"Health and Wealth" and the World Wide Web: Leading renewalist ministries' use of Web to communicate social order

Douglas J. Swanson

Department of Journalism, California Polytechnic State University,
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407, USA

Abstract

Renewalist Christian ministries espouse a "Health and Wealth" theology that is embraced by increasing numbers of believers. This study investigated leading renewalist ministries' World Wide Web sites to assess their application of visual, operational, and informational enhancements to communicate social order. A content analysis revealed a communication of social order that is consistent with prosperity theology. Much emphasis is placed on the appearance and personality of the ministry leader. Almost no attention is paid to traditional Christian symbolism. Web sites claimed the value of inclusiveness, but offered little visual representation of children, senior adults, the poor, and people of color. Sites communicated the importance of regular financial donations and product purchases, but offered no encouragement for local church attendance. This research provides limited insight into some key unanswered scholarly questions about use of the Web by religious organizations, but more work is needed to investigate these issues in a broader context.

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increase in popularity of Protestant Christian evangelistic organizations that espouse a prosperity theology. Known as renewalist ministries, these so-called "Health and Wealth" groups believe that God grants material prosperity to the faithful in accordance with the promises of Jesus Christ (Olsen, 2006). A recent *Time* magazine survey found 61% of American adults who identify as Christians accept this belief – that God wants Christians to be materially prosperous (Biema & Chu, 2006).

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that almost 30% of American adults identify as Christian evangelicals (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 2007). Since these believers are among the most "fervent" in their use of the World Wide Web as a communications medium (Hoover, Clark, & Rainie, 2004, p. 5), this research investigates how leading prosperity ministries use the Web to communicate social order to followers.

Social order is manifested through predictable or coordinated actions (Couch, 1996; Elster, 1989). It is sustained through division of labor, establishment of trust and solidarity, a regulation of power, and a legitimization of social activity among humans (Eisenstadt, 1992). Social order can be communicated effectively through the Internet, "a powerful medium for popular religion" (Holland, 2004, p. 34). It is especially relevant to examine how renewalist groups are effecting this communication in light of their recent growth in popularity in a world in which studies have shown people are increasingly disconnected from mainline churches and other traditional social structures (Putnam, 2000).

This study is preliminary in nature and focuses on a small number of renewalist ministry Web sites. The focus of its investigation is "religion online" – the providing of information about religious groups and offerings, as opposed to "online religion" – the actual practice of worship through computer-based communication (see Dawson & Cowan, 2004). The research addresses the communication from ministry to follower; it does not address the inter-relationship of followers who share in the receipt of online messages.

While limited in its size and scope, the research provides insight on the use of Web sites in one small part of the religious online universe. It provides some answers to three critical research questions identified by Dawson and Cowan (2004) and suggests other avenues for more a broader, more detailed investigation in the future.

2. Prosperity theology and its origins

In the years immediately following the U.S. Civil War, urban revivalism took shape as a distinct institutional form. Entirely separate from the established Protestant churches, this revivalism was part evangelism, part showmanship, and part entrepreneurism. It held to the idea that if great events could be staged, souls could be saved, and "people will lift themselves out of poverty" (Hadden, 1987, p. 9).

Those who led the movement were tireless in their planning and organizing. They were not just waiting for God to bring revival – they were producing it. Urban revivalists such as Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Billy Sunday added "the roles of entertainer and celebrity to the evangelist's repertoire" (Hadden, 1987, p. 11).

Before long, television came on the scene. Although there was plenty of religious television in the 1950s and 1960s, at least one researcher observed that most religious TV programming was formulaic and dull (Bluem, 1969). This changed during the Reagan years, when the U.S. federal government's deregulation of broadcasting increased the potential for using religious broadcasting to turn ministries into social-political movements. Evangelicals such as Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker and others adapted readily to TV, and mastered the medium in part through presentation of "Health and Wealth" ideas.

This emphasis on prosperity in a Christian context integrated well with Americans' cultural ethos of individual achievement (Himmelstein, 1984). Despite occasional scandals that surfaced in the 1980s and 1990s, renewalism continued to find favor with increasingly large numbers of Americans. Its continuing presence affirms a "trusted, familiar relationship" between evangelists and audiences on a number of levels (Howley, 2001, p. 27).

Although not "cults" as defined by Singer (2003), most renewalist ministries do employ a powerful and persuasive leader, have a clearly defined power structure, and present a "coordinated program of persuasion" (Singer, 2003, p. 7). Ministries reach out persuasively and systematically to offer "instant, simplistic, and focused solutions to life's problems" with messages that often resonate well with "vulnerable people" who are less likely to take note of any deception or deceit (Singer, 2003, p. 107).

While many cults operate on the shadowy fringe of society, renewalist ministries are unashamedly mainstream in their marketing. They use "by-the-book marketing tactics" including attention to detail in the areas of themed church architecture, worship service planning, entertainment, and other amenities to draw in the faithful through effective product packaging (Symonds, Grow, & Cady, 2005, para. 5, 7). Larger renewalist ministries claim followings in the millions, and, overall, have success claims that rival anything one might hear in the consumer or retail sector.

Just as they took advantage of the medium of television in years past, ministries today have taken advantage of the World Wide Web to initiate and strengthen ties with followers. Indeed, religion has found "a solid home online" (Dawson & Cowan, 2004, p. 6). And because the Internet is a multimedia experience that is both interactive and global, its connection with followers is unlike that of any medium of communication previously used by religious groups. For that reason, some preliminary exploration of issues related to this medium of communication – even in limited scope – is timely and relevant.

3. Research question

How do leading prosperity theology ministries use the structure and content of their World Wide Web Sites to communicate messages about social order?

4. Method

An online search for ministry Web pages was conducted using relevant terms found in recent publications about Christian renewalism (Biema & Chu, 2006; Symonds et al., 2005). Initial results were narrowed to include only those non-denominational ministries (Symonds et al., 2005) that are led by a prominent evangelist, address a worldwide audience (Howley, 2001), and have an operational Web site sponsored by the ministry. Thirteen ministries were included in a population for study (see Table 1).

Access and content analysis of Web site content was done in a systematic manner, in alphabetical order by ministry name and on a single day, Thursday, June 14, 2007. A coding sheet based on an original concept by Mitchell (1996) later refined by Swanson (2004, 1999) was used to systematically compare Web site visual, operational, informational, and merchandising

Table 1
Leaders/Ministries/World Wide Web sites in population for study, $n = 13$.

Leader/Ministry/Slogan/URL	Church-based	Total # of enhancements/ Web site	No. of subordinate pages/Web site
Juanita Bynum *Women on the Frontline* "More than a ministry" www.juanitabynum.com/		32	8
Kenneth Copeland *Kenneth Copeland Ministries* "Jesus is Lord" www.kcm.org	√	39	42
Paul Crouch *Trinity Broadcasting Network* "Touching billions now" www.tbn.org/		36	14
Creflo Dollar *Creflo Dollar Ministries* "Making a mark that cannot be erased" www.creflodollarministries.org/	√	37	13
Marilyn Hickey *Marilyn Hickey Ministries* "Covering the Earth with the word" www.mhmin.org/		35	13
Benny Hinn *Benny Hinn Ministries* "Winning the lost at any cost" www.bennyhinn.org/	√	43	46
Brian Houston *Hillsong Church* "The church that never sleeps" www2.hillsong.com/	√	38	67
T.D. Jakes *The Potter's House* "Reaching the lost and the broken" www.thepottershouse.org	√	34	38
Joyce Meyer *Joyce Meyer Ministries* "Enjoying everyday life" www.joycemeyer.org/		36	28
Joel Osteen *Joel Osteen Ministries* "God always causes us to triumph" joelosteen.lakewood.cc/site/ PageServer?pagename=JOM_homepage	√	31	10
Rod Parsley *Rod Parsley Ministries* "Back to Bible basics" www.rodparsley.com/	√	36	23

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Leader/Ministry/Slogan/URL	Church-based	Total # of enhancements/ Web site	No. of subordinate pages/Web site
Oral Roberts *Oral Roberts Ministries* "Jesus' resurrection power" portal1.oru.edu/pls/portal/ORMCCMGR. 　DYN_ORM_HOME_2.show?p_arg_ 　names=p_id&p_arg_values=1082		32	14
Robert Tilton *Robert Tilton Success N Life Ministries* "Reaching the unreached: Bringing hope 　and destiny to a hurting world" www.roberttilton.tv/		23	7

content. Qualitative observations were made and the resulting themes were classified using the constant comparative analysis method (Bruner, Goodnow, & Austin, 1972). As noted previously, the focus of this investigation was on social order as it relates to religious information provided online, rather than on social order as it relates to users' worship through online means (Dawson & Cowan, 2004).

5. Results

Results showed strong similarities in how the ministries' Web sites communicated about social order through the presentation of visual, operational, and informational enhancements. Each of the ministries focused content attention on the prosperity doctrine and promised faithful followers they would receive God's blessings of financial prosperity and good health. Each stated directly or through inference that Jesus Christ is the son of God, and that believers must enter into a righteous relationship with God through Jesus so that "Health and Wealth" can be evidenced.

5.1. Web site enhancements and social order

Fifty-six enhancements were observed in use on at least one Web site. Most enhancements (39, or 70%) were perceived to be primarily oriented toward communication with site users. Twenty-three (41%) were perceived to be primarily oriented toward evangelizing – to persuade users toward Christianly thought, belief, and action. Ten of the enhancements (18%) were perceived to be primarily oriented toward fundraising, or merchandising – in place to encourage users to donate money or make a purchase. Table 2 illustrates some common and uncommon enhancements observed through content analysis.

5.2. Visual enhancements

Visual enhancement scores were determined by the presence or absence of 14 visual enhancements – elements that symbolically illustrate the ministry. Summary visual enhancement scores ranged from a high of 12 to a low of 9, with an average of 10.69.

Table 2
Selected examples of common and uncommon enhancements observed on Web sites V (visual), (O) operational, (I) informational.

Enhancement	Primary orientation				Number of sites displaying	Frequency of use among the population
	E	C	F	M		
Photos (V)		✓			12	92%
Photos of minister (V)	✓				12	92%
Recorded audio/video (V)	✓				12	92%
Animated graphics (V)		✓			10	76%
Streaming audio/video (V)	✓				2	15%
Automatic bank debit (O)			✓	✓	10	76%
Secure credit card link (O)			✓	✓	10	76%
Link(s) to online magazine/similar (O)	✓	✓			10	76%
Link(s) to political organizations (O)	✓	✓			3	23%
Music/mp3 available for download (O)	✓				1	7%
Products, services for sale (I)				✓	13	100%
Broadcast schedule (I)	✓	✓			13	100%
Leader's personal appearance schedule (I)	✓	✓			11	84%
Free gift offer or info (I)			✓	✓	8	62%
Sermon notes (I)	✓				2	15%
Online Bible (I)	✓				1	7%
Local church reference/assistance (I)	✓				0	0%

Enhancement's perceived primary orientation in support of social order: E (evangelism), C (communication), F (fundraising), M (merchandising).

All but one of the ministries displayed photographs of their ministry leader prominently on the front page of the Web site. The number of photos of the minister on Web front pages ranged from 0 to 15, with an average of 5.15. Most ministers were photographically portrayed as happy and involved in a variety of activities such as speaking, praying, talking with friends, and engaging in leisure pursuits. Use of this type of enhancement is consistent with the renewalist idea of closely tying a ministry to the symbolized personality of its leader. In the broader context of religious organizations in general, Singer calls this "packaged persuasion" (2003, p. 56).

People other than ministry leaders also are imaged on sites, but most photos appeared to be stock photos rather than portraits of congregational members. Sites displayed only a handful of photos of non-Caucasian people (other than ministry leaders), children, and senior adults. When children or elderly people are portrayed, it was often in the context of being un-empowered recipients of a mission or charitable offering.

Traditional Christian symbols were almost completely absent. The glowing candle, stained glass window, cross of Jesus, and crown of thorns were not in prominent display on any Web site. When a traditional Christian symbol was found, it was buried in a subordinate page or included as part of a larger and more 'modern' icon. The lack of visual representation of traditional

Christian images is consistent with renewalism's marketing philosophy that traditional symbols scare people away (Symonds et al., 2005).

5.3. Operational enhancements

Operational enhancement scores were determined by the presence or absence of 24 operational enhancements – functional elements that make a site accessible by users. Operational enhancement scores ranged from a high of 15 to a low of 5, with an average of 11.40.

The majority of operational enhancements (17 of 24) seemed oriented mostly toward communication in that they exist to help users navigate through Web sites. However, lesser numbers of operational enhancements seem oriented toward evangelization (6 of 24) in that they help users access content related to a Christian message. Five of the 24 enhancements are more oriented toward fundraising, merchandising, or both because they help users give an offering or purchase a product.

The first measure of operational enhancement was the use of subordinate Web pages to control content and offer depth that users need when seeking detailed information (Zuckerman, 2000). The greatest number of subordinate pages identified in this analysis was 67 and the smallest number was 7. The average number of subordinate pages was 24.85.

Four of the most commonly observed operational enhancements related to fundraising and merchandising, while many of the less commonly observed enhancements related to users' ability to broaden their spiritual growth. For example, only six sites (46%) offered multilingual text translation. Only one site (7%) offered Christian music for downloading. A chat room for users to talk about spiritual development could not be found on any of the Web sites. In contrast, 10 sites (76%) had a bank account auto debit option for donations. Ten sites (76%) would accept funds through a secure credit card entry point. Seven sites (54%) allowed users to create a personal identity and log in for access to more tailored information and merchandising offers.

5.4. Informational enhancements

Informational enhancement scores were determined by the presence or absence of 23 text-based informational types. Informational enhancement scores ranged from a high of 19 to a low of 9, with an average of 14.20.

The majority of informational enhancements (15 of 23) seemed oriented mostly toward evangelization in that they help users learn how to strengthen their Christian faith. But many of these enhancements did not offer information that many people would identify as key to spiritual understanding. For example, only eight sites (62%) offered to accept a prayer request, either through a special e-mail address or phone number to call. Only about half the sites (7, or 54%) offered text-based testimony from the ministry leader, and even fewer (3, or 23%) offered testimony from followers. Only two (15%) offered sermon notes. Only one site offered an online Bible. Information to aid users in attending a local church could not be found on any of the Web sites.

A slightly lesser number of enhancements (13 of 23) seemed oriented mostly toward communication in that they supported the evangelistic message but did not necessarily contribute

to it. An example of this would be an organizational chart (observed on 7 sites, or 53%) or a description of facilities (observed on 6 sites, or 46%).

A total of five of the informational enhancements were oriented exclusively toward fundraising or merchandising. These included text-based fundraising requests (observed on 12 sites, or 92%). Routine requests were often categorized as "sewing a seed" while others were categorized as an "urgent request."

Nine sites (69%) offered "partnerships" with special perks for followers who would agree to give regularly. Often these came with pre-set giving amounts; the lowest level of giving on one ministry's drop-down menu was $100. Eight of the Web sites (61%) promised some type of free gift for those who contact the ministry with an offering or prayer request.

Ten of the Web sites (76%) included at least one merchandising solicitation. Among these, text-based descriptions were offered for as many as 23 products and as few as one. The average number of individual merchandising solicitations identified among all 13 Web sites was six. Many of the products offered for sale were traditional Christian self-help items including books, CDs, DVDs, pamphlets, and educational opportunities. Other items of a more symbolic nature included a $200 sculpture, a $75 bottle of "anointing oil" and a $12 coffee mug.

6. Discussion

A. William Bluem's survey of religious TV programming during the 1960s concluded that Christian churches were losing their relevance in society. He urged religious groups to develop new types of programming that would "establish clear priorities in communicative purpose" (1969, p. 171). This would include programs and messages showing people how their lives had meaning, reflecting the continuing impact of the religious experience on people, and supporting an ongoing dialogue between the church and the world.

It could be argued that evangelical ministries began this process in earnest in the 1980s, when they conquered the medium of television. By 1987, Hadden observed that evangelicals had made great strides to use media to "influence and reshape American culture" (Hadden, 1987, p. 1). The current study suggests that evangelicals continue to do this through use of the World Wide Web.

Although differences were observed in the Christian renewalist ministry Web sites analyzed for this study, there were far more similarities of content as it relates to social order. Each of these ministries uses the visual, operational, and informational enhancements of its Web site to communicate a social order consistent with its prosperity theology.

6.1. Division of labor

Each of these ministries is led by a folksy, friendly, positive-reinforcing preacher who urges followers to "trust in Jesus" (Kenneth Copeland), "receive your blessing" (Creflo Dollar) and "never give up" (Joel Osteen) until the blessing is made manifest. Each ministry's leader is portrayed on the Web site in multiple photographic poses – some formal, others casual – but almost without exception, with maximum nonverbal expressions of charm and confidence.

Each of these ministries is a large, complex operation. Joel Osteen claims his Lakewood Church can seat 14,000 people in a single service. Joyce Meyer's *Enjoying Everyday Life* television program claims a worldwide audience of 3 billion people. It certainly takes many staff members to coordinate these functions, but these people are rarely referenced on Web sites. Web site enhancements always put the preacher in the pre-eminent role, both in text and through visuals.

The quantity and consistency of enhancements related to fundraising and merchandising demonstrate that the role of the Web site user in this social order is to be attentive to the ministry's messages, donate funds, and purchase products.

6.2. Trust and solidarity

Trust is developed in the socially ordered environment when people take responsible actions (Silvert, 1998). In the socially ordered environment of the Christian renewalist ministry, believers are asked to demonstrate responsibility through building a communicative relationship on a number of levels with the ministry.

This begins by being attentive to the messages on subordinate pages – messages about mission work, educational opportunities, and "righteous" political positions, for example. Believers are asked to act on these messages by taking a number of different actions such as downloading a newsletter, subscribing to a daily Christian text message, sending in a prayer request, or attending a believer's conference.

Each of these ministries offers a myriad of opportunities for interaction to build trust and support among Web site users. As a result, the subsequent request for a donation or a purchase seems a natural outcome of an already committed relationship.

6.3. Regulation of power

In the social environment, the regulation of power is supported by rules that maintain a "regularity of social life" (Edgerton, 1985, p. 255). Much of the regulation on renewalist ministry Web sites is evidenced through the unwritten 'rules' of communication itself.

For example, unpleasant subjects such as sin and suffering are not addressed directly, but instead are couched in positive, encouraging language that focuses on the blessings that come from obedience. Web users are given frequent encouraging reminders such as that "Christ is our hope and has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer" (T. D. Jakes).

Rather than characterizing the Bible as a restrictive book of laws, it is called "the inspired word of God and the infallible rule of faith and conduct" (Kenneth Copeland). It has "all the answers to man's problems" (Robert Tilton). Obeying God allows us to "enjoy everyday life" (Joyce Meyer).

Traditional Christian imagery can be discomforting to new believers. So, renewalist Web sites instead show a multitude of photos of happy Christians – in cafes, in crowded auditoriums, on cruise ships, and in other brightly-lit social gatherings. No one looks judgmental. All appear to be living a life filled with blessings.

It was repeatedly made clear by all the ministries that this life of comfort is made possible, in large part, through gifts to God. Web users are reminded that donating money is really "sowing

a seed" (Kenneth Copeland). A monetary donation allows God to save and heal other people (Oral Roberts). Donating is not as much about benefiting the ministry as it is about helping the giver, because the act of donating "causes the blessings of heaven to be poured out" (Marilyn Hickey).

6.4. Legitimization of social activity

With few exceptions, the Web sites analyzed for this study were as technologically sophisticated as any large consumer or retail sector Web site. Each made use of many of the most current visual, operational, and informational enhancements to establish a professional image that would be perceived as credible by online users. To the extent that the use of the Web is itself a social activity, these sites do exactly what a user would expect them to do. Their content is legitimate as it competes for attention in the online commercial marketplace.

However, one must question whether their content is legitimate as it competes in the marketplace of religious ideas. None of the sites did much to encourage users' religious devotion beyond the host ministry, as evidenced by the lack of content to motivate users to connect with a local church.

In their study of people who made donations to religious ministries, Korpi and Kyong (1986) concluded that people who viewed religious TV programming often found it a favorable substitute for attendance in church. The analysis of Web sites conducted for this research finds little content that would be seen as a favorable substitute for church attendance, although there is much communicative content to supplement that activity.

7. Conclusion

This research does not represent a comprehensive content analysis of Web sites hosted by the world's Christian ministries, nor does it represent an examination of the totality of evangelical Web sites. What it does represent is an initial effort to make some generalizations about how a few leading "Health and Wealth" ministries use the Web to communicate with followers.

It has been suggested that people evaluate churches in "rational, utilitarian terms" (Bromley, 1988, p. 35). As a result, a ministry that does not define itself in rational, utilitarian ways may be perceived as irrelevant. The findings of this research make it clear that leading renewalist Christian ministries work to communicate a social order that is relevant to followers and consistent with their prosperity theology. Web site content is focused first on communication, and then on evangelization. Fundraising and merchandising are important, as well, though the presence of these functions is not as significant as it often has been in traditional religious broadcasting (Winzenburg, 2001).

The ministries in this research all structured their Web-based messages in positive ways, with upbeat themes that encouraged the faithful to rely both on God and on personal initiative to live a life of material abundance. Ministries used the visual, operational, and informational enhancements of Web sites to create a perception of inclusiveness, even though they offered little visual representation of children, senior citizens, the poor, and people of color. Inclusiveness is implied to be contingent on making a donation or product purchase.

8. Further directions for research

Dawson and Cowan (2004) posed six important unanswered scholarly questions about "how the Internet is being used and with what results" in regard to religious communication (see Dawson & Cowan, 2004, p. 10). The research effort at hand provides some enlightenment in regard to three of those questions by examining a relationship between people's religious activities online and offline, examining how the Internet attempts to engage followers in religious activities, and, investigating how features of technology itself are applied in online communication about religion (Dawson & Cowan, 2004).

More research is needed to answer some basic questions about the size of the religious Web universe and the scope of the content found there – both generally, and among Christian groups. It would be helpful to fully investigate the differences exist in use of the Web by mainline denominations, non-denominational ministries, ordained individuals and laypeople – and to quantify how sites balance evangelizing, communication, and fundraising/merchandising content.

It would also be helpful to engage in a research effort that focuses on the processes at work inside religious organizations. Without the knowledge of user responses that ministries hope to obtain from Web sites, and the development process that goes on behind the scenes, it is impossible to make accurate judgments about the viability of the online product and its relationship to desired social order.

In his book *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam presented data drawn from nearly 500,000 interviews over the last quarter century to show that people sign fewer petitions, belong to fewer organizations, know their neighbors less, and socialize with family members less often. Putnam argued that Americans have become increasingly disconnected from social and community structures and this lessening of social capital impoverishes our lives and communities.

Religious organizations in general, and renewalist Christian ministries in particular, would potentially have the opportunity to use the World Wide Web in dynamic ways to widen their reach and impact of religious messages, and rebuild social capital. Or, they could continue using the Web primarily as a marketing tool, to solicit funds and sell merchandise – allowing further encroachment of consumerism into spiritual practice. More investigation will help us determine which direction religious organizations are taking with their Web content – and what they hope to accomplish over the long term.

References

Biema, D. V., & Chu, J. (2006, September 18). Does God want you to be rich? *Time*, pp. 48–56. Retrieved June 1, 2007, from Ebscohost database.

Bluem, A. W. (1969). *Religious television programs: A study of relevance*. New York: Hastings House.

Bromley, D. G. (1988). Religious disaffiliation: A neglected social process. In D. G. Bromley (Ed.), *Falling from the faith: Causes and consequences of religious apostasy* (pp. 9–25). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Bruner, J. D., Goodnow, J. J., & Austin, G. A. (1972). Categories and cognition. In J. Q. Spradley (Ed.), *Culture and cognition* (pp. 168–190). New York: Chandler.

Couch, C. J. (1996). *Information technologies and social orders*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Dawson, L. L., & Cowan, D. E. (Eds.). (2004). *Religion online: Finding faith on the Internet*. New York: Routledge.

Edgerton, R. B. (1985). *Rules, exceptions, and social order*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Elster, J. (1989). *The cement of society: A study of social order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eisenstadt, S. N. (1992). The order-maintaining and order-transforming dimensions of culture. In R. Munch & N. J. Smelser (Eds.), *Theory of culture* (pp. 64–88). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hadden, J. K. (1987). Religious broadcasting and the mobilization of the New Christian Right. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *26*(1), 1–24.

Himmelstein, H. (1984). *Television myth and the American mind*. New York: Praeger.

Holland, C. (2004). Popular religion and the World Wide Web: A match made in (cyber) heaven. In L. L. Dawson & D. E. Cowan (Eds.), *Religion online: Finding faith on the Internet* (pp. 23–35). New York: Routledge.

Hoover, S. M., Clark, L. S., & Rainie, L. (2004). *Faith online*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved June 3, 2007, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Faith_Online_2004.pdf>

Howley, K. (2001). Prey TV: Televangelism and interpellation. *Journal of Film and Video*, *53*(2), 23–27.

Korpi, M. F., & Kyong, L. K. (1986). The uses and effects of televangelism: A factoral model of support and contribution. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *25*(4), 410–423.

Mitchell, B. K. (1996). Cyberspace: Its impact on the public relations functions of state departments of transportation. Unpublished Master's thesis, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.

Olsen, T. (2006, December 5). What really unites Pentecostals? *Christianity Today*, pp. 18–19. Retrieved May 28, 2007, from Ebscohost database.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of the American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Silvert, K. H. (1998). Reasons for democracy (ideas behind social order). *Society*, *35*(2), 176–184.

Singer, M. T. (2003). *Cults in our midst* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Statistical Abstract of the U.S. (2007). Washington, D.C.: United States Census Bureau. Retrieved March 25, 2008, from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>

Symonds, W. C., Grow, B., & Cady, J. (2005, May 23). Earthly empires. *Business Week*, pp. 78–88. Retrieved May 29, 2007, from Ebscohost database.

Swanson, D. J. (2004). The framing of contemporary Christian apostasy on the World Wide Web. *Journal of Media and Religion*, *3*(1), 1–20.

Swanson, D. J. (1999). World Wide Web sites and social order within higher education journalism and mass communication programs. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.

Winzenburg, S. (2001, October 22). Televangelist report card. *Christianity Today*, pp. 88–91.

Zuckerman, M. J. (2000, February 14). A simple vision of the web. *USA Today*, p. 3D.