

# The LDS Edition of the Scriptures

The best place to begin our study is with the resources at hand in the 1981 edition of the Latter-day Saint scriptures. This edition includes various kinds of footnotes, a topical guide, a Bible dictionary, excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation, a gazetteer, and maps of the locations in which Old and New Testament events occurred. The 1981 LDS scriptures contain enough information and reference material that much excellent scripture study can be done with no more than these books, a pencil, and a notepad.

## Footnotes

The editors of the LDS scriptures have provided many footnotes. It is important to use these aids as they were intended—as aids to study, not as scripture. The editors who created these footnotes were called and perhaps set apart to create an edition of the scriptures for the Saints. They likely worked under inspiration, but they were people like us, fulfilling their callings as best they could (see 1 Corinthians 1:26–28). The references and tools they have provided are helpful, but they do not substitute for relying on our own thought, intelligence, and inspiration, and they are not revealed doctrine like the scriptures.

The LDS edition of the scriptures contains at least four kinds of footnotes: cross-references, explanations of the Hebrew or Greek words, references to the Joseph Smith Translation, and references to the Topical Guide.

## Cross-References

In Job 1:7 just before the phrase *to and fro* is a superscript and italicized lowercase *a*. At the bottom of the page is this note: “7<sup>a</sup> D&C 10:27.” The superscript letter *a* in verse 7 means that at the bottom of the page is information that may be helpful or interesting. The notes for a verse might include more than one entry (see verse 6) or they may include only one entry (see verse 7). The entry in verse 7 is a cross-reference. The editors felt that a reference to a different passage that also speaks of Satan going to and fro among the people of the earth might be helpful. Footnotes that give a scriptural reference are called cross-references.

## Explanations of Greek or Hebrew Words

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Some footnotes in the Bible give alternate translations for these Greek and Hebrew words. Job 2:3 has four footnotes. The *a* is in front of the word *perfect*, and the corresponding note at the bottom of the page reads, “3<sup>a</sup> HEB blameless.” This tells us that the English word *perfect* is a translation of a Hebrew word that can also be translated “blameless.” The footnote for the *b* in front of the word *escheweth* reads, “<sup>b</sup> HEB turns from.” The note explains that the word *escheweth* is a translation of a Hebrew word that can also be translated “turns from.”

The New Testament contains similar notes, but they use the abbreviation GR, for *Greek*. In Luke 15:32 there is a superscript *a* before the word *meet*. The note at the bottom reads, “32<sup>a</sup> GR necessary,” telling us that the Greek word translated “meet” could also be translated “necessary.”

Alternate translations of words help us understand the nuances of the words and alert us that the word in the verse does not necessarily reflect the full meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew word. The first note in Job 2:3,

for example, explains that the writer of Job is speaking of moral perfection, not other kinds of perfection. Job could be perfect because he has repented of all his sins.

## References to the Joseph Smith Translation

The editors of the LDS scriptures excerpted parts of the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) and placed them near the end of the LDS Bible. Some footnotes mark references to the JST excerpts. For example, Acts 22:29 has an *a* before the word *then*, the first word in the verse. The footnote refers to the JST for Acts 22:29–30, noting that those verses are found in the appendix. In the appendix under Acts 22 are the changes that Joseph Smith made to these verses. If the difference between the JST and the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) text is not extensive, it is included in the footnotes rather than in the appendix.

## References to the Topical Guide

Some footnotes contain the abbreviation TG. For example, the letter *b* appears just before the word *sinned* in Luke 15:18. Footnote b reads, “*b* TG Confession.” This tells us that a collection of scriptures that relate to confession is in the Topical Guide, located near the end of the Bible (for more about the Topical Guide, see the next section).

The footnote references to the Topical Guide do not give a definition or an alternate translation of the relevant word or phrase. Also, the scriptures included in the Topical Guide under “confession” are not the only ones about confession. Those who created the Topical Guide may have overlooked some scriptures on the topic, and scriptures can have different meanings for us at different times in our lives and in different circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Be careful not to be misled by the Topical Guide. Sometimes it is not clear why the Topical Guide includes a particular reference; occasionally it is wrong. Consider, for example, note *a* in Romans 1:32. It refers to “capital punishment” in the Topical Guide, but the context of verse 32 indicates that the death spoken of must be spiritual. Otherwise Paul would be arguing that those who are proud deserve the death penalty. The Topical Guide is an excellent and useful tool, not a substitute for our own thoughtfulness and prayer.

## Topical Guide

The Topical Guide is exactly what its name suggests, a scriptural guide or index for a variety of topics. It lists numerous topics and relevant scriptures. Concordances (word indexes) have the disadvantage of listing only the same or similar words in other scriptures. For example, if a writer uses a synonym I do not happen to think of, then a word index will be of no help. In contrast, the Topical Guide lists related topics before giving the scriptural references, as well as listing specific references to that topic, whether they contain the word or not.

For example, suppose I want to find scriptures on welfare because the bishop asked me to give a talk on that subject. Using a concordance, I can find 27 references to the word *welfare* in the scriptures, but few are much help in preparing a talk on the welfare program or on helping those in need. I might find some scriptures by looking up related words, such as *need* (327 references). Once again, however, most of the references are not related to welfare. If I look in the Topical Guide, however, I will find a long list of scriptures on the topic of welfare, some of which may not contain the word *welfare* but are about that subject. I will also find a lengthy list of related topics. Such lists of scriptures are valuable, especially for preparing talks or lessons or for personal study.

I also keep a notebook in which I make my own topical index. As I study the scriptures, I often find some verses that help me understand a topic but are not included in the Topical Guide. My personal topical index is a supplement to

that valuable work and helps me find those passages later.

The only disadvantage of the Topical Guide is the disadvantage of any study tool: when we use it we depend on the understanding of the editors. They may have inadvertently omitted some potentially important verses (hence the need for a personal index) or included others that are not helpful (I gently mark these out—gently because I may change my mind). Though it is not perfect, the Topical Guide is still an indispensable tool.

### **Bible Dictionary**

The Bible Dictionary is more like a small encyclopedia than a standard dictionary. It gives the meanings of words found in the Bible; explains concepts; gives historical background on people, places, and events mentioned in the Bible or related to the Bible; provides brief explanations of doctrines; and provides other useful information for Bible study. There are many Bible dictionaries, but the one in the LDS scriptures is edited for an LDS audience. It is always a good place to begin studying. Look through it to see the kinds of information it contains. Note the list of quotations from the Old Testament that are found in the New Testament (under the heading “quotations”). Another helpful entry is “Gospels, harmony of.” The wealth of information in the LDS Bible Dictionary is amazing.

### **Gazetteer and Maps**

A gazetteer is an index for a map or set of maps. The gazetteer is the place to look for the location of a place referred to in the Bible. For example, Joshua 11:1 refers to a place called Hazor. In the gazetteer is the entry “Hazor **D3:** 2; **D2:** 3, 9; **C3:** 5, 6, 7, 8.” This means that the city of Hazor is located in the area designated by the coordinates D3 on map 2, in D2 on maps 3 and 9, and in C3 on maps 5, 6, 7, and 8.

### **Note**

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, January 1995, 6–9.