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## Preface

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# Preface

The world is commemorating the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' first voyage to America. Without question, this voyage is one of the most significant events in the history of humanity. Columbus' expedition brought two worlds into permanent contact with each other, the Old World of Europe and Asia and the "New World" of the Americas, and set in motion a chain of events that would transform both worlds forever. Among other things, Columbus' encounter with the Americas opened the door to a flood of exploration, colonization, missionary work, and fortune-seeking, the likes of which this earth has seldom, if ever, experienced.

As part of this celebration, many books have appeared which analyze the life and achievements of Columbus. Why then another book? While most of the books published thus far have assessed the achievements of Columbus from a secular basis, I have endeavored in this book to look at and discuss his contributions in a spiritual context. This concise overview of Columbus' life is intended primarily for Latter-day Saint readers—people who believe in the Book of Mormon and the teachings of modern-day apostles and prophets.

I have been impressed with and have emphasized seven important themes relative to Columbus' life and accomplishments: (1) his discovery of the Western World was the fulfillment of Book of Mormon Prophecy; (2) he was a forerunner to the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days; (3) his prime motive for exploration was to spread Christianity throughout the world; (4) he was guided by the Spirit of God, especially on his first voyage; (5) he, himself, believed he was guided by the Spirit; (6) he believed many of his achievements were a fulfillment of prophecy; and (7) many Latter-day Saint apostles and prophets have held and do hold Columbus in high regard.

As I have prepared this work, I have come to feel a special kinship with Columbus and also with others who have written about him: Samuel Eliot Morison, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*; Ferdinand Columbus, the Admiral's son, whose biography of his father, *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus*, while somewhat less critical than one might wish certainly offers many insights into the man Christopher Columbus; Oliver Dunn and James Kelley, Jr., who published *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493*, an excellent English translation of the abstract of Columbus' journal of his first trans-Atlantic expedition; and finally, Delno C. West and August Kling, whose *The Libro de las Profecias of Christopher Columbus* is an outstanding English translation of and commentary on Columbus' *Book of Prophecies*. I have relied heavily upon these works and am indebted to these authors.

I am also very grateful to many people who helped me with this present project: Robert L. Millet, Dean of Religious Education and General Director of the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University, who encouraged me to publish this work and provided a research grant to make it possible; Leon R. Hartshorn, chair of the Department of Church History and Doctrine at BYU, who graciously rearranged my teaching schedule so I could have the time necessary to complete this study; and Charles D. Tate, Jr., Assistant General Director—Publications of the Religious Studies Center, Charlotte Pollard and Curtis Bay of his staff, who have provided expert, professional editing for this work. To Richard O. Cowan, my good friend and mentor, and De Lamar Jensen, a distinguished historian and chairman of BYU's Columbus Quincentennial Committee, go my thanks for reading the manuscript and offering many helpful suggestions, and to Dr. Jensen for writing the Foreword.

My research assistant, Fred Williams, and secretary, Mary Kay Robinson, have also helped make it possible for me to meet the deadlines for this manuscript.

I would especially like to thank my wife, Cherie, and our children, Wendi, Natalie, Randy, Rob, and Cory, for their kind understanding when I had to be working on this project rather than doing something with them. Finally, I would like to express appreciation to my mother, Lucile Garr, for her many years of love and encouragement.