Preface to the 1996 Reprint Edition

Fourteen years after the first publication of *Book of Mormon Authorship*, interest continues to grow in a range of Book of Mormon studies that address the authorship question in one way or another. While dissident or revisionist Latter-day Saints join cause with skeptical non-Mormons to advance new or revised attacks on the standard account of the book’s origins, there has been a major boom in research by faithful Latter-day Saints that substantially refutes these attacks and sets out volumes of new insights into its ancient origins.

A year ago I began planning for a new volume of authorship studies that would reflect the current state of scholarship on these issues. In that process, we discovered that many people have wanted to obtain copies of the original 1982 studies, now out of print. Several of the papers in that original collection have turned out to be classic pieces and are widely circulated as photocopies. While we have gone ahead in the preparation of a volume of new studies to be released later in 1996, we decided to reprint the original volume first, making these important studies available again in a high-quality publication.

The 1982 volume was published by the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University as volume 7 in its Religious Studies Monograph Series. We express appreciation to the Religious Studies Center for permission to bring the volume back into print as a publication of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and as a companion for the second volume, which will follow shortly.

I have decided against any effort to update or revise these authorship studies as published in 1982. While the new volume
will present more recent scholarship on some of the same issues, none of the studies in this volume have been outdated or refuted by subsequent studies. The evidence and conclusions they put forward are just as persuasive today as they were in 1982. It is this lasting quality of the collection that justifies this reprinting.

A footnote to the 1982 Introduction would point out that the famous debate on the shroud of Turin has taken some major turns with the publication of carbon 14 dating in 1988 that appeared to establish a late medieval date for the fabric, eliminating the possibility that it could have been the shroud of the Savior. While there are recent rumblings in the scientific community about alternative analyses that might open this question again, it is generally conceded that the issue is settled. While a generation of new critics of the Book of Mormon would like to believe that they could settle the question of its authenticity in a similar way, the evidence continues to mount higher on the other side, supporting the book’s claims of an ancient origin. And the critics lag further and further behind in dealing with a host of new studies that vindicate the claimed ancient authorship in a variety of ways.

While the book’s critics claim to base their skepticism in scholarly studies, the defenders represented in this volume recognize that these are not issues that will be settled by scholarly effort. Finally, belief in the divinity of the Book of Mormon is a matter of faith and depends on the personal testimony of each individual. While testimonies may be reinforced or encouraged by scholarly studies, such works are not the foundation of testimony. Religious truths require divine witness to establish the faith of the believer. As believing scholars, we recognize that fully and would not consider exchanging our scholarly perspective for the gift of faith that makes these matters so interesting to us. We hope others will continue to find these studies useful in developing a more complete understanding of the Book of Mormon and in learning to appreciate the great strengths of its position as a book of ancient scripture.

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