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### Robert E. Hales and Sandra L. Hales, *A Standard unto My People*

John M. Beck

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**Title**

**Author(s)** John M. Beck

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**Abstract** Review of *A Standard unto My People* (1990), by Robert E. Hales and Sandra L. Hales.

**Robert E. and Sandra L. Hales, *A Standard unto My People*, vols. 1 and 2, illustrated by Susan Meeks Curtis. n.p.: Seven Up Publishing, 1990. Vol. 1, 186 pp. \$10.95; Vol. 2, 182 pp. \$10.95.**

Reviewed by John M. Beck

Volumes 1 and 2 of *A Standard unto My People* follow a format similar to that of the authors' earlier publication, *How to Hiss Forth with the Book of Mormon*. These later publications are in a reader/workbook format, with questions for each chapter and an answer section at the back of each book.

A quick perusal of the volumes gives one the impression that these books are rather basic in nature and would satisfy the inquisitive learner. However, serious questions arise as one studies the topics and notices how little flow there is between the various concepts studied in each section. For example, in section 1 of volume 1, the author moves from topics such as the Fall of Man to the Law of Moses in a matter of pages. The volumes would be more readable if new chapter headings were developed and the various topics within the headings were rearranged to give more meaning and flow to the study. Discussion of significant gospel topics would be strengthened if the authors tied more of the concepts together from one section to another. It appears that the authors have compiled topics of their own interest under broad and often vague and unrelated headings. Volume 2 appears to have been given more organizational thought. However, no page numbers are supplied in the table of contents for concepts 19-36.

Volumes 1 and 2 contain four sections each, with from three to six concepts presented within each section. The full Book of Mormon text for each reference is also included, with questions and commentary dispersed throughout. In the spirit of simplicity and brevity, approximately 20 per cent of the volume could be deleted if the reader were to have the Book of Mormon in hand instead of having the Book of Mormon text within the volume. The reader would then be able to move between the workbook and the Book of Mormon itself. Scripture annotating, cross-referencing, and scriptural chaining of key verses could be entered in one's personal copy of the Book of Mormon, while one could answer the questions within the workbook itself.

Most section headings represent typical Latter-day Saint concepts and doctrines. Some headings, however, could use a bit of improvement. For example, "Free Agency" (vol. 2, p. 4) should read "Agency," and "Psychological Sickness" (vol. 2, concept 30) could better be labeled "Rationalizing One's Sins." Often there are vague and misleading connections between the topic being discussed and the topic heading. A case in point is "Psychological Sickness." What is "psychological sickness"? How does one become "sick"? No reference is made to this topic within the section.

On the positive side, the authors should be given credit for developing some rather good scripture chains within specific sections. There are few typographical and spelling mistakes, and this fact contributes to a splendid-looking workbook. Most charts and learning activities are simple enough even for younger readers.

In summary, there is a definite need to organize the materials better so that the authors' objectives to "teach . . . the doctrinal concepts addressed in the Book of Mormon" can be met. There is merit in this "workbook" style of learning, but some simple changes along the lines suggested would improve these volumes.