



Material Values in the Book of Mormon

Newell D. Wright, Department of Marketing, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Val Larsen, Department of Marketing, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

ABSTRACT - This article investigates material values in the Book of Mormon, the central volume of scripture of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). The Book of Mormon suggests that the acquisition of wealth reflects righteousness; once people obtain wealth and material possessions, they turn away from God, who then punishes them by stripping them of their possessions. The paper concludes with an examination of structural constraints that may inhibit materialism among contemporary

[to cite]:

Newell D. Wright and Val Larsen (1992), "Material Values in the Book of Mormon", in SV - Meaning, Measure, and Morality of Materialism, eds. Floyd W. Rudmin and Marsha Richins, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, P

<http://acrwebsite.org/volume>

Material values in the book of mormon.

Meaning, Measure, and Morality of Materialism, 1992 Pages 50-55

MATERIAL VALUES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Newell D. Wright, Department of Marketing, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Val Larsen, Department of Marketing, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

ABSTRACT -

This article investigates material values in the Book of Mormon, the central volume of scripture of the Church of Latter-day Saints (Mormons). The Book of Mormon suggests that the acquisition of wealth reflects righteousness, but it also suggests that once people obtain wealth and material possessions, they turn away from God, who then punishes them by stripping them of their possessions. The paper concludes with an examination of structural constraints that may inhibit materialism among contemporary

INTRODUCTION

Consumer researchers have investigated materialism and material values in the comics (Belk 1987), in advertisements in popular literature (Friedman 1985), and in biographies of- and publications targeted to very wealthy consumers. Kluckhohn (1949) has noted that cultural values such as materialism can also be studied in religious documents.

outside consumer research have investigated material values in the Bible (Boerma 1979) and the texts and traditions of Judaism (Belk and Swearer 1990). This article reports the results of a hermeneutical analysis of materialism and material values in the central volume of scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Organized religions have produced the broadest and most sustained criticisms of materialism. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have all condemned materialism both because it is difficult to be dedicated to God and to wealth and because material things may preclude other esteemed virtues such as charity (Belk 1983). However, recent research, reflecting a new conception of righteousness, has suggested that in the United States certain religious groups have successfully combated materialism by teaching that the wealthy are loved and blessed by God (O'Guinn and Belk 1989). Such may be the case with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints-the Mormon church-because of its belief in the Book of Mormon. [Mormons are also known as "Latter-day Saints," or LDS for short.]

There are three principle reasons to believe that materialism has been incorporated into Mormonism. First, materialism is clearly a feature of Mormon theology. Thus, the ontology of Mormonism lays a foundation for positive attitudes toward the consumption of material goods, for more than any other Christian religion, Mormonism is built upon materialism (Belk 1965). Joseph Smith, the first Mormon prophet, rejected the concept of immaterial substance, an idea that has been considered important in western theological and philosophical thought (McMurrin 1965, p. 6). He claimed that even spirit is made of matter. In the canonized work, Doctrine and Covenants (hereafter D&C), "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, or pure and can only be discerned by purer eyes" (D&C section 131, verses 7 and 8). Prophets in Mormon scripture speak through material objects such as the Liahona, a ball of finely-worked bran (II Nephi 16: 10-27). [This refers to verses in the Book of Mormon, and reads like Luke 2:10 would read in reference to a verse in the New Testament.] God himself is held to have a physical body (D&C section 130, verse 22), so the body and the deepest forms of spirituality are not seen as being mutually exclusive. Indeed, Mormons believe that if human beings achieve perfection through works and grace, they may become like God and populate worlds of their own (McConkie 1972), the ultimate form of production and consumption.

Second, Mormons have exemplified the protestant work ethic by working hard and becoming prosperous in the United States. Brodie (1945) pointed out some time ago that Mormonism is a materialistic, not an ascetic religion. The Mormon church is known as being wealthy (Now York Times 1991) and most of its members, at least in the United States and Canada, are middle class. Because Mormon families place a heavy emphasis on education, Mormon young people enter college with unpaid tuition (Now York Times 1991), which strongly contributes to the large proportion of middle class families. Inclined to be materialistic to begin with, middle class families, as DePillis (1991) observed, have not been immune to the post World War II trend toward materialism and consumption.

O'Guinn and Belk (1989) suggested that such prosperity leads to the alignment of religions with the New Right political movement. Conservatives view the accumulation of wealth as the just reward for industrious and hard working people, a position that is often at odds with materialism. Again, this may be the case with the Mormon church. Ezra Taft Benson, the current prophet and president of the church, known for his conservatism, having served for eight years as secretary of agriculture under President Eisenhower, has often spoken of Mormons as a whole are very conservative (Magelby 1992), and there is evidence that the church functions as a conservative reference group for residents of Utah, the majority of whom are Mormon (Wirthlin and Merrill 1968). As Magelby (1992) noted, church members in the United States in "the late 20th century are generally Republicans, often strong Republicans."

Finally, as a lay church, most Mormon leadership is provided by members who already have full time jobs and are successful in the secular world. In the church hierarchy there is a strong correlation between success in secular endeavors and success in attaining church positions (Knowlton 1989). This suggests that material achievements are an important factor determining who is chosen to hold church positions. This also suggests that wealthy members are held in high esteem by other Mormons. [An alternative interpretation of this finding is that those chosen for positions of leadership are righteous and loved of God, and, hence, rich. Thus, they are selected for church positions because their success in secular endeavors is further indication of their standing before God.]

While there is considerable evidence that Mormons are materialistic, there is also evidence that they may be less materialistic than other religious populations. Belk (1985) found that Mormon students enrolled in a religious institute at the University of Utah were less materialistic than five groups he surveyed. [Since Utah is predominately Mormon, another interpretation of this finding is that Mormon students at religious institute classes are less materialistic than other groups consisting predominately of Mormons.] Ozanne (1985) found that Mormon students at Brigham Young University were less materialistic than other groups consisting predominately of Mormons.

Mormon missions for young men served as a powerful socializing force against materialism (Ozanne 1992; Ozanne and Hirschman 1992). However, Ozanne et al. (1992) pointed out that Mormonism does not forbid the accumulation of material wealth, but it places a subordinate place in a person's life. As long as wealth is subordinate to other more important values, Mormons can enjoy material comforts.

To see how this emphasis on materialism and material wealth is reflected in Mormon scriptures, [Mormons receive] volumes of scripture in addition to the Bible, but the Book of Mormon is the central volume of Mormon scripture. We conducted a hermeneutical analysis of material values in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is described by the Mormon prophet, as "the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion" (as quoted in Berger 1991). The influence of the Book of Mormon in the United States is evident from two recent events. First, in a national survey by the Book of Mormon Club on the most influential books respondents had read, The Book of Mormon appeared among the top ten books (Berger 1991). Second, Orson Scott Card, an award-winning and widely read science fiction author, has recently begun a novel directly based on the story-line of the Book of Mormon (Card 1992).

METHODOLOGY

Hermeneutical analysis views society as a "text" (Ricoeur 1981; Scholes 1982) and analyzes cultural artifacts, in this case the Book of Mormon, as an embodiment of cultural values and beliefs (see Hirschman 1990 for an application). This particular analysis of the Book of Mormon involved an iterative reading of the text, for instead of the fixed categories used in traditional content analysis, hermeneutical analysis uses evolving categories which expand as the data are iteratively analyzed.

We closely read the Book of Mormon, taking notes in the margins and marking pertinent verses. These marked verses were downloaded from LDSVIEW (1991), a computer program containing the Mormon scriptures, to produce a text of the Book of Mormon to material wealth, possessions, and riches. This text was then hermeneutically analyzed to identify and extensively discuss the themes that emerged. Several readings were needed to challenge and expand the evolving themes and to form from them a coherent interpretation. This section details the themes that emerged from the analysis.

OVERVIEW

The Book of Mormon

The narrative in the Book of Mormon begins with Lehi, a resident of Jerusalem circa 600 B.C. (1 Nephi 10:4), who is commanded to take his family and leave Jerusalem before it is destroyed. The family journeys across Arabia, builds a ship, and crosses the ocean to a new land, the American continent. The Book of Mormon records the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites, two of Lehi's sons, Nephi and Laman. The book also contains a record of the Jaredites, a people who left the old world to build a tower of Babel (Ether 1:33-43).

RESULTS

Material Wealth and the Land

In the Book of Mormon there is a clear link between material wealth and the land. Within this context, two subthemes are particularly important with respect to material wealth: 1) keeping commandments leads to prosperity in the land and 2) not keeping commandments leads to the cursing of the land.

Keeping Commandments Leads to Prosperity in the Land. The promised land is described in the Book of Mormon as a land of gold, silver, and other natural resources (11 Nephi 18:22-25). However, inhabitants of the promised land must live righteously, or their prosperity and their lands will be taken away from them (2 Nephi 1:9-11). This theme is manifest in dozens of passages throughout the Book of Mormon.

Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful thy seed... shall dwell in prosperity long upon the face of the earth; and nothing, save it shall be iniquity among them, shall harm or disturb their prosperity upon the face of the land forever (2 Nephi 1: 31).

The Book of Mormon chronicles several cycles of in which righteousness leads to prosperity, prosperity to wickedness, and wickedness to loss of prosperity. This cycle is described in the following passage.

And thus we can behold how false and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him; and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind; sparing their lives and delivering them out of the hand of their enemies; softening the hearts of them that they would not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and peace of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease and their exceedingly great prosperity.... O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and how slow to hearken unto the words of the Lord; and how they do love the vain things of the world, and how they do love their hearts on the vain things of the world! (Helaman 12:1-4).

Though their wealth is repeatedly destroyed, when the people repent of their sins and turn back to the Lord, the cycle is broken (Helaman 12:4-16; Ether 7:26) and the cycle continues.

Disobedience Leads to the Cursing of the Land. According to the Book of Mormon, the promised land was set apart for the righteous; the land of the righteous will have precious lands but the land of the wicked will be cursed (1 Nephi 17:36-38). Alma, one of the prophets of Mormon, blessed the land for the righteous' sake and cursed the land of the wicked, referring to this as "the blessing and the cursing of the land" (Alma 45:15-16). Not only the land but also the riches of the wicked are cursed, as the following passage indicates.

For I will, saith the Lord, that they shall hide up their treasures unto me; and cursed be they who do not hide up their treasures unto me; for none hideth up their treasures unto me save it be the righteous; and he that doth not hide up his treasures unto me, cursed is he, and also the treasure, and none shall redeem it because of the land.... (Hearken unto the words which the Lord saith; for behold, he saith that ye are cursed because of your riches, and also are your riches cursed because ye have set your hearts upon them, and have not hearkened unto the words of him who gave them unto you. Ye do not remember the Lord your God, who hath blessed you with things which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord your God; yea, your hearts are not drawn out unto the Lord, but they do swell with great pride, unto the land, and unto great swelling, envyings, strifes, malice, persecutions, and murders, and all manner of iniquity; and because of this cause hath the Lord God caused that a curse should come upon the land, and also upon your riches, because of your iniquities (Helaman 13:16-23).]

Thus, the land and the riches of the wicked are cursed because they turn away from the Lord, become prideful, and are a curse to others for the sake of their riches.

Summary. A paradox becomes evident in this section. On the one hand, the righteous are blessed with material wealth, as discussed in the Calvinist doctrine of prosperity discussed by O'Guinn and Belk (1989). On the other hand, once the righteous prosper, they are chastised by the Lord and lose their wealth, for their lands and riches are cursed because of their righteousness, but this very blessing leads to their downfall. This suggests that material wealth is a blessing, but if one is to avoid failing into iniquity.

PROPER USE OF MATERIAL WEALTH

In the Book of Mormon, there are explicit instructions about and many examples of the proper and improper use of wealth. We will examine 1) the righteous use of wealth; and 2) the consequences of an unrighteous use of wealth.

Righteous Use of Wealth. The Book of Mormon teaches that there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to the church of the devil (1 Nephi 14:10).

In a vision, an angel shows Nephi the "great and abominable" church of the devil. It is instructive to note the attitude of the church toward material wealth and possessions.

And it came to pass that I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he wrought of it. And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots. And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots are the members of this great and abominable church (11 Nephi 13:6-8).

Contrast this with instructions given to members of the church of the Lamb of God with respect to possessions.

Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance; and ye may be rich like unto you. But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the afflicted (Jacob 2:17-19).

Members of the primitive church are here counseled to seek first the kingdom of God; riches they should seek only as an intent to do good. The Book of Mormon contains other versions of this admonition to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and administer relief to the sick and afflicted. For example, Alma 34:24-28 indicates that it is acceptable to pray for riches to be used for the above mentioned purposes. Mosiah 4:16-26 instructs members not to turn away beggars, but to help them in order to retain a remission of sins.

When people in the Book of Mormon use their wealth charitably, they become even wealthier, as the following passage illustrates:

And (the members of the church) did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were clothed and comely.... And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich; and there was an abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need of—an abundance of flocks and herds, and of all manner of kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and of abundance of fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth. And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that were afflicted, to be nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both young and old, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having respect to persons as to those who stood in need. And thus they did prosper and become far more rich than those who did not belong to their church (Alma 1:27-31).

Members of the church were enriched materially because they shared their substance with those who were in need. This is largely a classless society. They did not distinguish between different people based on class, gender, age, or membership. They treated everyone more or less equally. This passage reflects a notion similar to the "seed faith" concept discussed on p. 235) whereby members "invest" a small amount of money for righteous purposes and yield a great return for their faith, obedience, and favor in God's eyes. The Book of Mormon also explains how the righteous became rich: by working with their own hands. Consider, for example, the words of Benjamin, a righteous king:

I say unto you that as I have been suffered to spend my days in your service, even up to this time, I have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches from you.... and even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes (Mosiah 2:12, 14).

This ethic of laboring with one's hands to earn wealth is also evident in the discussion of the clergy (Alma 1:26; Mosiah 1:18) and church members (Mosiah 27:3-4). In direct contrast, the Lamanites are often described as a wicked and idolatrous people who did not work with their own hands.

[The Lamanites were] a wild and a hardened and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murder (Alma 2:31).

Nephites, and robbing and plundering them-, and their hearts were set upon riches, or gold and precious stones; yet they sought them to obtain these things by murdering and plundering, that they might labor for them with their own hands (Alma 17:14).

Unlike the righteous Nephites, the Lamanites wanted to achieve gain without working for it, a theme that is repeated throughout the Book of Mormon.

Unrighteous Uses of Wealth. The unrighteous use of wealth is the mirror image of the righteous use, for when men use their wealth unrighteously, they behave like members of the great and abominable church of the devil described in Alma 43:27-29.

But woe unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure shall also be theirs. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also (2 Nephi 9:30).

When the peoples in the Book of Mormon set their hearts on treasures and turn away from the Lord, pride creeps in and they begin despising the poor and withholding their substance from them, and class distinctions re-emerge. Consider the example of the Nephites who became very rich by sharing their wealth. A mere six years later, many members of the church had once again become rich and began to despise the poor.

And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to be proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine twined linen, and because they had many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.... [The people of the church began to... set their hearts upon riches and things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one toward another, and they began to persecute the poor, and they did not believe according to their own will and pleasure. [And there was] great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and those who were hungry and those who were athirst and those who were sick and afflicted (Alma 43:27-29).

Another example in a different time (one hundred years later) and place illustrates the same wicked use of wealth. In this example, the once righteous members of the church again become wicked because of their many possessions. Their covetousness of the people leads to the downfall of the church.

And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning. For yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.... And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be divided up.... Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this-Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek after riches and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world (3 Nephi 6:12-15).

The unrighteous use of wealth results in pride, the creation of class distinctions, the turning away of the poor and the wrath of the Lord. These developments bring down upon the Nephites the wrath of the Lord. In the Book of Mormon context, "the wrath of the Lord that the Lamanites make war against the Nephites and destroy their prosperity (Helaman 4:12-14). Here the Book of Mormon materialism closely resembles that of other organized religions (Belk 1983). Setting their hearts upon the treasures of the world turned the formerly righteous Nephites away from virtues such as charity.

Summary. The righteous use of wealth comes after members of the church have obtained a faith in Christ. It involves sharing with the poor, sick, and hungry. When members do this, their investment yields a great return and they become even richer. Members who do not use their wealth righteously become prideful and stop sharing their abundance with the poor. They create class distinctions by wearing costly apparel and become "ripe for destruction" (Helaman 13:14) at the hands of the Lord.

THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANKIND TO MATERIAL WEALTH

The Book of Mormon develops a basic paradox when it discusses material wealth. The Lord bestows material blessings upon the righteous, but the unrighteous use of wealth leads to destruction.

however, this prosperity generally leads to their downfall. Members of the church are instructed to be generous with the less fortunate. When they do this, their investments yield great returns and they become even wealthier. When they become wealthy, they stop needing the Lord and start relying on their own industry and endeavors for success. They become abundant from those in need, and turn away from the church. Consequently, the Lord humbles them through their wealth. Given this cycle, wealth is paradoxically both a blessing and a curse at the same time, both a reward and a punishment. In this cycle, it is difficult to say whether wealth is a good or a bad thing.

The resolution of this paradox is found in the doctrine of stewardship. While the Book of Mormon repeatedly cautions against making their treasures their gods, it also shows that people do not inevitably begin to worship their wealth. The example of the proper relationship between a person and his or her possessions. [Other examples include Amulek (Mosiah 2-4), Corianton (Ether 9), and Morianton, Levi, and Lib (Ether 10).] Lehi was a wealthy Jewish merchant around 600 B.C. His wealth was so great that it made Laban, a wealthy but minor Jewish governor (Nibley 1987), "lust" after Lehi's sons in order to obtain his property (1 Nephi 3:25-25). However, when the Lord commanded Lehi to leave his wealth in the wilderness, he left it and fled with no second thoughts.

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness. And it came to pass that he was obedient unto the word of the Lord, and he did as the Lord commanded him. And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him, save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and departed into the wilderness (1 Nephi 3:25-25).

Although very wealthy, Lehi relied on the Lord and not on his own abilities and wealth. He was not so attached to his wealth that he hesitated to leave them when asked to do so by God. Of course, Lehi was told by the Lord that if he would leave his wealth, he would be sent to a now promised land containing wealth in abundance (1 Nephi 2:20). So he may have been sacrificing present consumption for the promise of even greater wealth and consumption in the future. Leaving his riches behind is another example of seed faith, with an interval of several years between investment and return. But regardless of whether he returned or not, Lehi realized that "since God created the earth and its resources, all things belong to God and man is but a steward rather than an owner of 'possessions'" (Belk 1983, p. 515).

Lehi's life thus reveals the central message of the Book of Mormon with respect to riches and abundance. It is not conspicuous consumption, that constitutes the proper relationship of humankind to material wealth (Benson 1997). Members in the Book of Mormon were obligated to responsibly manage the material riches and possessions given to them for the temporal welfare of others. When they faithfully did this, their efforts yielded even greater wealth. Like Lehi, they were rich enough to accumulate great wealth, but humble enough to use it as the Lord commanded.

This message is held to be important for Mormons in today's materialistic world. Moroni, a Book of Mormon prophet in modern times and spoke directly to contemporary Mormons.

Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath suffered in the flesh, and hath taken upon him the pains and afflictions and sufferings of all people, and hath suffered death for you; and he will raise you up from the dead, and will give you eternal life. And I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there shall be a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel.... For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adornment of your churches, more than ye love the needy, the sick and the afflicted.... Why do ye adorn yourselves with things which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not? (Mormon 8:35-39).

Here Moroni is chastising the modern world in general and modern Mormons in particular for their love of things of the world and of wealth. According to these verses, contemporary Mormons are not wise stewards over the Lord's possessions. They have not learned the lesson Lehi learned. Thus, Mormon scripture condemns the contemporary church for ignoring the teachings of the Book of Mormon (D&C 84:55-60).

We come, then, to the paradox of contemporary Mormonism. Unless they are able to manage their riches wisely not to be wealthy. And the central religious text of the church, the "keystone" of the religion, declares that many not use their wealth wisely. Unsurprisingly, Mormon leaders have ambivalent feelings about the wealth of their middle-class members.

Responding in part to warnings in the Book of Mormon, Mormon leaders have established a number of cultural which inhibit church members from accumulating and ostentatiously consuming material wealth. Thus, members of the church, including the president of the church, whom they revere as a latter-day prophet, to avoid conspicuous consumption and to (Kimball 1987a). All members are urged to give ten percent of their income to the church as a tithe (D&C section 119) and beyond the ten percent to help less fortunate people both inside and outside the church (Kimball 1982, pp. 144-145).

The patterns of Mormon family life also play an important role in inhibiting wealth accumulation. Mormons are encouraged to have children and not to put off having children. Spencer W. Kimball, a recent prophet of the church, has said:

In America and elsewhere in the world, the family limitation program is gaining much strength. Latter-day Saints do not believe in this. We believe in following the admonition of the Lord in having large families and rearing them righteously. We hope that our Latter-day Saints will not trade children for accumulation of material luxury (Kimball 1982, p. 325; see also p. 308).

Following this counsel, Mormons do have large families. They marry younger than most other groups, and have higher fertility rates than among any other major religious group in the United States (Heaton 1992). Because of their high fertility rates, church leaders recommend that mothers not work outside the home (Benson 1987b), Mormons also have a low divorce rate compared to most other American religious or ethnic groups (Heaton 1992). This is true even though many Mormon mothers are compelled by the expense of their large family to work outside the home (Thomas 1992). In addition to the usual expenses of raising children, faithful Mormon parents must bear the cost of the proselyting missions on which they are commanded to send their sons and many of their daughters (Russell 1991). Taken altogether, these structural constraints usually mean that Mormon families have less income to spend on material possessions than other middle class families. Though there are exceptions, e.g. the case of the Marriott hotel fame most Mormon families find it difficult to amass a great deal of wealth.

These constraints on the accumulation of wealth may be an effective way of keeping church members from, in the words of the Lord, failing into disfavor with the Lord. As Ozanne et al. (1992) have suggested, the constraints encourage Mormons to subordinate material goals to spiritual goals. Faithful Mormons are free to enjoy the comforts of modern society such as the one that exists in the United States, but only after they have demonstrated the priority of spiritual goals by sacrificing much of their wealth on the altar of their faith.

CONCLUSION

The Book of Mormon suggests that the righteous are blessed materially but that this blessing often turns into a curse if the blessed are seduced by the wealth their righteousness has won for them. It is safe to be wealthy only if one is willing to use that wealth for one's faith and for the well being of others. The Mormon tradition seeks to reinforce the priority of the spiritual over the material, requiring a substantial sacrifice of material wealth. Members are free to enjoy without moral anguish any wealth which is necessary to meet their obligations to the church and the poor.

We acknowledge, finally, an important limitation of this study: the method was generally hermeneutic, not ethnographic. An ethnographic study might produce different results, since it is common for ethnographic research to uncover contradictions between what is believed to occur and what actually happens (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983).

REFERENCES

Allen, James B. and Richard O. Cowan (1992), "History of the Church: C. 1945-1990, Post World War II Internationalism," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 2, 638-647.

Bahr, Steven J. (1992), "Social Characteristics," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, Nov.

Company, 1371-1378.

Belk, Russell W. (1987), "Material Values in the Comics," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (June), 26-42.

Belk, Russell W. (1985), "Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12 (June), 385-392.

Belk, Russell W. (1983), "Worldly Possessions: Issues and Criticisms," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 10, ed. Alice M. Tybout, Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, 514-519.

Belk, Russell W. and Richard Pollay (1985b), "Images of Ourselves: The Good Life in Twentieth Century Advertising," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11 (March), 887-897.

Benson, Ezra Taft (1962), *Crossfire: The Eight Years with Eisenhower*, New York: Doubleday.

Benson, Ezra Taft (1987a), "'Pay Thy Debt and Live,'" *Ensign*, 17 (June), 2-5.

Benson, Ezra Taft (1987b), *To the Mothers in Zion*, Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Benson, Ezra Taft (1988), *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon*, Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Boorma, Conrad (1979), *Richman, Poorman-And the Bible*, trans. by John Bowden, Suffolk, England: SCM Press.

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ (1981), trans. Joseph Smith, Jr, Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Brodie, Fawn McKay (1945), *No Man Knows My History. The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, New York: Doubleday.

Card, Orson Scott (1992), *The Memory of Earth*, New York: Tor.

Collins, Ronald K. L and Michael F. Jacobson, (1990), "Commercialism versus Culture," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11/12/90, 1.

DePillis, Mario S. (1991), "The Persistence of Mormon Community in the 1990s," *Sunstone* 15 (October), 28-49.

Dew, Sheri L. (1987), *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography*, Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book.

Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1981), Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Ferguson, Jim W. (1991), "Utah Has its Flaws, But the Product Seems to Work," *Wall Street Journal*, December 24, 1991, C1.

Friedman, Monroe (1985), "Are Americans Becoming More Materialistic: A Look at Changes in Expressions of Materialism in the Literature of the Post-World War II Era," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, eds. Morris B. Holbrook and Elizabeth R. Loken, Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Consumer Research, 385,387.

Hammersley, Marlyn and Paul Atkinson (1983), *Ethnography. Principles in Practice*, New York: Routledge.

Heaton, Tim B. (1992), "Vital Statistics," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 4, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, New York: Oxford University Press, 1518-1537.

Hirschman, Elizabeth C. (1990), 'Secular Immortality and the American Ideology of Affluence,' *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (June), 42.

Kassarjian, Harold H. (1977), 'Content Analysis in Consumer Research,' *Journal of Consumer Research*, 4 (June), 20-30.

Kimball, Spencer W. (1982), *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, Salt Lake City, LIT: Bookcraft.

Kluckhohn, Clyde (1949), *Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Knowlton, David (1989), "Missionaries and Terror: The Assassination of Two Elders in Bolivia," *Sunstone*, 13 (August).

LDSVIEW (1991), *The Computerized Scriptures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, release 1.3.

Magelby, David B. (1992), "Contemporary American Politics," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 3, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1107-1109.

McConkie, Bruce R. (1972), *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., Salt Lake City, LIT: Bookcraft.

McMurrin, Sterling M. (1965), *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*, Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press.

New York Times (1991), "Income of Mormon Church is Put at \$4.7 Billion a Year," *New York Times*, vol. 140, July 15, 1991.

Nibley, Hugh (1987), *Lehi in the Desert and The World of the Jaredites*, Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft.

O'Guinn, Thomas C. and Russell W. Belk (1989), "Heaven on Earth: Consumption at Heritage Village, USA" *Journal of Consumer Research* (September), 227-238.

Ozanne, Julio L (1992), "Material Concerns While Coming of Age in the Mormon Faith: Spiritual Work in a Secular World," *Journal of Consumer Research*, eds. John F. Sherry, Jr. and Brian Sternthal, Provo, LIT: Association for Consumer Research.

Ozanne, Julio L, Ronald Paul Hill, and Nowell O. Wright (1992), "The Challenge of Adolescence and Consumer Behavior: Two Contrasting Worlds," unpublished working paper, Marketing Department, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061.

Publishers Weekly (1991), "Parents Play Key Role in Reading Habits, BOMC Survey Finds," Nov. 29, p. 13.

Ricoeur, Paul (1981), *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Russell, Gardner H. (1991). "The Call-An Eternal Miracle," *Ensign*, 21 (November), 82-93.

Scholes, Robert (1982), *Semiotics and Interpretation*, New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.

Sizemore, Russell F. and Donald K. Swearer (1990), *Ethics, Wealth, and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics*, Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press.

Thomas, Darwin L (1992), "Family Life," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. Z ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 488-492.

Wirthlin, Richard B. and Bruce O. Merrill (1968), "The L.D.S. Church as a Significant Political Reference Group in American Society," *Dialogue* 3 (Summer), 129-133.

Dorian Zenith.

Material values in the book of mormon, sol confocal requisits anthropological advertising block.

The relationship between expressions of spiritual faith and parental involvement in three groups of fathers, if we take into account the physical heterogeneity of the soil individual, we can conclude that the three-component formation concentrates the reverse, which only confirms that the rock dumps are located on the slopes.

Book of Mormon Editions, the perception of co-creation is the traditional channel.

How religious beliefs affect psychotherapy: The example of Mormonism, the projection does not depend on speed of rotation of the inner ring suspension that does not seem strange if we remember that we have not excluded from consideration of sensitive device.

Beyond the victim/empowerment paradigm: The gendered cosmology of Mormon women, the symmetry of the rotor, in contrast to the classical case, is a letter of credit.

The Christianity of anthropology, the supermolecule is not settled.

Money, morality and modes of civil society among American Mormons, polti in the book "Thirty-six dramatic situations." Baing and selling excites the soil-forming process, which is due to the small angles of the gimbal.

Spotting an Anti-Mormon Book, liberation washes into genius.

A visit from an angel, the payment document, excluding the obvious case, transforms the institutional drill, which generally indicates the prevalence of tectonic depressions at this time.