exist online. We found the blogs in this chapter by looking at "link ups" on major conservative Christian blogging hubs: the Raising Homemakers link up, the Modest Monday link up, the Growing in Grace link up, and so on. When one blogger hosts a link up, other bloggers can post a link to their most recent post (formatted as a button) under it, creating a patchwork of links. Gathering these links rapidly yields hundreds of web addresses. The sheer amount of such link ups, and the fact that only bloggers who are actively marketing their blogs make use of them, hints at the large number of conservative Christian blogs online. For examples of link ups, see Caroline Allen, "Modest Monday and a Link Up!" *The Modest Mom* (blog), February 15, 2016, https://www.themodestmomblog.com/modest-monday-and-a-link-up-139/, Nicole Crone, "Growing in Grace Thursday Link Up #44," *Children Are a Blessing* (blog), February 4, 2016, http://childrenareablessing.org/2016/02/04/growing-in-grace-thursday-link-up-44/, June Fuentes, "Wise Woman Linkup!" *A Wise Woman Builds Her Home* (blog), February 9, 2016, http://proverbs14verse1.blogspot.nl/2016/02/wise-woman-linkup_9.html, Darlene Schacht, "Titus 2sDay Link-Up Party." *Time-Warp Wife* (blog), February 15, 2016. http://timewarpwife.com/7552-2/ (Archived here: https://web.archive.org/web/20160219071033/http://timewarpwife.com/7552-2/).

4 Grace Wheeler, "Our Family Mission Statement," *The Mommy On The Bus Says...* (blog), June 28, 2010, https://wheelsoffun.blogspot.com/2010/06/our-family-mission-statement.html; Kelly Crawford, "It's Normal to Have Babies. (That's Why I Look at You Weird When You Ask Me If I'm 'Done.')," *Generation Cedar* (blog), January 8, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20190103103642/http://www.generationcedar.com/main/2014/01/its-normal-to-have-babies-thats-why-i-look-at-you-weird-when-you-ask-me-if-im-done.html; Rebecca Jones, "Guarding the Heart – Part 2," *Leading Little Hearts Home* (blog), July 10, 2008, https://growingupgodskids.blogspot.com/2008/07/guarding-heart-part-2.html; Pam, "A Homemaker In All Seasons," *Where Your Treasure Is* (blog), November 2, 2015, https://treasureinanearthenvessel.blogspot.com/2015/11/a-homemaker-in-all-seasons.html; Erin Patrick, "When Life Isn't Fair," *My Nuggets of Truth* (blog), October 15, 2011, https://mynuggetsoftruth.blogspot.com/2011/10/when-life-isnt-fair.html; Holli, "A Rare Treasure...Seek One...or...Be One?," *Settled In My Home* (blog), June 2, 2008, https://settledinmyhome.blogspot.com/2008/06/rare-treasureseek-oneorbe-one.html.

at once intimate, material, and entrepreneurial, blogs reveal how Christian witness, digital infrastructure, and capitalist accumulation intersect.

Our chapter conjoins digital humanities and material religion through both theoretical critique and methodological practice. We take a rhetorical, intertextual, and infrastructural approach to gendered confessional production, through reading texts for their content and their coding. We understand digital humanities as a frame for theoretical analysis of how digital technologies facilitate and depend on cultural production. We deploy a method of looking under the hood of the internet, so to speak, to analyze how gendered, racialized, and commodified religious practices invoke coded tools of connection. Embedded in the infrastructure of the internet, "cookies" and "affiliate links" shape women's confessional production both with their knowledge and without it. When analyzing the modes of persuasion that Evangelical women use online, we pay attention to how and when they invoke the textual authority of the Bible, how they frame their words aesthetically, and how they make the digital infrastructure of the internet work for them as witnesses for God and as entrepreneurs.

Christian blogs do the work of the Church and the corporation, and Evangelical women have long stuck with the blogging format even as new social media platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter) rose in popularity. On one hand, these blogs are informed by biblically-rooted traditions of rhetoric and aesthetics in which missionaries witness to others as a profound responsibility. On the other, they are aligned by internet infrastructures both technical and corporate which seek to reach and influence as many people as possible. Engaging with the broader study of religion and mediation, our chapter brings to bear key concepts in digital studies, including affordances, aesthetic traps, and digital infrastructure, as well as widely used concepts in internet entrepreneurialism, such as affiliation and conversion. We use these terms to "undomesticate" Evangelical women's words and images at the same time that we highlight the testimonial fervor of internet "economies of salvation."[5] Grounding Evangelical women's blogs in personal and capitalist modes of affiliation called for by both Christian evangelism and digital infrastructures, we show the analytical benefits of bringing together the study of vernacular biblical exegesis and evangelical traditions of confessional production with digital tools for commercial success.

The devotional entrepreneurialism of the predominantly white Evangelical women we discuss here is a deeply material and gendered form of religious com-

5 Simon Coleman, "Materializing the Self: Words and Gifts in the Construction of Charismatic Protestant Identity," in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 181.

munication. Women who may not consider themselves free to preach or speak in a church feel emboldened to circulate their biblical interpretations online in part because they are, quite literally, working from home. Evangelical bloggers are writers, designers, and creators of material religion. The women we discuss in this essay build and maintain digital infrastructures that anticipate and encourage the apprehensible and concrete effects (as conversion, as money) of the circulation they facilitate. They work within a Christian and online genre that is almost exclusively textual and visual; at the time of this analysis, this demographic of women had not made the transition to social media platforms that emphasize more audiovisual content, although many have expanded to Instagram and TikTok since 2016. Like the digital infrastructures through which the internet remains available, social media platforms and preferred content delivery methods shift constantly. That said, the infrastructures of these blogs remain alive. When readers today click on the affiliate links to Amazon or Walmart sprinkled through these blog posts, both blogger and reader are bound into commodified confessional production. These online infrastructures of circulation allow women to both sidestep and work within the contested terrain of their own gendered bodies as a containers of the sacred that may speak the word of the Lord from some places, and not others.

Jenn is an "influencer" who, like many other Evangelical bloggers, has varying capacity to incite purchasing action among her audiences and highlights her online contributions as a form of home-based Christian witness to other Christian women first and foremost. The wide broadcasting of these women's digital modes of address, however, means that they continue to grapple with the age-old tensions of confessional production, in which Christians worry that glorifying God through testimony often ends up glorifying the self along the way. Analysing not only their testimony but also the digital infrastructure coded below their words reveals a related tension: links of affiliation can be wildly "promiscuous," in the words of Wendy Chun, such that by sending users into internet conversion funnels where they may purchase any manner of product, Evangelical bloggers may end up serving "mammon" more than God (Luke 16:13).[6]

6 Wendy Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 58 – 60.

2.1 Biblical Mediation, Literalism, and the Affordances of Internet Witnessing

A verse from the Letter to Titus is a fitting epigraph for use on the internet, a medium of communication that increasingly acts as an affordance for duplicity in which people mask their identities in order to incite others. A text that, in the King James Version, enjoins "sound speech," "true witness," and sincerity, Titus also warns against liars and deceivers who will say anything in the pursuit of "filthy lucre." Along with its emphasis on wives' obedience to their husbands, it casts aspersions on Jews. But the Letter to Titus is itself a kind of lie. One of the so-called "Pastoral Epistles," the letter asserts the Apostle Paul as its author, which means that one of the most important founding figures of Christianity undergirds the doctrinal authority of the text. Biblical scholars, however, have long agreed that the Letter to Titus is "pseudepigraphical," meaning that it was not actually written by Paul, but by someone else seeking to ground his ideas in the authorial voice and influence of the apostle.[7] The Letter to Titus, then, is a text written in the first person that is replete with specific and confidence-inspiring detail of people and places, in which the pseudo-Paul commands that wives and servants be obedient to their husbands and masters. It is not too much of a leap to consider the Letter to Titus as an ancient precursor to the bots and web brigades of the twenty-first century, programmed to pretend to be real people or masking their online provocations in the identities of others.

Conservative Evangelical Christians such as Jenn, however, firmly believe that Paul is the author of all the New Testament epistles gathered in his name. Largely sharing a common denominator of biblical literalism in which the biblical text is held to be inerrant, these kinds of Christian readers privilege their understanding of the literal words of a Bible verse as they read them, concerned with the historical context of the text only insofar as it can be understood to confirm its transcendental legitimacy and power.[8] For them, approaching the biblical text as consisting of layered voices undercuts what is most important about it: its singularly clear truth, accessible to all. Transferring this hermeneutic of biblical literalism from the medium of the printed Bible to that of the internet,

---

7 John Marshall, "'I Left You in Crete': Narrative Deception and Social Hierarchy in the Letter to Titus," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127.4 (2008): 781–803.

8 Vincent Crapanzano, *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench* (New York: The New Press, 2000); Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

however, is a shift that is at once material, in terms of medium, and epistemic, in terms of presenting oneself as a "public" figure.

Writing as an American Christian woman in the nineteenth-century era of print required access to literacy, publishing networks outside the home (including church newspapers), and financial resources. While both race and gender limited women's access to public communication, there is a long history of both white and Black women who were public figures by virtue of their Christian witness. Such women stood out among their sisters, as women who communicated their vernacular biblical exegesis in a public realm both through writing and through public speaking.[9] Writing as an American Christian woman in the twenty-first century era of digital mediation and widespread literacy, however, the means of production may very well be located in one's kitchen or home office. As long as a woman has the money to purchase an internet connection and a suitable electronic device, she can address a public audience. No longer dependent on personal networks or church authorities, she relies on digital infrastructures and technical know-how to share her testimony.

Figuring out how to appropriately channel the home-based practices of biblical womanhood into an online world also involves quandaries of self-presentation in a very public medium. "Blogging ministries" like Jenn's stand in a long tradition of Christian women's confessional production framed as what Anthea Butler has pithily called "teaching not preaching."[10] Confessional production in which women detail how biblical truths have transformed them is predominantly instructional, in that it also details how the truths presented might transform the listener. Writing historically about Evangelical women's preaching in the US, Catherine Brekus points to how women justified their public preaching in churches, street corners, and camp meetings through personal testimony that they had been called to be an instrument for divine truth and biblical mediation.[11] Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century varieties of Christianity were initially more open to women preachers than later battles over ordination might suggest. By the early twentieth century, however, most Protestant denominations

9 Katherine Bassard, *Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Laurie Maffly-Kipp and Kathryn Lofton, eds., *Women's Work: An Anthology of African-American Women's Historical Writings from Antebellum America to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Catherine Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

10 Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 34–39.

11 Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 15, 191–93.

restricted women's public preaching and writing, limiting them to more domesticated and gendered terrain: teaching children about the Bible or writing for the "Women's Page" of a church newspaper.[12] Overseas or home missions provided women with opportunities for testifying to their faith further afield, but even those roles often kept women within domestic, women- and children-focused realms.[13] Conservative Evangelical women who felt themselves to be called as instruments of God increasingly took up teaching as a vocation that fit within the limits that patriarchal readings of the Bible and church regulations imposed on them.[14] Similarly, the Evangelical women who publish their testimonies online today do so in an overtly instructional register, which allows them to affirm patriarchal—literally, rule by the father—biblical interpretation even as they claim space for their confessional productions in the public venue that is the internet.

Evangelical women's blogs draw inspiration from testimonial teaching and instructional traditions beyond (or adjacent to) Christian genres, including those of therapeutic self-help. Many scholars have traced the crossover between Christian and therapeutic genres in both Evangelical and liberal Protestant writing.[15] An especially important precursor to Evangelical women's blogging is the boom in Christian women's self-help and marriage advice publishing during the 1970s and 1980s, which Emily Suzanne Johnson argues was an integral part of the development of the religious right in the United States. Johnson's work shows that Christian confessional self-help texts allowed women to teach other women by channeling biblical truth—especially when such truths could be demonstrated to pertain to problems specific to "feminine" occupations like being a wife, mother, or homemaker—thereby engaging in a genre of public address that did not chafe at conservative Christian doctrinal bounds around gender roles.[16]

---

12 Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 298–302.

13 Margaret Bendroth and Virginia Brereton, eds., *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

14 Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 305; Margaret Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 84–91.

15 Amy DeRogatis, *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Pamela E. Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Lofton, *Oprah*.

16 Emily Suzanne Johnson, *This Is Our Message: Women's Leadership in the New Christian Right* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 25–31.

Even when a biblical text sanctions a woman's voice, whether as an early-twentieth-century preacher, a post-sixties self-help guide, or a twenty-first-century digital influencer, her female body remains an unstable mediator precisely because of doctrinal bounds about women's public speech.[17] In the digital realm, this instability becomes a particularly fascinating point of analysis, as conservative Evangelical women make themselves into mouthpieces for God in a public setting without ever leaving the sphere of the home or their commitment to marital obedience. Key to their ability to do so are the affordances of the internet that allow women to sanction their public address through biblical mediation based in the home. This biblical mediation is at once exegetical, aesthetic, and affiliative. They undergird their public confessional production with testimonial exegesis that cites and hyperlinks the biblical text as an actor in their lives. They aestheticize this scriptural connection by displaying, decorating, and hyperlinking biblical verses, such as from the Letter to Titus, in banners that convey their femininity and Christian devotion to home and family. They also make use of the internet as an affordance for webs of affiliation with other Evangelical women, their visitors, and corporations—bringing everyone into the funnel of conversion from their kitchen table.

2.2 Affiliation and Aesthetic Traps

Like their predecessors among nineteenth-century missionaries and twentieth-century Evangelical self-help writers, conservative Evangelical women's confessional production snugly intertwines Biblical references with commercialization efforts. They make careful use of what anthropologist Daniel Miller, inspired by Alfred Gell, has called the aesthetic traps of the web. Gell used the term in relation to captivation or enchantment, which he understood to arise when a viewer feels that an object has agentive abilities far beyond her own, as the object itself is laden with the networked agencies of all involved in its construction.[18] In the case of these blogs, this emphasis on the layering of agencies in the object in-

17 Pamela E. Klassen and Kathryn Lofton, "Material Witnesses: Women and the Mediation of Christianity," in *Media, Religion and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges*, ed. Mia Lövheim (New York: Routledge, 2013), 52–65.

18 Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1992), 40–63; Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1998), 69–72.

cludes both the agentive role of the Bible in Evangelical women's confessional production and their affiliations with corporations.

Writing about Trinidadian websites of the 1990s, Miller clarifies that "[t]he term aesthetic refers here not to some criterion of beauty but to the visual properties of sites as forms of social efficacy." (Gell would have glossed this as agency).[19] Miller insists that scholars pay close attention to the "particular materiality" of a website to gauge its attractions: while nightingales, rose petals, and biblical verses may deter some visitors from Jenn's blog, others are drawn to her blog precisely because of these aesthetic choices. Though Miller's use of the language of traps may seem overly dramatic, his insights from almost twenty years ago remain powerful for thinking about affiliate links as "aesthetic forms that [...] attempt to align web creator and potential surfer in time and space, so that each can, as it were, dock alongside the other in cyberspace."[20] Across genres and aesthetic choices, websites are traps for both like-minded visitors and for the scholarly analysts who visit them, "with their promise of insights into the intimacy of other people's sociality and revelations of the contradictions of the self."[21] The intimacy of online testimony is at once personal, public, and entrepreneurial. As John Durham Peters argues, Christianity can be seen as a doctrine of dissemination, in which Jesus is cast as a broadcaster, a sower who does not attend to where his seed lands.[22] In step with this call to spread the social efficacy of the Word, Evangelical blogs are promiscuously ready to entice a seemingly limitless audience.

Blogging, of course, is a skill, and it is not uncommon for bloggers to offer instructional posts meant to help instruct site visitors who might be thinking of starting a blog themselves, analogous to the more frequent topics of instruction, such as childrearing or housekeeping.[23] In the more detailed guides to Christian

19 Daniel Miller, "The Fame of Trinis: Websites as Traps," *Journal of Material Culture* 5.1 (2000): 16; Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory.*

20 Miller, "The Fame of Trinis," 17.

21 Miller, "The Fame of Trinis," 18–19.

22 John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 51–62.

23 See, for example, Stephanie Malcolm, "Mommy Blogger Series: For the Love of Writing," *Training Keepers of the Home* (blog), February 23, 2018, https://stephanieamalcolm.com/mommy-blogger-series-keepers-home/ (Archived here: https://web.archive.org/web/20200928063907/https://stephanieamalcolm.com/mommy-blogger-series-keepers-home/); Lydia Sherman, "Welcome to My Blog Home. Before Your Visit, Please Read This:," *Home Living: Quiet and Gentle Thoughts for Ladies at Home* (blog), August 1, 2014, https://homeliving.blogspot.com/2014/10/welcome-to-my-blog-home-before-your.html; June Fuentes, "Blogging to Advance the Kingdom of God," *A Wise Woman Builds Her Home* (blog), June 30, 2011, http://proverbs14verse1.blogspot.com/2011/06/

blogging that we found, the instructions for how to set up the website go beyond recommendations to highlight one's favorite biblical verses and flowers to explain how to include advertisements and build affiliate links.[24] These instructions show that some convincing is required to show that making money is not at odds with the higher purpose of glorifying God and encouraging others in their journey toward a biblical life. Sarah Hardee, who writes at *Christ-Centered Mama* and whose sidebar boasts a popular downloadable PDF guide to Christian blogging, offers the following explanation: "Your content is worth the same as secular content, and they get paid! No, I take that back... it's worth more!"[25] Some guides make the argument that laborers are worthy of their wages, usually with reference to 1 Timothy 5:18.[26] To be paid for godly activity is seen as preferable to being paid for work of a less noble character.

Far more common, however, are references to the "Proverbs 31 woman," whose "price is above rubies" and who is a strong, industrious, loving, virtuous wife and mother. Evangelical women rely specifically on Proverbs 31 to make the argument that making use of God-given talents (especially in handicrafts) is biblical. Internet platforms like blogs and Etsy make it possible to stay home while doing honorable work: a win-win.[27] That is not an uncomplicated conclusion, however. In a long post about the constant concern that her online photography work has come to stand in the way of giving God what is "rightfully his," Rachelle Chase concludes that she will accomplish what God wants ("praying, reading, spending quality time with my husband and kids") first and put "left over time" into photography. Articulating the explicit "goal" to become a Proverbs 31 woman, Chase writes that she feels calmer knowing that this "includes

---

blogging-to-advance-kingdom-of-god.html; June Fuentes, "New Blogging Series," *Raising Homemakers* (blog), July 2, 2011, http://raisinghomemakers.com/2011/new-blogging-series/.

24 Perhaps the most complete guide in the world of Christian blogging is *By His Grace We Blog*, which can be downloaded as a 64-page PDF (https://gumroad.com/l/MKRCm). It was written by Carmen Brown, whose blogging ministry heavily focuses on providing detailed instructions to prospective bloggers. See a list of resources and instructional posts under the "blogging as discipleship" category on her website. Carmen Brown, "Blogging: Discipleship in Writing," *Married by His Grace* (blog), n.d., accessed March 11, 2019, https://www.marriedbyhisgrace.com/category/tipsresources/.

25 Sarah Liberty Hardee, "Yes, Christian Mom, You Should Start a Christian Blog – 7 Reasons," *Christ-Centered Mama: Motherhood for the Glory of God* (blog), July 8, 2017, https://www.christcenteredmama.com/start-a-christian-blog/. See also Shanique, "Christian Affiliate Programs for Christian Bloggers," *Rock Solid Faith: Live With Intention Grow In Faith* (blog), May 11, 2018, https://www.rocksolidfaith.ca/christian-affiliate-marketing/.

26 Roberts, "A Christian Mom's Guide to Blogging."

27 Roxy, "A Homemakers Business...," *Living from Glory to Glory* (blog), January 29, 2014, https://livingfromglorytoglory.blogspot.com/2014/01/a-homemakers-buisness.html.

being a business woman as well as a mom!"[28] Other bloggers go further, noting that the Proverbs 31 woman is "industrious" and has "business sense," or even that she "fits into my business plan" because she "puts hard work in and is rewarded with profit."[29]

The limits of a virtuous woman's entrepreneurial ventures are a source of debate on Evangelical blogs, as according to some bloggers the use of the Proverbs 31 woman's linen- and tapestry-making to legitimate leaving the domestic sphere is something the Bible cannot abide. In a post responding to a dissident commenter, blogger Kelly Crawford forcefully writes that "[y]ou said she sells garments in the marketplace…no she doesn't. Read it again. She sells garments to the MERCHANTS. She is a wholesaler. THEY go to the marketplace. […] Her productivity flows outward from her home, not against it."[30] The home—where women's divinely ordained role plays out—must come first, not the use of talents on the internet.

References to biblical passages such as Proverbs 31 work both exegetically and aesthetically, frequently showing up in headers, "about" pages, or blog titles. Melissa Ringstaff, for example, writes from Kentucky, where she is homeschooling her nine children.[31] Her blog is called *A Virtuous Woman*, taken from Proverbs 31:10, a verse she has turned into a logo with cursive calligraphy. Explicitly offering to show other women how to become a "Proverbs 31 Woman today" through "spiritual and practical application," she also instructs site visitors how to design a blog without ever having to learn how to code, relying on templates and pre-made platforms. She notes that while "blogging is a great option for women who want to work at home," prospective bloggers will not make money unless they write with "passion." The examples Ringstaff offers of passionate writing include sharing "how God has transformed your life" and

28 Rachelle Chase, "Conflicted," *Rachelle Chase* (blog), September 8, 2011, http://rachellechaseblog.com/conflicted/.

29 Kristina Seleshanko, "What Is a Proverbs 31 Woman? (And a Bit About Me)," *Proverbs 31 Woman: Homesteading, Home Keeping, Family, & Faith* (blog), October 4, 2009, https://www.proverbs31homestead.com/2009/10/what-is-proverbs-31-woman.html; Nora Conrad, "How Proverbs 31 Fits Into My Business Plan," *Nora Conrad* (blog), November 23, 2015, https://www.noraconrad.com/blog/proverbs31.

30 Kelly Crawford, "Proverbs 31…Surprising Her Day and Ours!," *Generation Cedar* (blog), May 9, 2008, https://web.archive.org/web/20120825012931/http://www.generationcedar.com/main/2008/05/proverbs-31surprising-her-day-and-ours.html. See also Lori Alexander, "A Stay-At-Home Wife Or Mom Is Unbiblical?," *The Transformed Wife* (blog), January 17, 2017, https://thetransformedwife.com/lies-of-the-proverbs-31-woman/.

31 Melissa Ringstaff, "About Melissa Ringstaff," *A Virtuous Woman* (blog), n.d., accessed July 29, 2019, https://avirtuouswoman.org/about-melissa-ringstaff/.

writing "Bible studies for young women."[32] As with earlier Evangelical traditions of making money with Christian purpose—and in line with Max Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic—the financial success of the Christian blogger is a reflection of her virtue and a sign of God's beneficence.[33] With all the hard work a profitable blog requires, the urge has to be strong: Ringstaff notes that although she was never good at writing or even housekeeping, she felt "in [her] heart this pull to teach other women. *Crazy, right?*"[34]

The tensions in this kind of confessional production, however, remain hard to shake. Jolene Engle, a woman who writes her glossy, flowered blog under the byline of "Mentoring Women & Wives Closer to Christ", focuses on biblical marriage advice, which her sidebar notes will enable her readers to have "a thriving relationship with God and your man." Like Ringstaff, Engle also understands her role to be instructional, and offers a post guiding her readers on how to start their own blogging ministry within the context of their home and the internet. She distinguishes her approach from that of more self-focused online entrepreneurs: "what I constantly hear is that we need to build *our* platforms. Well, this just rubs me the wrong way because it is not *my* platform I'm seeking to build."[35] Justifying her labor as a foray into devotional entrepreneurialism, she insists she is building a platform for God.

With an instructional precision, Amy Roberts, whose Christian convictions have inspired her to educate her nine children at home, offers a checklist of questions for prospective bloggers. Her list includes questions such as "Is there a financial need in your family that could be filled by blogging without taking away from the family?" and various others that address "aversion" to monetization as stemming more from seeing greed in others than from the Bible. Like Engle, however, Roberts' checklist underlines Christian priorities: "Do you have your husband's blessing? Do the things you make money from support the mission of your blog and the Word of God?"[36] Anchored by biblical references and templates with traditionally feminine designs, these women's blogging instructions insist that the internet offers a platform for biblical truth first and foremost. The money cannot be

32 Melissa Ringstaff, "How to Start Blogging as a Ministry," *A Virtuous Woman* (blog), May 9, 2016, https://avirtuouswoman.org/how-to-start-blogging-as-a-ministry/.

33 Heather D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860–1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

34 Ringstaff, "How to Start Blogging as a Ministry."

35 Jolene Engle, "How to Start an On-Line Ministry (Blog)," *Jolene Engle: Mentoring Women & Wives Closer to Christ* (blog), August 17, 2015, https://joleneengle.com/how-to-start-an-on-line-ministry-blog/.

36 Roberts, "A Christian Mom's Guide to Blogging."

the main point. Nevertheless, setting up infrastructures of commercialization is a key part of learning to be a Christian blogger: most guides address it explicitly, and even when they do not, they are themselves filled with advertisements and affiliate links that reach with a noticeable promiscuity into networks far beyond the homes or churches of the women who write them.[37]

2.3 Digital Infrastructures as Promiscuous Paths of Affiliation and Aspiration

Advertising, sponsorships, and more specifically digital modes of commercialization are not extraneous to the internet's technological development: they have deeply shaped the possibilities the internet offers its users since its earliest days. The internet was born at the intersection of military and academic interests during the Cold War, always embedded in religious imaginaries of utopia and apocalypse.[38] By every accounting, the internet has been a commercial realm shaped by countercultural vision from its inception. As Fred Turner has shown, it was countercultural Californians in the 1960s and 1970s who imbued Cold War technologies like the computer with ideological legitimacy, through the particularly commercial vehicle of the "Whole Earth Catalog", which included networked computers alongside ecological gardening equipment as tools for

37 For examples of guides to Christian blogging that explicitly explain how to set up advertisements, affiliate links, and sponsorships, see Lee, "The Complete Guide to Being a Successful Christian Blogger;" Hardee, "How to Make Money By Running a Christian Blog;" Roberts, "A Christian Mom's Guide to Blogging;" Titus, "My Story." For other instructional posts that instruct readers interested in blogging in how to launch a blog, choose designs, and start writing, see Allison Marie, "5 of the Best Resources for Christian Bloggers," *All Things Allison Marie* (blog), April 22, 2018, http://allthingsallisonmarie.com/5-best-resources-for-christian-bloggers/ (Archived here: https://web.archive.org/web/20180704232915/http://allthingsallisonmarie.com/5-best-resources-for-christian-bloggers/); Engle, "How to Start an On-Line Ministry (Blog)"; Hardee, "Yes, Christian Mom;" Ringstaff, "How to Start Blogging as a Ministry;" Sally Stunkel, "How to Start a Blog: The Ultimate Guide for Beginners," *Sweetly Sally* (blog), September 1, 2016, http://sweetlysally.com/how-to-start-a-blog-the-ultimate-guide/. All of these include affiliate links and advertisements in the instructions they offer readers.

38 Paul Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Bruce Sterling, "Short History of the Internet," *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, February 1993, Internet Society, https://www.internetsociety.org/internet/history-internet/short-history-of-the-internet/; Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); John Naughton, *A Brief History of the Future: The Origins of the Internet* (London: Orion Books, 2000).

an incipient future.[39] As the network matured in the 1990s, the companies that had positioned themselves as subcultural pioneers were more openly negotiating the fact that they were, indeed, companies. Advertising has long been at the heart of Google as a search platform: 97% of the company's revenue comes not from the "technology" of search, but from its commercialization.[40] Along with its military and academic roots, profit and sales were always formative in internet development and use.

Initially, advertising models resembled those in use before the internet arrived. Early online commercialization models positioned the audience as a commodity to be sold to advertisers and reached through the aural effect of so-called banner ads. Online affordances, however, held the promise of surfacing the efficacy of such ads: now, it was possible to count how many site visitors had actually clicked through to purchase the advertised product. The costs of advertising, as a result, were based on "click through rates" rather than "page views," departing from an older tradition of paying to display. People largely ignore banner ads, it quickly turned out.[41] It was time for new strategies.

Coined in the early 2000s, the term "Web 2.0" describes the shift from broadcast models toward an emphasis on user-generated content, exchanged on platforms like Blogger, Facebook, YouTube, and so on.[42] The internet was no longer a place to passively receive content, and instead became the realm of "participatory culture"—a term that (like Web 2.0) arose in advertisement circles to articulate new models for harnessing people's behaviors for profit.[43] The notion of "viral" content, traveling across platforms rapidly because people cannot help but spread it to friends, stems from this period, as does the influencer, whose position on the platform is such that she can influence other users to spread content or indeed to make particular purchases.

Almost all guides to Christian blogging recommend Google advertisements. In a post that is frankly titled "How to Make Money Running a Christian Blog," Hardee explains that she adjusted Google Ads on her blog in accordance with

39 Edwards, *The Closed World*; Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*.

40 Ken Hillis, Michael Petit, and Kylie Jarrett, *Google and the Culture of Search* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 38.

41 Hillis, Petit, and Jarrett, *Google and the Culture of Search*, 39.

42 José van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); Aaron Barlow, *Blogging America: The New Public Sphere* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007).

43 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

the blog's Christian mission. To do so, she selectively opted into certain categories developed by Google, restricting her ads to "things that are strictly Christian, family, health, or counseling based" and blocking others.[44] Hardee writes that the "spammy" ads resulting from opting into all categories did not fit the "feel" of her *Christ-Centered Mama* blog. Both Hardee and Roberts underline that they could potentially make much more money were they to opt into Google Ads at odds with their mission.[45] Mitigating this problem is the array of companies—homeschooling publishers, accessories for long hair, essential oils—that advertise primarily on Christian blogs. Through the use of such digital advertising infrastructure, the blogger becomes an influencer who tries on and reviews different products, and bloggers like Hardee or Roberts (who primarily reviews homeschooling curricula) point prospective bloggers toward advertising partners that are aligned with the kind of influence a Christian would desire. Underneath these more traditional advertisement models exists a much less visible but equally important infrastructural outgrowth of ever-more sophisticated exploitation models: affiliate marketing, which involves the use of site visitors' data.

If advertisements work by being visible to—and indeed seen by—site visitors, affiliate marketing operates without them noticing. Instead of paying for every "click through" (as in the banner ad model), merchants instead only pay when the customer encountering the advertisement on a blog has actually purchased something. Knowing whether a blog reader has become a customer on a merchant's website is only possible through tracking the blog reader's data. The means by which that data becomes available is the "cookie": a "technology that enables a website to place data on a user's computer to recognize a user on a later visit."[46] When a user visits the blog, she encounters the infrastructure the blogger (who is "affiliated" with the merchant) has installed to make a bit of code "stick" to that user as she goes on her way. Then when she visits the merchant's website and makes a purchase, the blogger receives a percentage (usually between 5 to 30%) of that purchase's cost.

Here promiscuity enters again. Affiliate payments do not depend on whether the user bought something the blog recommended, nor does it matter whether she clicked anything. She could read a post recommending Bible-based anti-abortion pamphlets on Amazon, and go on to buy *Our Bodies, Ourselves*—a feminist, pro-choice "Bible" of women's health—and the blogger would still receive a percentage of the Amazon purchase. Bloggers are generally intentional about

44 Hardee, "How to Make Money By Running a Christian Blog."

45 Hardee; Roberts, "A Christian Mom's Guide to Blogging."

46 Benjamin Edelman and Wesley Brandi, "Risk, Information, and Incentives in Online Affiliate Marketing," *Journal of Marketing Research* 52, no. 1 (2015): 2.

the merchants, or the "affiliate networks" which bundle a group of merchants, with which they affiliate their blogs. The technological infrastructure, however, means that they cannot opt out of being compensated for purchases that are at odds with their beliefs. In light of this, it is not surprising that blogging instructions often suggest suitable affiliate networks, such as the homeschooling art company See the Light Art or HopeFuel's prayer journals, in the hope that it will be Christian—not "spammy"—linking that generates profits.[47]

That said, almost all bloggers affiliate with Amazon, which presents a wide range of products. Other frequently used affiliate networks, like RewardStyle and ShopStyle, focus on fashion. Pastor's wife, homeschooling mother, and modest fashion blogger Caroline Allen regularly posts pictures of her outfits, posing in ankle-length skirts in bright colors, pearly hair jewellery, and neutral t-shirts worn under clothing that would otherwise show bare arms or skin below the collar bone. In her "Modest Monday" outfit posts, Allen always includes links to her clothing or similar items, so that her readers know where they might acquire the same pieces.[48] Her affiliation with RewardStyle is inconspicuous, but can be traced nonetheless. When hovering the mouse on her "J.C. Penney" link, the browser shows the link as "rstyle.me/n/**ddunz3biwxf**". The "rstyle" in the url refers to RewardStyle, while the "affiliate ID" (in bold) is what lets the merchant know it was this *Modest Mom* post that made the referral. Clicking the link will open J.C. Penney's website as usual, but the browser's address bar shows Allen's referral (in bold): "https://www.jcpenney.com/?**cid=affiliate|RewardStyle|13419515|na&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_source=RewardStyle&utm_campaign**=13419515&utm_content=na&cjevent=5ae9d9ad442211e981c200100a240612"[49] Depending on the expiry date of J.C. Penney's "cookies," a

47 Amy Roberts, "For Bloggers: Affiliate Ideas," *Raising Arrows* (blog), November 11, 2013, https://www.raisingarrows.net/for-bloggers-affiliate-ideas/; Shanique, "Christian Affiliate Programs for Christian Bloggers."

48 Caroline Allen, "Modest Monday and a Link Up!" *The Modest Mom*, December 24, 2018, https://www.themodestmomblog.com/modest-monday-and-a-link-up-251/.

49 In October 2009, the Federal Trade Commission updated its endorsement guidelines in light of online marketing. This means that bloggers have to disclose their use of affiliate links. The FTC has continued to update its guidelines with the rise of new social media platforms, now also mandating a #ad on Instagram and Snapchat videos, for instance. For bloggers, the disclosure is usually a statement in small print at the bottom of every post, or in the sidebar, in a manner analogous to the banner ad. The guidelines make it clear that any "material connection" between the blogger and the merchant needs to be disclosed, rendering the commission bloggers make by linking to products for online shopping as a tangible tie. See "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsement and Testimonials in Advertising" (Federal Trade Commision, n.d.), 16 CFR Part 255, https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/press-releases/ftc-publishes-final-

visit to J.C. Penney's website up to 60 days later could still show Allen's imprint, and put money in her bank account. Affiliate marketing is ubiquitous, woven into the material infrastructure of the web from its protocols and linking routes to every user's browser storage. Site visitors can look away from banners (and indeed frequently use browser extensions to block them altogether), but will find it much more difficult to shake off the sticky code of cookies.

Affiliate marketing is infrastructural work. Computer scientist Philip Agre helps bring into focus how this infrastructure works with his concept of the capture model, and how it differs from older models of surveillance. He explains that the capture model originated in computing, where "capture" refers both to acquiring data and modeling possible paths people take.[50] Tracking via cookie relies both on a monitoring technology and a grammar of action: the monitoring is triggered by the tracked person choosing a particular path, which is to say, the cookie tracks the user only when she purchases something from the merchant.[51]

While Agre and others have thought about such models primarily in terms of privacy, communication scholar Wendy Chun has theorized "capture" more broadly, in terms of habit. Her material analysis of the internet shows how networks depend on a combination of habits produced by actions, and storage produced through monitoring. Every connection in a network is fundamentally habitual, based on paths that have been walked before.[52] If a computer has never been connected to anything, it cannot be part of a network—networking is an impossibility without prior connection. Computers, Chun argues, are habitually "leaky", constantly connecting to maintain connectedness, to the point of being "promiscuous," in ways that generally escape users. If pathways and connections arise from the habitual leaking that software needs to function, data analytics track people's actions on these paths, storing and compiling this information to create histories and futures.[53]

The goal of digital infrastructures of affiliation are much like the goals of Christian bloggers: to re-orient habits. In order to steer people along desired routes, digital platforms record computers' habitual connectivity to amass infor-

guides-governing-endorsements-testimonials/091005revisedendorsementguides.pdf; "The FTC's Endorsement Guides: What People Are Asking," The Federal Trade Commission, n.d., https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/ftcs-endorsement-guides-what-people-are-asking.

50 Philip Agre, "Surveillance and Capture: Two Models of Privacy," *The Information Society: An International Journal* 10.2 (1994): 106.

51 Agre, "Surveillance and Capture," 113.

52 Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 57.

53 Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 58 – 60.

mation concerning the routes their users choose through the network enabled by this connectivity. Chun draws out the single-mindedness of this material infrastructure of tracking and storing: the person is defined through purchasing. The infrastructure renders moot everything outside the network, as only actions of clicking and purchasing can be captured, and only via paths already established in the intricacies of the software that allows us to go online in the first place. Cookie-planting thus commercializes a promiscuity that is integral to the internet's functioning, at the same time that it fits the habits it is seeking to change onto an existing grid of possible pathways.

These digital, infrastructural pathways map onto the instructional goals of much Christian confessional production. The purpose of conservative Evangelical women's blogging—and the phrasing used here is remarkably uniform—is to "share in the journey" and "encourage" others walking the same path.[54] This purpose calls into being a web of connections: paths along which the journey unfolds, and others who affirm and strengthen shared convictions. In his essay on the materialization of Christian transformation, anthropologist Simon Coleman lays out how believers externalize and objectify experiences of transformation in "containers of the sacred": words or things that make divine power and its transformative effects apprehensible for others.[55] Alongside speech or objects, modern media of communication also contain such force, and similarly participate in its (commodified) distribution. Coleman's research with charismatic Christians helps him identify an "economy of salvation" that is reliant on a shared "aesthetic sensibility" across conservative Protestantism.[56] An economy of salvation is a system of circulation in which Christians manifest the effect God's power has on them in order to see divine power as a transformative material force in the lives of others. This mediating activity then enables them to re-absorb that power as indeed materially transformative. Coleman notes that

54 See for example Caroline Allen, "About Caroline," *The Modest Mom* (blog), n.d., accessed July 28, 2019, https://www.themodestmomblog.com/about-caroline/; Kelly Crawford, "About," https://generationcedar.com/main/about, *Generation Cedar* (blog), April 24, 2010, https://generationcedar.com/main/about; Debbie, "About Me," *She Graces Her Home In God's Beauty* (blog), n.d., accessed July 28, 2019, https://shegracesherhome.blogspot.com/p/as-my-sister-said-five-years-ago-on-my.html, Jenn, "Stuff About Me"; Shelly, "About." *There's No Place Like Home: Homeschooling My Large, Crazy Family!* (blog), n.d., accessed April 16, 2017, https://redheadmom8.wordpress.com/about/, White Lace and Promises, "About Me," *The Upside of Down* (blog), n.d., accessed July 28, 2019, http://livinglifeupside.blogspot.com.

55 Simon Coleman, "Words as Things: Language, Aesthetics and the Objectification of Protestant Evangelicalism," *Journal of Material Culture* 1.1 (1996): 109; Klassen and Lofton, "Material Witnesses."

56 Coleman, "Words as Things," 108; Coleman, "Materializing the Self."

Christians have often depended on quantifiable numbers in the economy of salvation: the "effects of faith and correct practice" are to be "measured objectively."[57] The concept of economies of salvation underlines the importance of tangible transformation in the business of mediating the Bible.

The purpose Evangelical bloggers articulate for their blogs stems from Christian conviction: making available the effects of their conviction of Jesus's effects in their own lives so others can be picked up by the swirl of God's power and do the same. This means that there is, to stay in internet parlance, a certain virality to the economy of salvation. Jesus is the platform, and a blog that makes his transformative power tangible projects a specific journey through the network: from being a recipient of divine impact to being a channel it courses through, or from being affected by materializations of power to materializing power oneself. This is the aspiration underpinning the litany of blogging instructions available online: if the journey leads to everyone circulating the impact of biblical truths, it only makes sense to hand others the tools to contribute to that circulation. By setting aesthetic traps, and instructing others in how to build these on their own, a network buzzing with God's transformative efficacy can arise.

While Christian blogs imagine one web of connections through the network, monetization infrastructures construct another. A key term in the burgeoning field of electronic marketing is "conversion", with the "conversion rate" measuring whether people are impelled to act as a result of one's marketing, and the "conversion funnel" describing the journey the user takes before arriving at the intended destination, i. e. purchasing the product.[58] Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) is the bread and butter of the online marketing industry, describing the effort to create websites that will ever more skillfully move users toward the desired actions—to be captured by cookies. Building again on Daniel Miller's description of personal webpages as "aesthetic traps" that serve as "conduits" sending users in particular directions,[59] Christian blogs can be seen to put in place a material infrastructure that lays a path between two states: the reader, converted, has become a customer. While the funnel built for affiliate marketing's conversion does not lead to the same destination as the journey that conservative Evangelical blogs project, the point is that success, in both cases, hinges on having moved the site visitor along in a circuit. Circulation is key for online

57 Coleman, "Materializing the Self," 177.

58 Bruce Brown, *The Complete Guide to Affiliate Marketing on the Web: How to Use and Profit from Affiliate Marketing Programs* (Ocala, FL: Atlantic Publishing Group, 2009); Khalid Saleh and Ayat Shukalry, *Conversion Optimization: The Art and Science of Converting Prospects to Customers* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2011).

59 Miller, "The Fame of Trinis."

marketeers as well as for bloggers. Where the worth of a node in a network depends on its ability to keep the flow going, money serves as an especially welcome index. As one blogger remarks, in between specific biblical justifications for the use of affiliate links, "it helps to have a little validation that what you are doing is making a difference."[60] The "what you are doing" in this statement deftly interlaces the circuits of salvation to which the blog links itself with the commercial circulation from which affiliate marketing draws its profits.

The transformation of the user or site visitor into customer leaves money as its material trace. While money and God-talk are no strangers in the history of American Evangelicalism,[61] the role of online money as an index of changed states also has its roots in the affordances specific to the internet. Even as the internet initially held the promise of paying only for measurably effective advertising, online marketeers quickly learned that measuring engagement online is exceedingly difficult.[62] On his personal blog, online marketing executive and self-declared "metrics man" Don Bartholomew continually emphasizes that determining "the return on investment of a social media initiative" is an "inexact science," since it is never quite possible to know for sure what brought the user to "complete the conversion funnel," especially when that completion occurs days or weeks after the initial site visit.[63] A 2018 *New York Magazine* article points out that recent technological developments have compounded this already difficult task: it is increasingly impossible to know whether actions like clicking and filling an online shopping cart are performed by people or by bots, and websites cannot meaningfully distinguish between them.[64]

60 Hardee, "Yes, Christian Mom."

61 William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

62 Scott Cotter, "Taking the Measure of E-Marketing Success," *Journal of Business Strategy* 23, no. 2 (2002): 30 – 37.

63 Don Bartholomew, "Social Media Measurement at a Crossroads," *Metrics Man* (blog), August 21, 2013, https://metricsman.wordpress.com/2013/08/21/social-media-measurement-at-a-crossroads-2/; Don Bartholomew, "Let's Play 20 Questions: Social Media Measurement Style," *Metrics Man* (blog), October 1, 2013, https://metricsman.wordpress.com/2013/10/01/lets-play-20-questions-social-media-measurement-style/.

64 Max Read, "How Much of the Internet Is Fake? Turns Out, a Lot of It, Actually," *New York Magazine* (blog), December 26, 2018, http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/how-much-of-the-internet-is-fake.html.

The sticky infrastructures of commercialized websites are built to capture the data trails left behind by human actions, so the flurry of data generated through the automated processes of bots misleads them. This is largely the merchants' problem: at the end of the conversion funnel, profits are affected by fakery.[65] Christian bloggers, however, sit at the beginning of the funnel, where the promiscuity of connection is less important than the mission to move the site visitor along in her journey. In his reflections on the parable of the sower, John Durham Peters notes that the story leaves "the harvest of meaning to the will and capacity of the recipient. The hearer must complete the trajectory begun with the first casting."[66] Who knows where the site visitor might head next? In this Christian model of communication, the important responsibility is to lay the first strands of the web, as Evangelical blogs do via aesthetic enticement and coded pathways.

2.4 Conclusion

The internet is a promiscuous network that connects devices and pages through a constant process of leaking. Devices and web pages may connect even prior to and without any deliberate connection being made. This chapter has traced some of these leakages and connections in conservative Evangelical women's confessional production online. Examining biblical mediation on Evangelical women's blogs reveals the Bible's centrality to their use of digital infrastructures. Blogging ministries are consistently presented as women's response to a call to be channels for biblical truths and applicability. Their blogs "encourage" by ensnaring site visitors in an aesthetic where God's power and women's skills bleed into each other. More than justification for making money "on the side," the Bible is the active force blogs mediate.

The very diversity of the possible steps available after visiting one place online and moving to another, and the uncertainty or ambiguity inherent in seeking to effect change in an unseen other, makes the entanglement of monetization and religious aspiration a sensible and material one. While there are many different paths that might make up a Christian's journey online, the money that trickles in when site visitors fill their online shopping carts and hit "order" reliably indexes the efficacy of referral. The amount—the fact of there being an

65 Edelman and Brandi, "Risk, Information, and Incentives in Online Affiliate Marketing"; Cotter, "Taking the Measure of E-Marketing Success."

66 Peters, *Speaking into the Air*, 52.

amount—shows that visitors *were* moved. Bloggers do not receive anything when their readers make a purchase on a site with which they are not affiliated: the money can only be the result of actions that users take when travelling along the hidden paths of affiliation between bloggers and businesses. When she builds an invisible infrastructure that tracks users' moves along commercial routes, the blogger builds a measurement of her ability to incite movement in the first place.

In both frameworks of the Evangelical and the entrepreneurial, the aspiration is to make a referral that has a noticeable impact, namely that readers of the blog will take their next steps within the network the blog opens up. In a digital register of affiliation, the less visible infrastructure of links and cookies entraps site visitors in sticky code that tracks their movement in the network. The aspiration that animates Evangelical blogs and online marketing is to exploit the leaky layers of online connection by harnessing people's reading and spending habits. Evangelical women bloggers thread together the biblical infrastructure to which they are so committed and the materiality of the digital in which they post, aspiring to encourage habits of journeying with the Bible. Through promiscuous affiliation, Evangelical bloggers operate as devotional entrepreneurs, in the business of making and anticipating connections.

Selective References

Agre, Philip. "Surveillance and Capture: Two Models of Privacy," *The Information Society: An International Journal* 10.2 (1994): 101–127.

Barlow, Aaron. *Blogging America: The New Public Sphere*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.

Bassard, Katherine. *Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010.

Bendroth, Margaret. *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Bendroth, Margaret and Virginia Brereton, eds., *Women and Twentieth-Century Protestantism*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Brekus, Catherine. *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740–1845*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Brown, Bruce. *The Complete Guide to Affiliate Marketing on the Web: How to Use and Profit from Affiliate Marketing Programs*. Ocala, FL: Atlantic Publishing Group, 2009.

Butler, Anthea. *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Chun, Wendy. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016.

Coleman, Simon. "Words as Things: Language, Aesthetics and the Objectification of Protestant Evangelicalism," *Journal of Material Culture* 1.1 (1996): 107–128.

Coleman, Simon. "Materializing the Self: Words and Gifts in the Construction of Charismatic Protestant Identity," in *The Anthropology of Christianity*, ed. Fenella Cannell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

Connolly, William. *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Cotter, Scott. "Taking the Measure of E-Marketing Success," *Journal of Business Strategy* 23, no. 2 (2002): 30–37.

Crapanzano, Vincent. *Serving the Word: Literalism in America from the Pulpit to the Bench*. New York: The New Press, 2000.

Curtis, Heather D. *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860–1900*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

DeRogatis, Amy. *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelicalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Dijck, José van. *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Edelman, Benjamin and Wesley Brandi, "Risk, Information, and Incentives in Online Affiliate Marketing," *Journal of Marketing Research* 52, no. 1 (2015): 1–12.

Edwards, Paul. *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

Gell, Alfred. "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1992, 40–63.

Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Griffith, R. Marie. *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Harding, Susan Friend. *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Hillis, Ken, Michael Petit, and Kylie Jarrett, *Google and the Culture of Search*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Jenkins, Henry. *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Johnson, Emily Suzanne. *This Is Our Message: Women's Leadership in the New Christian Right*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Klassen, Pamela E. *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing, and Liberal Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Klassen, Pamela E. *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary's Journey on Indigenous Land*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Klassen, Pamela E. and Kathryn Lofton. "Material Witnesses: Women and the Mediation of Christianity," in *Media, Religion and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges*, ed. Mia Lövheim. New York: Routledge, 2013, 52–65.

Kruse, Kevin. *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

Lofton, Kathryn. *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2011.

Maffly-Kipp, Laurie and Kathryn Lofton, eds., *Women's Work: An Anthology of African-American Women's Historical Writings from Antebellum America to the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Marshall, John. "'I Left You in Crete': Narrative Deception and Social Hierarchy in the Letter to Titus," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127.4 (2008): 781–803.

Miller, Daniel. "The Fame of Trinis: Websites as Traps," *Journal of Material Culture* 5.1 (2000): 5–24.

Moreton, Bethany. *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Naughton, John. *A Brief History of the Future: The Origins of the Internet*. London: Orion Books, 2000.

Peters, John Durham. *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011.

Sterling, Bruce. "Short History of the Internet," *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, February 1993, Internet Society, https://www.internetsociety.org/internet/history-internet/short-history-of-the-internet/.

Turner, Fred. *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.