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Abstract Review of *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families* (1999), and *The New Testament for Latter-day Saint Families* (1998), edited by Thomas R. Valletta.

SCRIPTURES FOR FAMILIES

Rebecca M. Flinders and Anne B. Fairchild

As mothers of several children each, ranging in age from newborn to twenty-one, we found *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families* and *The New Testament for Latter-day Saint Families* to be wonderful resources in our family scripture study. As stated in the introduction of one of the books, “The purpose of [these books] is not to offer a rewriting of the [scriptures] in more modern language. The text [of the scriptures] has not been changed. The illustrations and the reading and understanding helps are designed to complement and not replace the official LDS edition of th[ese] sacred work[s]. The intent of th[ese] volume[s] is to help Latter-day Saints, and especially young readers, develop a lifelong love for the [scriptures]” (*Book of Mormon*, p. ix). The compilers and editors of these books did a superb job in producing books with the capacity to meet this goal. The many supplementary helps provide the opportunity for a rich and rewarding

Review of Thomas R. Valletta, gen. ed. *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999. xiv + 672 pp., with glossary and bibliography. \$49.95.

Review of Thomas R. Valletta, gen. ed. *The New Testament for Latter-day Saint Families*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998. xi + 500 pp., with glossary, pronunciation guide, and bibliography. \$39.95.

scripture study experience that enables family members, both young and old, to gain a greater understanding of and love for the scriptures.

These books contain resources that are helpful when reading scriptures with younger children (approximately ages two to ten years). Book and chapter headings differ from those included in the official Latter-day Saint scriptures, but they still include an overview of the selection that follows. Often these headings include “suggestions of important things to look for to give purpose to family members’ reading” (*Book of Mormon*, p. x). Parents can use the headings to provide an overview of the chapter or book in easy-to-understand language for their younger children. The suggestions of things to look for provide something for younger children to focus on as they read or listen.

A valuable feature is the topic headings printed in red, which subdivide each chapter and include an average of five to seven verses. Parents can use the topic headings to break up the chapters into smaller, yet still cohesive, sections when an entire chapter is too long for very young children to sit through. The headings also give parents a topical reference that is beneficial when restating and explaining the scriptures to their young children.

The two volumes include many paintings and drawings that depict scenes or characters from the scripture stories. Many photographs of places, people, and artifacts shed further light on the topics covered in the text. In addition, various maps augment the text. All these tools help capture the reader’s interest. The high occurrence of illustrations, maps, and photographs—included on almost every other page—helps to keep the reader focused, and these visual aids are very appealing, especially for young children. Based on our experience, children as young as two years old anticipate and look excitedly for the next picture. These illustrations create an interest in the scripture stories, help explain those stories, and draw the children into the scriptures for further information.

Many of the difficult words in the text are colored blue, indicating that a definition or explanation of that word is provided at the bottom of the page. The definitions are valuable when parents explain the scriptures to young children. Older children (ten and above) and

adults also benefit from these definitions. A few words that are even more complex, such as *covenant*, are colored pink, which indicates that they are explained in even more detail in the glossary at the back of the books.

In addition to the resources mentioned earlier, many other valuable tools are particularly useful for older children and adults. Verse numbers highlighted in red refer the reader to the bottom of the page where three symbols are used to indicate that further insight and a more in-depth explanation of the scripture verse is given. One symbol, a picture of a sun, indicates that modern-day scriptures and quotations from latter-day prophets are used to shed light on the scriptures. The magnifying glass symbol indicates that information is provided “about the meaning of a verse or about the history, the people, or the customs that make the verse interesting” (*Book of Mormon*, p. xi). Some cross-references to scripture stories with similar themes are also given next to the magnifying glass symbol. Next to the third symbol, a question mark, thoughts and questions for pondering or for further discussion are given. All these resources assist families and individuals in having a richer scripture-reading experience. These tools are extremely helpful, especially in books that are difficult to understand, such as 2 Nephi and Revelation.

The previously mentioned red topic headings are also useful for older children and adults in dividing the scriptures into sections that indicate where stories or situations begin and end. This is beneficial because it helps parents more easily lead discussions about the different sections of the chapter, especially in the New Testament when one chapter can cover many different events.

As in the official Latter-day Saint edition of the Book of Mormon, *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families* includes the testimonies of the Three and the Eight Witnesses and of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In addition, it includes an introduction, written partly to the young reader and partly to the parents. The introduction explains the various helps that are provided and how they are indicated in the text. It also explains the purpose of the book and how it was intended to be used. An overview of the Book of Mormon describes

the main stories and people, the various sources of the stories, and the main purposes (given with scriptural references) of the Book of Mormon. The introduction and overview provide useful background information for the readers of this book. Having references to the Joseph Smith Translations given at the bottom of each page in *The New Testament for Latter-day Saint Families* is convenient.

One flaw is that the binding is not durable. After six months of reading nightly with the family, a signature from one of the books fell out. This issue is one that needs to be addressed in future printings.

When these books are used side-by-side with the official Latter-day Saint version of the scriptures, their full value becomes obvious. On their own, the lack of cross-references and indexes included in the regular scriptures can be frustrating. Some cross-references are included in the helps at the bottom of the page, but they are limited. Using these books in conjunction with another set of scriptures gives the family reader a full set of resources with which to study the scriptures.

Overall we were very impressed with these Book of Mormon and New Testament books designed for Latter-day Saint families. The many resources that were compiled and included in these books allow readers of all ages to acquire a “lifelong love for the [scriptures].” They are a valuable addition to the Latter-day Saint family library but are, needless to say, not a substitute for the scriptures themselves.