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Abstract Review of *Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon* (2003), by Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen.

THE MOST CORRECT BOOK

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The Prophet Joseph Smith called the Book of Mormon “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion.”¹ Consequently, Latter-day Saints should embrace study aids that assist in our understanding of this book of scripture. Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen have compiled a useful tool for the study and teaching of the Book of Mormon.

There is, however, an initial but important drawback to the volume. There is no preface or introduction justifying this publication or explaining its format, purpose, and intended audience. A brief yet carefully organized preface or introduction would help readers more easily discover how to use the various sections of this book.²

The book is divided into forty-eight chapters, each covering a few chapters of the Book of Mormon and each with a brief introduction

1. *History of the Church*, 4:461.

2. A companion volume, which has a preface, has been published. See Ed J. Pinegar, Richard J. Allen, and Karl R. Anderson, *Teachings and Commentaries on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Covenant Books, 2004).

Review of Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen. *Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Covenant Books, 2003. 545 pp. \$39.95.

and summary. Every chapter is divided into various “Themes for Living,” which are relevant study and discussion topics selected from those particular Book of Mormon chapters. Each theme for living is further divided into four sections: “Theme,” “Moment of Truth,” “Modern Prophets Speak,” and “Illustrations for Our Time.” The “Theme” explains the topic in greater detail. The “Moment of Truth” is an explanation of what the authors have determined to be the primary lesson from the particular chapters in the Book of Mormon. The authors include relevant quotations from Latter-day Saint General Authorities in “Modern Prophets Speak.” In “Illustrations for Our Time,” the authors offer various ways in which the principles taught in Book of Mormon chapters can be applied to daily life experiences.

Pinegar and Allen are successful in accomplishing what they set out to do. I found the information contained in the sections “Theme,” “Moment of Truth,” and “Illustrations for Our time” to be informative, relevant, and applicable. I also enjoyed the quotations found in “Modern Prophets Speak,” but found myself wishing the authors had included more quotations.

It would have been helpful if the publishers had placed a reference to the relevant Book of Mormon chapters at the top of each page. This would have made the book more user-friendly. If readers wish to find a particular Book of Mormon chapter in this book, they first have to find the beginning or end of a chapter to know which section of the Book of Mormon is being discussed. There are no indexes, either of scriptures or of topics. The book also seems to favor the first half of the Book of Mormon, having approximately forty more pages of discussion than for the second half.³ Unfortunately, as with many publications on the Book of Mormon, the sections covering the words of Isaiah and the war chapters are relatively thin. These sections represent a greater number of pages in the Book of Mormon than do other sections of the book but do not contain a comparable propor-

3. The current edition of the Book of Mormon has 531 pages. The first 265 pages of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi to approximately Alma 22) receive 294 pages of discussion, while the second 265 pages (Alma 22 to Moroni 10) receive only 251 pages of discussion.

tion of commentary.⁴ The sections covering the important covenant discourse of the resurrected Savior, including significant quotations from Isaiah, Micah, and Malachi, are also fairly thin.⁵ Because of this and the general lack of in-depth historical commentary, students of the scriptures who are primarily interested in substantial information concerning the historical and cultural background and context of the Book of Mormon will find this book less than satisfying. But those students can turn to other books that adequately fill this need.⁶

In the end, Pinegar and Allen have essentially provided a kind of LDS institute manual for the Book of Mormon, similar to the ones published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the Church Educational System. And, in my view, the authors have successfully done so. Unfortunately, rather than making this book more accessible to students and teachers in an affordable paperback edition, Covenant Communications has published this book in hardback and priced it significantly higher than other institute manuals.⁷ This is likely to limit the distribution to those who can afford it.

I would recommend this book to seminary and institute teachers, Gospel Doctrine teachers, parents, and anyone interested in learning how the Book of Mormon is relevant to our modern-day experiences. The ideas and insights provided are helpful if one wishes to prepare discussions for classes or family home evenings with relevant applications to daily living.

President Ezra Taft Benson offered this important counsel concerning Book of Mormon study: “Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations. . . . If they saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest

4. See for example, chapter 9 (2 Nephi 11–25), chapter 31 (Alma 43–52), chapter 32 (Alma 53–63).

5. See chapter 40 (3 Nephi 16, 20–21) and chapter 41 (3 Nephi 22–26).

6. See, for example, Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).

7. Pinegar and Allen’s book costs nearly \$40, while the institute manuals are significantly less. For example, compare the following prices: Book of Mormon (\$2.50), New Testament (\$5.00), Old Testament (\$4.75), Doctrine and Covenants (\$4.75), and LDS Church History (\$7.00).

worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, ‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?’”⁸ Pinegar and Allen’s book is a useful tool in accomplishing this important objective.

8. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, January 1992, 5.