

# Christopher Columbus

## Man of Destiny

Arnold K. Garr

During the October 1992 general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Gordon B. Hinckley gave a special tribute to Christopher Columbus: “I have no doubt that [he] was a man of faith, as well as a man of indomitable determination. . . . It was he who in faith lighted a lamp to look for a new way to China and who in the process discovered America . . . with frequent prayers to the Almighty for guidance. In his reports to the sovereigns of Spain, Columbus repeatedly asserted that his voyage was for the glory of God and the spread of the Christian faith.”<sup>1</sup> This endorsement, given by a great spiritual leader, is in harmony with another tribute from the distinguished scholar Professor Delno C. West, who translated Columbus’s *Book of Prophecies*. West maintains: “Christopher Columbus looked upon himself as a man of destiny who had been given a charismatic gift to understand Scripture, navi-

gation, maps, winds, tides, astronomy . . . mathematics and related sciences. His understanding of his mission, or enterprise, was drawn from the Bible or proved by the Bible. . . . He believed himself a chosen person working for the good of all Christendom in opening up the rest of the world to the gospel message.”<sup>2</sup>

Though some historians portray Columbus as a villain who started the process of displacing the rightful inhabitants of the Americas,<sup>3</sup> Latter-day Saint scriptures affirm that he was an instrument in the Lord’s hands in preparing the way for a work that would ultimately bless the lives of the native inhabitants of the Americas (see 1 Nephi 13:10–41).<sup>4</sup> The following concise overview of Columbus’s 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.<sup>5</sup> Throughout this article seven important themes will be emphasized:

(1) Columbus fulfilled Book of Mormon prophecy in his discovery of the Western world; (2) he was a forerunner to the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days; (3) he had the spreading of Christianity as one of his major motivations for exploration; (4) he was guided by the Spirit of God, especially on his first voyage; (5) he believed he was guided by the Spirit; (6) he believed many of his achievements were a fulfillment of prophecy; and (7) he has been held in high regard by many Latter-day Saint apostles and prophets.

### **FULFILLMENT OF BOOK OF MORMON PROPHECY**

For Latter-day Saints, the story of Christopher Columbus begins long before his birth in 1451. In fact, his doings were known in prophecy nearly six hundred years before the birth of Christ, when the ancient American prophet Nephi foresaw Columbus's voyage to the New World in a vision and recorded it on metal plates. Joseph Smith later translated the account of Nephi's vision as part of the Book of Mormon. The record of the vision is found in 1 Nephi 13:12. Nephi declared, "I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land."

Elder Mark E. Petersen, a modern-day Apostle, explained that the "many waters were the Atlantic Ocean" and that "the seed of [Nephi's] brethren were the American Indians." He also affirmed that "it was Christopher Columbus whom [Nephi] saw, and he observed further that the discoverer was guided by divine power on his journey."<sup>6</sup>

Several modern-day prophets have testified that Columbus was guided to the New World by the Spirit of God, fulfilling Book of Mormon prophecy. President Hinckley claimed that "we

interpret [1 Nephi 13:12] to refer to Columbus. It is interesting to note that the Spirit of God wrought upon him."<sup>7</sup>

In 1976 President Ezra Taft Benson declared, "God inspired 'a man among the Gentiles' . . . who, by the Spirit of God was led to re-discover the land of America and bring this rich new land to the attention of the people in Europe. That man, of course, was Christopher Columbus, who testified that he was inspired in what he did."<sup>8</sup>

In 1950 Elder Spencer W. Kimball testified that God "inspired a little boy, Christopher Columbus, to stand on the quays in Genoa, Italy, and yearn for the sea. He was filled with the desire to sail the seas, and he fulfilled a great prophecy made long, long ago, that this land, chosen above all other lands, should be discovered. And so when he was mature, opportunity was granted to him to brave the unknown seas, to find this land, . . . and to open the door, as it were."<sup>9</sup>

Church leaders' statements about Columbus are not restricted to those of the twentieth century, as the apostles and prophets from the beginning of this dispensation also boldly testified that the Lord guided the great discoverer. In 1869 Elder George Q. Cannon delivered an address in the Salt Lake Tabernacle in which he affirmed, "Columbus was inspired to penetrate the ocean and discover this Western continent, for the set time for its discovery had come; and the consequences which God desired to follow its discovery have taken place."<sup>10</sup>

At the 1854 Fourth of July celebration in Salt Lake City, President Brigham Young spoke of the Lord's direction of the events that led to the modern discovery of America: "The Almighty . . . moved upon Columbus to launch forth upon the trackless deep to discover the American Continent."<sup>11</sup> Elder Orson Hyde, speaking at the same celebration, made perhaps the most intriguing reference to this theme, connecting Columbus's voyage and discoveries with the ministry of

Moroni, the ancient American prophet and divine messenger and caretaker of the Book of Mormon records. Referring to him as the “Prince of America,” Elder Hyde noted that Moroni “presides over the destinies of America, and feels a lively interest in all our doings. . . . This same angel was with Columbus, and gave him deep impressions, by dreams and by visions, respecting this New World.” He continued, “The angel of God helped him—was with him on the stormy deep, calmed the troubled elements, and guided his frail vessel to the desired haven.”<sup>12</sup> It is clear from these and other statements by Church leaders that the Lord was very interested in the success of Columbus’s voyages to and from the Americas.

#### FORERUNNER TO THE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL

Several modern-day apostles and prophets have clearly stated that Columbus, as discoverer of the Americas, and also the Founding Fathers of the United States of America were instruments in the Lord’s hands in preparing America to become the seat of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this last dispensation. Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, stated, “The discovery [of America] was one of the most important factors in bringing to pass the purpose of the Almighty in the restoration of his Gospel in its fullness for the salvation of men in the latter days.”<sup>13</sup>

Echoing this same idea, Elder Petersen affirmed, “The true gospel . . . could not be given to Israel of today until it was restored, and the restoration could come only under favorable conditions, in a free country, where men could worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.”<sup>14</sup> Speaking specifically about the work that Columbus and the Founding Fathers performed, Elder Petersen declared, “These events were preliminary steps leading up to the gospel being restored and taken to the entire house of Israel.” He emphasized that “few peo-

ple think of the discovery of America, the Revolutionary War, and the establishment of a constitutional form of government here as being steps toward the fulfillment of the Lord’s ancient covenant with Abraham. *But it is a fact that they were.*”<sup>15</sup>

Finally, George Q. Cannon specifically named Columbus along with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin as men who “were inspired to do the work which they did.” He declared that “it was a preparatory work for the establishment of the kingdom of God. This Church and kingdom could not have been established on the earth if their work had not been performed.”<sup>16</sup>

#### EARLY LIFE IN GENOA

When he was about fifty years old, Christopher Columbus wrote a letter to the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, which contained the following brief sketch of his youth and preparation for life: “At a very early age I began to navigate upon the seas, which I have continued to this day. . . . Such has been my interest for more than forty years. . . . I prayed to the most merciful Lord concerning my desire, and he gave me the spirit and the intelligence for it.”<sup>17</sup> Other than this, Columbus wrote very little about his youth in his personal writings; consequently he left to his biographers the task of piecing together the events of his early years. Fortunately, several historians have done admirable work.

Columbus was born in Genoa (now part of Italy), probably between August 25, and October 31, 1451.<sup>18</sup> He was the oldest of five children born to Domenico Columbo and Susanna Fotanarossa. He had three brothers: Giovanni Pellegrino, who died when he was a young man; Bartholomew, who helped Columbus plan his “Enterprise of the Indies”; and Giacomo, better known as Diego (the Spanish equivalent), whom the Admiral took with him on his second voyage to the New World. Columbus had only one sister, Bianchinetta, about whom we know very little.

Columbus's father, Domenico, was a master weaver and merchant. On one or more occasions, when his local political party was in power, he was also appointed keeper of the Olivella Gate on Genoa's east side. This position paid eighty-four Genoese pounds a year (or about \$160 in gold) from which he was expected to pay his assistants. Inasmuch as Domenico was a master clothier (not just a journeyman weaver) and sometimes the recipient of political patronage, we may assume that he was a respected artisan and businessman of the lower middle class.<sup>19</sup>

We know that as an adult, Columbus could read and write, but historians disagree about where he attended school—if he did at all—and the extent of his early education.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the truth may be about the location and timing of his early education, we know that by the time Columbus settled in Spain, at age thirty-three, he could read and write Spanish. Even the letters that he sent to business acquaintances and friends in Genoa were written in Spanish. Samuel Morison went so far as to propose that Spanish was the language of Columbus's thoughts. The Admiral's written Spanish was littered with Portuguese spellings, a reminder of a decade spent sailing from Portugal before he finally moved to Spain. In addition, he was able to read Latin and to speak Genoese, an unwritten dialect which differed greatly from Italian. Incidentally, there is no compelling evidence that he ever learned to read or write Italian, which at that time was spoken primarily in Tuscany (currently the political region surrounding Florence).<sup>21</sup>

We have no physical descriptions of Columbus in his youth, but several of his contemporaries who knew him personally as an adult have left some very helpful verbal portraits. El Capitan Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdes (hereafter Oviedo), who witnessed the Admiral's triumphant entry into Barcelona after his first voyage to America, described him as "taller than the average and strongly limbed: the

eyes lively and other parts of the face of good proportion, the hair very red, and the face somewhat ruddy and freckled."<sup>22</sup> Bartolome de Las Casas, a historian and family friend of Columbus, said that "he was more than middling tall; face long and giving an air of authority; aquiline nose, blue eyes, complexion light and tending to bright red; beard and hair red when young but very soon turned gray from his labors."<sup>23</sup>

His contemporaries also left a brief glimpse into Columbus's personality and character. Oviedo claimed he was "fair in speech, tactful and of great creative talent; a nice Latinist and most learned cosmographer; gracious when he wished to be, irascible when annoyed."<sup>24</sup> Columbus's son Ferdinand maintained that his father "was so great an enemy to swearing and blasphemy" that he "never heard him utter any other oath than 'by St. Ferdinand!'"<sup>25</sup>

It is also vitally important that we understand Columbus's attitude toward religion. We are indebted to the great priest-historian Las Casas, and others, for a brief description of the Admiral's religiosity: "In matters of the Christian religion, without doubt he was a Catholic and of great devotion. . . . He observed the fasts of the Church most faithfully, confessed and made communion often, read the canonical offices like a churchman or member of a religious order, hated blasphemy and profane swearing."<sup>26</sup> The priest further pointed to Columbus's belief in divine blessings: "He hourly admitted that God had conferred upon him great mercies, as upon David. When gold or precious things were brought to him, he entered his cabin, knelt down, summoned the bystanders, and said, 'Let us give thanks to Our Lord.'"<sup>27</sup>

## FIFTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

In the mid-fifteenth century, two important events significantly altered the political, economic, and cultural structure of Europe and had a great impact on Columbus. First, the Ottoman Empire attacked and captured Constantinople in

1453. The siege lasted six weeks and is regarded by many historians as one of the most dramatic events in world history. Constantinople had been a Christian stronghold, and its fall to the Muslims signaled a major defeat for Christianity.

The conquest of Constantinople greatly concerned European merchants. From Constantinople, the Turks began to expand into the Aegean and Adriatic seas and eventually took the Italian port of Otranto in 1480. This rapid expansion of a force hostile to Genoa's mercantile designs altered the activities of her seafaring merchants. Whereas the Genoese had traditionally traded in the profitable spice and aromatic markets of the eastern Mediterranean, the Ottoman expansion severely restricted Genoese access to these markets. By 1475 the Ottomans had captured Caffa, Genoa's sole remaining trading post in the Black Sea. They eventually conquered Syria, Palestine, and much of Africa, and by the 1520s controlled parts of central Europe. Historians suggest that the Ottoman Empire's threat to Genoese autonomy was so great that only the internal power struggle within the empire in 1481 prevented it from having an even greater effect on Renaissance Italy.<sup>28</sup>

In short, the Ottoman aggression in the eastern Mediterranean significantly restricted European sea expeditions. It should not surprise anyone that Columbus began to visualize a western course to the Indies; such a route would give access to the very profitable eastern markets without having to cross Ottoman territory.

The second development in fifteenth-century Europe that affected Columbus and the rest of the world was the invention of the printing press around 1455. Johannes Gutenberg, probably with the help of Johann Fust and Peter Schoffer, made this breakthrough that would dramatically cut the cost of books. By the mid-1400s, paper was widely available in Europe, and printing stimulated literacy among lay people, which in turn deeply affected their private lives.<sup>29</sup> The Gutenberg Bible was printed in 1456, and many other

texts appeared soon after. The Bible and several other scholarly works thus became available to Columbus.

The invention of the printing press was a key to promoting individual freedom and thought, paving the way for religious freedom and promoting the faith and devotion of lay people like Columbus. With a Bible of his own, Columbus now had instant access to the scriptures, and his personal study of them increased the influence of the Holy Ghost in his life. With this newfound source of freedom and independence in place, it is no wonder that other events that changed the course of history began to take place, including the beginning of the Protestant Reformation only twenty-five years after Columbus's first voyage.

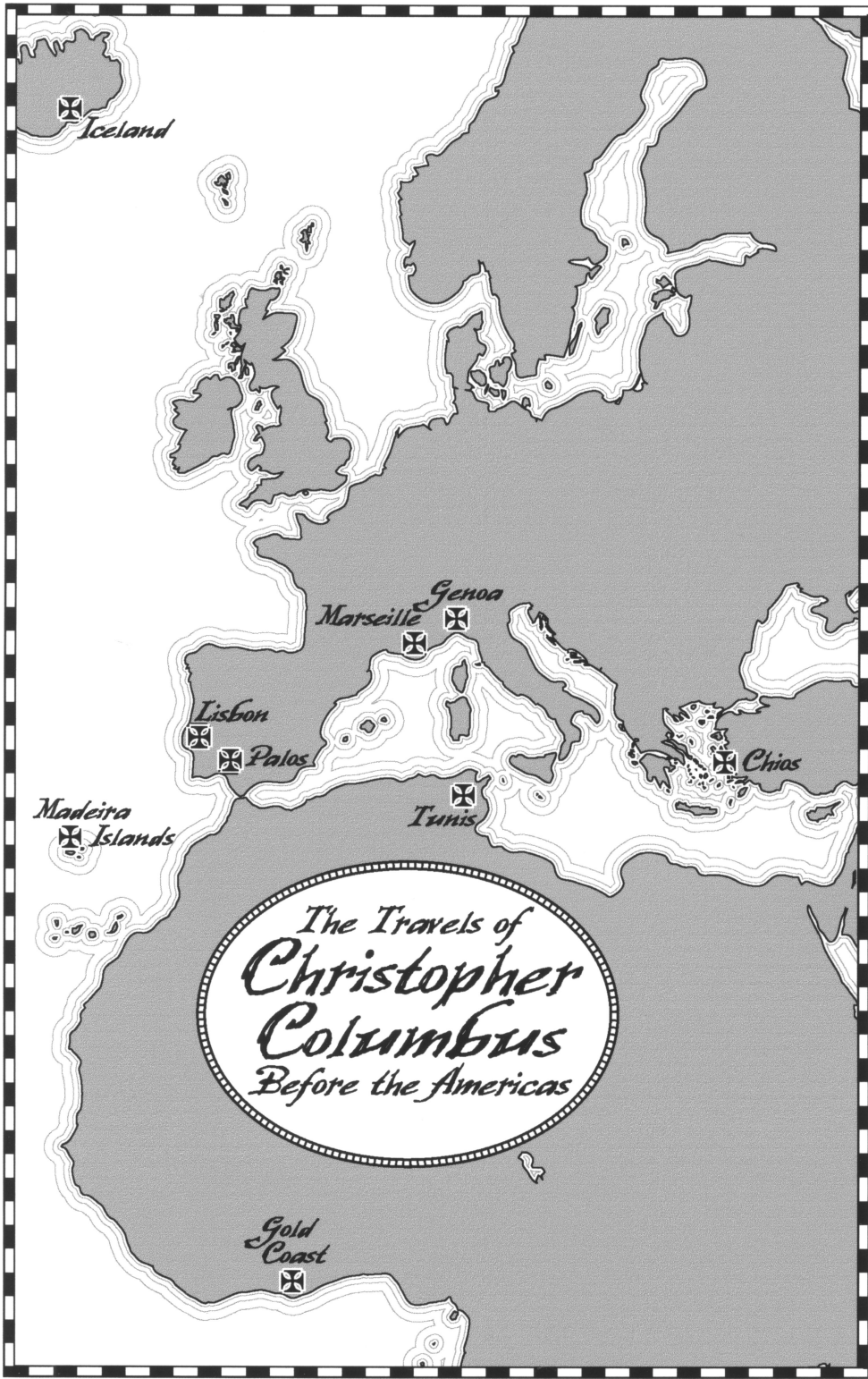
### EARLY EXPERIENCES AT SEA

The fact that Christopher Columbus was an accomplished and skillful sailor is well documented. The beginnings of his affair with the sea, however, are not so clear. Still, historians generally agree that his exposure to the maritime world began early, somewhere between the ages of ten and eighteen.<sup>30</sup> Situated conveniently between surrounding hills and the shore, Genoa had a bustling harbor that was the center of attention.

Evidence that Columbus worked as a sea merchant is substantial. Despite a seventeenth-century French attack on Genoa that destroyed many legal and notarial records, several receipts exist that place Columbus in different ports, participating in trade during the 1470s. Documents show that he traded in wine in Genoa on October 31, 1470, and in wool in Savona on March 20 and August 26, 1472.<sup>31</sup> Columbus also spoke of an early trip to Tunis and Marseille in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>32</sup>

We know that Columbus had sailed to the Genoese trading outpost on Chios in the Aegean Sea because when he attempted to describe many of the native plants he saw on his first voyage to

THE TRAVELS OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BEFORE THE AMERICAS



the New World, he compared a tree he saw there to the mastic trees he had "seen, on the island of Chios."<sup>33</sup>

By age twenty-five Columbus had had substantial experience at sea. Historic documents indicate that he was actively involved in Mediterranean trade in his young adult years. These experiences at sea prepared him for the more significant voyages he undertook in later years.

### YEARS IN PORTUGAL: COLUMBUS'S GRAND IDEA

A major turning point in Christopher Columbus's life happened when he relocated from Genoa to Portugal in 1476 under less than auspicious circumstances. In May of that year he signed on to sail with a Genoese merchant fleet bound for England. While on this voyage, near the coast of Portugal, a French war fleet of at least thirteen ships launched a surprise attack against the Genoese convoy. Columbus's ship caught fire, and the crew was forced overboard. Though Columbus was six miles from shore, he was able to reach land. He eventually found his way to Lisbon, Portugal, where he took up residence in a colony of Genoese merchants. He established a mapmaking business, which was his occupation when he was not at sea. It seems, indeed, providential that Columbus would choose to live in Lisbon, because at the time it was the world center for oceanic sailing and discovery.

During his years in Portugal, he sailed as far north as Iceland (Thule or Tile), as far west as the Madeira Islands, and as far south as the African Gold Coast.<sup>34</sup> With these voyages, Columbus became one of the most widely traveled seaman of his day. Las Casas claimed: "Columbus was the most outstanding sailor in the world, versed like no other in the art of navigation, for which divine Providence chose him to accomplish the most outstanding feat ever accomplished in the world until now."<sup>35</sup>

While living in Lisbon, probably in 1479, Christopher married Felipa Perestrelo e Moniz,

the daughter of Portuguese nobles. According to Paolo Taviani, by marrying Felipa, Columbus not only became part of a family of nobility but also gained access to navigational maps, commentaries, and manuscripts owned by the family. These materials may have contributed to Columbus's knowledge of the Atlantic.<sup>36</sup>

It was during this period of time that Columbus began to formulate his plan for the great "Enterprise of the Indies," his dream of reaching the East by sailing west. We know that while he lived in Portugal, he became an avid student of the Bible and of the writings of prominent theologians, philosophers, mathematicians, geographers, and world travelers. Besides the Bible, his other favorite books were Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi* (Image of the World), Pope Pius II's *Historia Rerum* (History of the World), and Marco Polo's *Description of the World*.<sup>37</sup>

Of these three works, d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, which summarizes geographical thought of the fifteenth century, evidently had the greatest influence on Columbus's understanding of world geography. Many passages in *Imago Mundi* give the impression that the Eurasian continent spans most of the circumference of the earth and that the ocean therefore is not particularly broad. Columbus's notes indicate that he was eager to embrace any statement in the work which would advance this theory. He took note of the following statements:

The end of the habitable earth toward the Orient [east] and the end of the habitable earth toward the Occident [west] are near enough, and between them is a small sea.

Between the end of Spain and the beginning of India is not great width.

An arm of the sea extends between India and Spain.

India is near Spain.

The beginnings of the Orient and of the Occident are close.

From the end of the Occident to the end of India  
*by land* is much greater than half the globe. . . .

Aristotle [says] between the end of Spain and  
the beginning of India is a small sea navigable in  
a few days. . . . Esdras [says] six parts [of the  
globe] are habitable and the seventh is covered  
with water. . . .

The end of Spain and the beginning of India are  
not far distant but close, and it is evident *that this  
sea is navigable in a few days with a fair wind.*<sup>38</sup>

Because of these statements and others, Columbus drastically underestimated the size of the earth. He believed the distance between the Canary Islands and Japan was about 2,400 miles, when in reality it is 10,600.<sup>39</sup>

Even though Columbus used the writings of Pierre d'Ailly, Pope Pius II, Marco Polo, and others as evidence to support and refine his plan, he never claimed that he derived his grand idea from any of them. Instead he sincerely credited the Lord for the inspiration for the Enterprise of the Indies. He wrote: "I have searched out and studied all kinds of texts: geographies, histories, chronologies, philosophies and other subjects. With a hand that could be felt, *the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies*, and he opened my will to desire to accomplish the project."<sup>40</sup>

Columbus was now prepared to seek royal sponsorship for his enterprise. Because he had lived in Portugal for the last eight years and married into the nobility of that country, Columbus chose, first, to present his plan to the Portuguese crown. In 1484 he gained an audience with John II, king of Portugal.<sup>41</sup> King John referred Columbus's enterprise to a maritime commission, headed by Diogo Ortiz. Unfortunately, the members of the commission recommended that the plan be rejected. This denial, coupled with the recent death of his wife, Felipa, was most disheartening to Columbus. He therefore decided that he and his five-year-old son, Diego, would move to

Spain in search of a better life. It was in Spain that this visionary man from Genoa would finally obtain the royal support he needed to fulfill his divine mission.

### YEARS IN SPAIN: COLUMBUS FINDS A SPONSOR

In 1485 Christopher Columbus, in company with his young son, took passage on a ship from Lisbon to Palos, Spain. As their ship neared its destination, it passed by a beautiful monastery located on a bluff overlooking the sea. This monastery, named La Rabida, soon became an extremely important sanctuary for Columbus, and it served as a home for Diego while Columbus was away promoting his plan.<sup>42</sup> It was here that Columbus was also befriended by influential and learned churchmen such as Antonio de Marchena and Juan Perez, who were sympathetic and helpful to him in his inspired cause.<sup>43</sup> And equally important, La Rabida became a spiritual refuge for Columbus himself.

With this religious setting as a backdrop, it now seems appropriate to consider one of the most important, yet least discussed, themes in Columbus's life: his spiritual motive for sailing to the Indies. It has become vogue in this materialistic age to say that Columbus's primary motivation was economic. For example, in his book *The Conquest of Paradise*, Kirkpatrick Sale states that "the goal was not *land*, at least in the Admiral's heart, but rather *gold*. . . . Time and time again . . . [Columbus] openly declared his single-minded interest in finding gold."<sup>44</sup> Also, an article in a contemporary American magazine maintains that "the Enterprise of the Indies . . . was a business trip. His chief motive was one of the oldest and most powerful of all: money."<sup>45</sup> Columbus was a complex individual and no doubt had multiple motives for what he did, including economic gain and societal recognition. After all, people rarely have only one motive for the things that they do in life. However, to say simply that Columbus's chief motivation was economic dis-



torts the truth and hides from the reader an important role that he said he played, that of being the “Christ-bearer.”

Sources on Columbus’s life are replete with evidence that one of his major motivations to sail to the Indies was to spread Christianity. He once wrote the following to Amerigo Vespucci (the explorer for whom America is named): “I feel persuaded, by the many and wonderful manifestations of Divine Providence in my especial favour, that I am the chosen instrument of God in bringing to pass a great event—no less than the conversion of millions who are now existing in the darkness of Paganism.”<sup>46</sup>

Many of the books that Columbus read and annotated addressed this theme. In the prologue in his personal copy of Marco Polo’s *Description of the World*, its translator, Francesco Pipino, argued the book’s usefulness for “converting pagans.”<sup>47</sup>

It seems clear that the Spanish monarchs also shared at least a part of Columbus’s enthusiasm for spreading the message of Christ. The first entry in Christopher’s journal of the maiden voyage stated, “Because of the report that I had given to Your Highnesses [Ferdinand and Isabella] about the lands of India and about a prince who is called ‘Grand Khan,’ . . . Your Highnesses, . . . lovers and promoters of the Holy Christian Faith, . . . thought of sending me, Christobal Colon, to the said regions of India to see the said princes and the peoples and lands, . . . to see how their conversion to our Holy Faith might be undertaken.”<sup>48</sup>

Las Casas also revealed the Admiral’s fervent desire to carry the message of Christ to the world: “He was extraordinarily zealous for the divine service; he desired and was eager for the conversion of [the Native Americans], and that in every region the faith of Jesus Christ be planted and enhanced, . . . ever holding great confidence in divine providence.”<sup>49</sup> At the end of his first voyage, Columbus did in fact take six Native Americans back to Spain, who were baptized.<sup>50</sup> On his second voyage, he took five priests for the purpose of converting the indigenous people.<sup>51</sup>

While Columbus did not have access to the fulness of the restored gospel, his efforts nevertheless would result in the reintroduction of Christianity to the descendants of Lehi living in the Americas. This missionary effort, as we know, helped prepare the way for eventual acceptance of the fulness of the gospel after it was restored in the latter days. In this way, Columbus’s proselyting ambitions helped accomplish the Lord’s purposes.

Elder B. H. Roberts wrote of the role played by people of other faiths in the accomplishment of the Lord’s designs, making it clear that he believed contributors from outside the Church assist in divine purposes: “God raises up wise men and prophets here and there among all the children of men, . . . speaking to them through means that they can comprehend; not always giving a fulness of truth such as may be found in the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ; but always giving that measure of truth that the people are prepared to receive.” He also noted that “wherever God finds a soul sufficiently enlightened and pure; one with whom his Spirit can communicate, lo! he makes of him a teacher of men.”<sup>52</sup> An official statement of the First Presidency in 1978 further validates this view. Issued during the administration of President Spencer W. Kimball, this declaration clearly states that great men and women in the history of the world have “received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.”<sup>53</sup> Given his desires to spread the message of Christ and his part as the initiator of Christian missionary work in the New World, Columbus surely fits into this classification of inspired individuals who have helped lay the foundation for the fulness of the restored gospel.

Feeling enthusiastic about spreading Christianity and optimistic about obtaining sponsorship in Spain, Columbus presented his plan to the Spanish crown in 1486. The monarchs received

his presentation open-mindedly and referred his recommendations to a maritime commission headed by Fray Hernando de Talavera, the queen's confessor. After months of dawdling deliberation, the commission "postponed rendering a report" but gave Columbus a retainer fee for a year.<sup>54</sup>

Over the next six years, Columbus made two more proposals to Spain and one more to Portugal. Simultaneously, Columbus sent his brother, Bartholomew, to King Henry VII of England and then to King Charles VIII of France in hopes of persuading one of them to sponsor the enterprise. Portugal, England, and France all turned them down, but in January 1492 Spain finally offered its support.

After eight years of frustration dating back to his first attempt to gain financial backing in Portugal, Christopher Columbus had a royal sponsor for his grand idea. Providence had finally blessed his dogged determination. He attributed the monarchs' capitulation to divine intercession, exclaiming: "I spent seven years here in your royal court discussing this subject with the leading persons in all the learned arts, and their conclusion was that all was in vain. That was the end, and they gave it up. But afterwards it all turned out just as our redeemer Jesus Christ had said, and as he had spoken earlier by the mouth of his holy prophets."<sup>55</sup>

Columbus then journeyed to the port of Palos, where he would assemble his fleet. The crown had ordered the city of Palos, as a punishment for smuggling, to provide two ships for the voyage, which it did. However, recruiting seamen to man the ships proved to be an arduous task. The local Spanish mariners were not enthusiastic to sign on with a foreigner from Genoa, especially for such a high-risk enterprise. Fortunately, Columbus soon gained the support of a respected sea captain from Palos, Martín Alonzo Pinzón, and his brothers. They, in turn, became vitally important in the effort to recruit a suffi-

cient number of crewmen for the voyage.<sup>56</sup> Christopher was now ready to embark upon the most celebrated sea voyage theretofore attempted in the history of the world, his Enterprise of the Indies.

### **FIRST VOYAGE TO THE AMERICAS: COLUMBUS GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT**

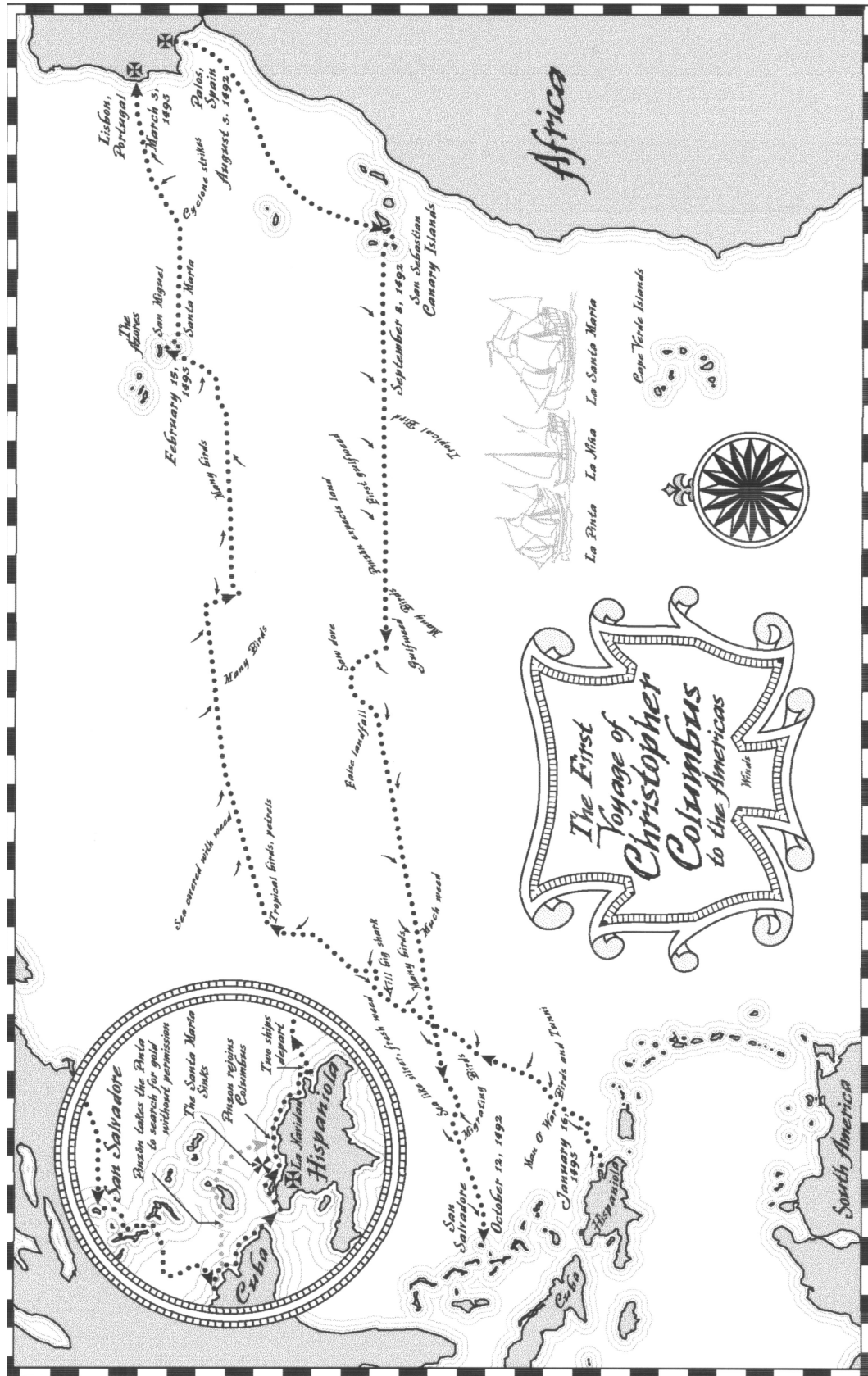
Columbus's historic voyage began at Palos, Spain, on August 3, 1492. On that day Columbus departed for the Canary Islands with three sailing vessels, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*, his flagship. They arrived at the Canaries August 12. There they took on provisions and made final preparations for their oceanic voyage. They departed the Canaries on September 6 and had their last view of land on September 9.

The anticipation and drama associated with Christopher Columbus's first expedition to the Americas is almost unparalleled in human history. Perhaps the only event of comparable magnitude in our day was man's first landing on the moon in 1969. Inasmuch as Columbus sailed thirty-three continuous days into the unknown with a crew ultimately verging on mutiny, it is apparent that every decision he made was crucial to both the success of his expedition and the survival of his small fleet. It is amazing, said George E. Nunn, a prominent geographer, that Columbus "did not make a single false move in the entire voyage."<sup>57</sup>

Historians have written about Columbus's first voyage to America from many points of view. Some secular historians, however, have placed little emphasis on the most important theme of all—the fact that Columbus was guided by the Spirit of God.<sup>58</sup> Beginning with the decision Columbus made concerning his point of departure and continuing all the way through to his return voyage to Spain, we can find numerous junctures at which the Lord manifested His hand in Columbus's key decisions.

Before 1492 other navigators had tried unsuccessfully to explore westward from the

COLUMBUS'S FIRST VOYAGE TO THE AMERICAS



Azores Islands (eight hundred miles west of the coast of Portugal), assuming that this was the best place from which to set sail.<sup>59</sup> Although the Azores were the western-most islands known in the Atlantic, Columbus chose to sail from Palos, Spain, to the Canary Islands (off the west coast of Africa) and from there to launch his voyage into the vast unknown. By doing so, he caught the trade winds blowing from the northeast to the southwest and avoided the headwinds which blow from the west to the east in the vicinity of the Azores.<sup>60</sup>

The route Columbus chose has stood the test of time: five hundred years of sailing have proven it the best possible course for sailing west from southern Europe to North America. Nunn suggested that Columbus's successful navigation was the result of "an application of reason to . . . knowledge."<sup>61</sup> Columbus, however, gave credit to the Lord. Even though he was a successful seaman and an accomplished navigator, he said, "With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies."<sup>62</sup>

Columbus experienced relatively easy sailing during the entire outward voyage; had he not done so, he likely would not have reached America before his crew mutinied. There was one occasion, however, on September 23, when the sea became calm and the ships were stalled for part of the day. Columbus noted in his journal that the crew, who had not seen land for some days, began to complain that since there were no heavy seas in the region, the wind would never blow hard enough to return to Spain. Soon thereafter, the sea mysteriously rose without wind, astonishing the crew.<sup>63</sup> The Admiral considered this a divine miracle. He said, "The high sea was very necessary for me, [a sign] which had not appeared except in the time of the Jews when they left Egypt [and complained] against Moses, who took them out of captivity."<sup>64</sup>

On the way to America, Columbus made only two major course changes during the entire

thirty-three days at sea. The first alteration was on October 7. Until that time, Columbus had sailed due west for twenty-eight days. Then he noted in his journal that a great multitude of birds passed over, going from north to southwest. Bartolome de Las Casas, the man who transcribed Columbus's journal, wrote that from this observation, the Admiral "decided to alter course and turn the prow to the WSW [west southwest]."<sup>65</sup> Professor Morison claimed that if Columbus had not changed course, "the voyage would have taken at least a day longer."<sup>66</sup> That extra day could have been critical, since two days before the eventual sighting of land, the crew threatened mutiny. Every extra day at sea heightened their anxiety; the Admiral's timesaving change of course on October 7, therefore, may have saved the expedition.

The story of the threatened mutiny is one of the most dramatic episodes of the first voyage. The incident took place on Wednesday, October 10, 1492, after they had been at sea for over thirty-one days without seeing land. The sailors who had been concealing their discontent now openly threatened insurrection. They had come to believe that Columbus, the foreigner from Genoa, had deceived them; they supposed he was leading them on a journey from which they would never return. According to one account, the sailors even conspired to do away with their leader, whom they "planned to throw into the sea."<sup>67</sup> Yet "Columbus, by using gentle words, holding out promises and flattering their hopes, sought to gain time, and he succeeded in calming their fears."<sup>68</sup> Others have stated, after the fact, that at this juncture, Columbus promised the men that they would return if they did not sight land within two or three days.<sup>69</sup> Although Columbus did not record this oft-repeated assertion in his journal, he did report that "I also told the men that it was useless to complain, for I had started out to find the Indies and would continue until I had accomplished that mission, *with the help of Our Lord*."<sup>70</sup> This incident serves as an

excellent example of Columbus's determination and faith in God.

The second instance in which the Admiral altered his route was after sunset on October 11, just a few hours before land was sighted. For no apparent reason, he gave orders to change direction from west-southwest back to the original course of due west.<sup>71</sup> He gave no explanation for the change, but it was nevertheless an excellent choice. Had he continued on the west southwest course instead of steering due west, he would have missed the island of San Salvador and would likely have ended up on the "shelterless shore" of Long Island (in the Caribbean).<sup>72</sup> Morison contends that "the change may have been just a hunch,"<sup>73</sup> but Las Casas said, "God gave this man the keys to the awesome seas, he and no other unlocked the darkness."<sup>74</sup>

Having made this second course correction, Columbus was then right on target, and just in time to meet with his destiny—to discover the new land. That evening as the crew gathered for prayer, the Admiral "spoke to the men of the favor that [the] Lord had shown them by conducting them so safely and prosperously with fair winds and a clear course, and by comforting them with signs that daily grew more abundant."<sup>75</sup> His policy since reaching a point seven hundred leagues beyond the Canaries had been not to sail at night, but the crew's desire to see land was so great that Columbus decided to sail through the darkness.<sup>76</sup> He commanded the night watch to keep an especially sharp lookout because he was confident that land was nearby.<sup>77</sup>

About 10 o'clock that night, Columbus saw a light in the distant dark, but it was so faint that he did not publicly announce it. He did, however, bring it to the attention of Pedro Gutierrez, who also acknowledged seeing the flickering light. Rodrigo Sanchez was also called on to observe the light, but he claimed he could see nothing from where he was.<sup>78</sup> Notwithstanding Columbus's glimpse of the light, it was some four hours later, at about two in the morning on Octo-

ber 12, that the fleet sighted land for certain. Rodrigo de Triana, a sailor on the *Pinta*, shouted, "*Tierra! tierra!*" while the fleet was still two leagues offshore.<sup>79</sup> Martín Pinzón, the captain of the *Pinta*, quickly verified Triana's claim and then fired a cannon shot, which was the prearranged signal for sighting land.

One can only imagine the gratitude and relief they all must have felt, after more than a month of anxious days at sea, when their eyes first saw this obscure little island in the middle of the tropical Caribbean Sea. The crews were ecstatic, and their respect and admiration for the Admiral soared overnight.

For Columbus, this historic sighting was a rendezvous with destiny. He had proven in spite of mounting opposition and his crew's lack of faith that it was possible to sail westward across the great Atlantic. According to his agreement with the monarchs, Columbus officially became Admiral of the Ocean Sea, simultaneously gaining the titles of viceroy and governor of the island. Professor Hugh Nibley aptly put this celebrated moment into proper perspective when he said: "Everything else in Columbus' life is subservient to the carrying out of that one mission. The aim and purpose of all his work and suffering was what happened at 2 a.m. on the morning of October 12, 1492."<sup>80</sup>

Impatient and anxious to explore their new discovery, the crew waited through the night and sailed excitedly to shore at daybreak. Upon reaching dry ground, the landing party knelt, kissed the sand with tears of joy, and offered prayers of thanks to God. Rising from his knees, the Admiral named the island San Salvador (Holy Savior), thus beginning a personal tradition of giving names of religious significance to many newly discovered lands.<sup>81</sup> In deference to the crown, Columbus dedicated San Salvador, which lies off the northern coast of Cuba, to the Spanish monarchs.

The Admiral's faithful motive for making the voyage is quickly revealed by his impressions

on meeting the island people. He confided, "I recognized that they were people who would be better freed [from error] and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force."<sup>82</sup> Later in his journal, Columbus noted: "I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion."<sup>83</sup> He determined to take six of the islanders with him back to Europe in order to baptize them and educate them in the ways of European life.

After three days of exploring on San Salvador, the Admiral set sail southward, passing various islands en route to an eventual landing at Cuba on October 28. It was here that Columbus was so impressed with the spiritual potential of the Indians that he made an immediate plea on their behalf in his journal that day. "I truly believe, most Serene Princes . . . that, given devout religious persons knowing thoroughly the language that they use, soon all of them would become Christian." Continuing his petition to the monarchs, he pleaded, "I hope in Our Lord that Your Highnesses, with much diligence, will decide to send such persons in order to bring to the Church such great nations and to convert them."<sup>84</sup> These requests, made at a time of such personal accomplishment, further illuminate Columbus's great devotion to things spiritual; the informed reader cannot doubt that he was truly motivated by his desire to serve God.

The Admiral also hoped to discover gold. However, many historians have completely overlooked the fact that his motivation for seeking riches was to sponsor a Christian army for the purpose of redeeming Jerusalem from the Muslims. On December 26, 1492, Columbus wrote: "I urged Your Highnesses to spend all the profits of this my enterprise on the conquest of Jerusalem, and Your Highnesses laughed and said that it would please them and that even without this profit they had that desire."<sup>85</sup> These are hardly the words of a selfish fortune seeker. The Admiral's ambition relative to the Holy Land will be

explained later, during the discussion on his *Book of Prophecies*.

Columbus spent the entire month of November exploring the northeast coast of Cuba; then, on December 5, 1492, he sailed across the Windward Passage and safely made his way to the island of Hispaniola. This island would soon become home of the first Spanish colony in the New World.

The Admiral's first Christmas in America was a day of major calamity for this historic voyage. Disaster struck just before midnight on Christmas Eve as the *Santa Maria* slid upon a coral reef so gently that the crew was not even aware that they were aground.<sup>86</sup> Even though it was not a tumultuous wreck and no lives were lost, the resulting leakage was so severe that the ship was unsalvageable. The accident forced Columbus to abandon the wreckage, and he was obliged to leave thirty-nine of his crew in a makeshift fort built from what was left of the ship. This fort, named *La Navidad* because of their arrival on Christmas Day, became the first Spanish colony in the New World, although it came about quite by chance.<sup>87</sup>

After exploring the islands of the Caribbean for three months, Columbus prepared to return to Europe in his substitute flagship, the *Niña*. The route the Admiral chose for his homeward journey is yet another example of his being inspired of God. On January 14, 1493, he recorded in his log, "I have faith in Our Lord that He who brought me here will lead me back in His pity and mercy. . . . No one else was supportive of me except God, because He knew my heart."<sup>88</sup> Columbus did not return to Spain by the same southern sea passage that had carried him to America. Instead, he sailed northeast and caught winds coming out of the west that took him back across the Atlantic to the Azores. Once again, Nunn asserted that Columbus's navigational decisions were remarkable: "So much has been said about his discovery of America that it has been lost to sight and thought that he also discovered

both of the great sailing routes in the North Atlantic."<sup>89</sup> With no prior trans-Atlantic sailing experience, how did Columbus enjoy such good fortune on both legs of the trip? Morison declared, "There can be no doubt that the faith of Columbus was genuine and sincere, and that his frequent communion with forces unseen was a vital element in his achievement."<sup>90</sup>

Thus, with the help of the Lord, Christopher Columbus was able to accomplish one of the greatest feats in human history. After this marvelous achievement, he could have taken all the glory for himself, but throughout his life he consistently gave credit to God. For example, in 1500 he solemnly declared: "Our Lord made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth, . . . and he showed me the place where to find it."<sup>91</sup>

The Admiral's encounter with America opened a floodgate to explorers, colonizers, fortune seekers, and missionaries. Many of these people would accomplish honorable purposes, while others would, unfortunately, bring harm. Whatever the final outcome, the world would most certainly never be the same.

Christopher Columbus was surely at a high point in his life when he returned from his first voyage to the Americas and was honored by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. He remained with the royal court at Barcelona for several weeks thereafter.<sup>92</sup> One of the most significant and memorable events that the Admiral attended during this time was the baptism of the six Native Americans he had brought back with him from the Indies. Ferdinand, Isabella, and their son, the Infante Don Juan, acted as godparents to the new converts. They named one Indian after the king, another after Don Juan, and a third, the Admiral's interpreter, they christened Don Diego Colon. Don Juan became a part of the royal household, where he was "well behaved and circumspect" according to Oviedo.<sup>93</sup> Sadly, Don Juan died just two years later. The other five

natives returned to the Americas with Columbus on his second voyage.

### COLUMBUS'S LATER VOYAGES

From 1493 to 1504 Columbus made three more voyages to the New World. Unfortunately these journeys were filled with poor decisions, sadness, disappointment, tragedy, and embarrassment. On the second trip (1493–96) the Admiral found that the natives had slaughtered the men he had left at La Navidad. Saddened but undaunted, he established another colony on Hispaniola called Isabella. He left it in the care of his brother, Don Diego, while he went exploring for the next five months. When Columbus returned he found the island in a state of turmoil. The Admiral may have been the greatest navigator in the world, but he was not a successful governor. He and his brothers could control neither internal rebellion among the settlers nor external fighting with the natives. Las Casas once said that "the Archangel Gabriel would have been hard put to govern those first colonists of Hispaniola."<sup>94</sup>

One of the problems was that the Europeans never found enough gold to satisfy their unrealistic expectations. As a result, in order to appease the discontented Europeans, the Admiral reluctantly consented to the enslavement of Native Americans for the purpose of trade and profit.<sup>95</sup> This decision seems to be a turning point in Columbus's career. There is very little evidence in the few years following that he received the same kind of divine guidance and inspiration that he had been so blessed with earlier in his life. During the years he served as governor, he appeared to be walking by his own light and stumbling along the way. This may have happened because he was in violation of an eternal principle taught in latter-day scripture. The Doctrine and Covenants states that "the heavens withdraw themselves" when men "exercise unrighteous dominion" over others (D&C 121:37, 39).

On the third voyage (1498–1500) he lost control of another rebellion in a new colony

called Santo Domingo. Conditions degenerated so badly that his opponents had him arrested and sent back to Spain in chains. Upon his arrival, the king and queen were shocked at how he had been treated and ordered him released. However, they appointed Nicolas de Ovando to replace him as governor.

During Columbus's fourth voyage (1502–4), around four hundred natives ambushed and massacred several members of his crew. However, in spite of the tragedy, during this time Columbus had perhaps the most remarkable spiritual experience of his life. While slumbering aboard his ship, the *Capitana*, Christopher "heard a compassionate voice" calling him to repentance:

O fool, and slow to believe and serve thy God, the God of every man! What more did He do for Moses or for David His servant than for thee? From thy birth He hath ever held thee in special charge. When He saw thee at man's estate, marvelously did He cause thy name to resound over the earth. The Indies, so rich a portion of the world, He gave thee for thine own, and thou hast divided them as it pleased thee. Of those barriers of the Ocean Sea, which were closed with such mighty chains, He hath given thee the keys. . . . Thou hast won noble fame from Christendom. . . . Turn thou to Him and acknowledge thy faults; His mercy is infinite.<sup>96</sup>

Columbus, obviously humbled by this admonition, said that he had "no answer to give in definite words," leaving him only "to weep for [his] transgressions." The final words spoken by the voice gave Columbus a feeling of hope and comfort: "Fear not, but have trust."<sup>97</sup>

### **HIS BOOK OF PROPHECIES**

Christopher Columbus used the time he had in Spain between his third and fourth voyages to meditate on the events of his life. He set about searching the scriptures and the writings of great philosophers for evidence of his role in the fulfillment of divine destiny. Columbus never

put a title on his manuscript, but its introductory statement outlined two interrelated purposes for preparing the work. First, it contained prophecies concerning the final recovery of Jerusalem from Muslim rule and the restoration of the ancient temple.<sup>98</sup> Second, it contained passages that prophesied of the discovery and conversion of all "peoples and nations" to Christianity. Other statements in the manuscript make it clear that Columbus believed his own achievements were also a fulfillment of prophecy, and he attempted to place those accomplishments within the framework of divine history, which he believed had a predetermined, unchanging timetable.

The section of the book that gives the most insight into Columbus's thoughts and feelings on these subjects is his introductory letter written for the Spanish sovereigns. In this letter the Admiral tried to convince the monarchs to sponsor a crusade to reclaim the Holy Land for Christianity and to restore the temple, an event he believed was divinely destined to take place.

Columbus substantiated his position by quoting numerous passages from the Old Testament (as quoted from the West and Kling and Brigham translations of Columbus's Latin text, which occasionally is slightly different from the King James Version). Isaiah 44:28 reads: "Thou art my shepherd, and thou shalt perform all my pleasure. Who say to Jerusalem: Thou shalt be built. And to the temple: Thy foundations shall be laid."<sup>99</sup> And Isaiah 2:2 reads: "And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow unto it."<sup>100</sup>

Concerning the theme of converting all nations to Christianity, Columbus quoted, among others, the following New Testament passages: Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations"; Mark 16:15, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature"; and Acts 1:8, "You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,



and even to the uttermost part of the earth."<sup>101</sup> The biblical passage to which Columbus referred most often has also become a Latter-day Saint favorite: John 10:16, "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring. And they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."<sup>102</sup>

Columbus's understanding of a divine timetable for the earth's history gave him a sense of urgency in fulfilling these prophecies. As a result of his studies of Saint Augustine and Pierre d'Ailly, Columbus believed that the earth had a predetermined life span of seven thousand years, that all the prophecies in the Bible had to be fulfilled before that time expired, and that "only one hundred and fifty years [remained] for the completion of the seven thousand years which would be the end of the world."<sup>103</sup> In short, Columbus believed not only that Jerusalem would be redeemed and that Christianity would be preached to all nations but also that these two great events had to be completed in a short period of time.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of the book is where Columbus quoted prophecies from scriptures and learned men that he believed pertained to his own achievements. In his introductory letter to the Spanish monarchs, Columbus stated that the Enterprise of the Indies "all turned out just as our redeemer Jesus Christ had said, and as he had spoken earlier by the mouth of his holy prophets."<sup>104</sup> A little later in the letter, Christopher again declared that "the execution of the journey to the Indies . . . was simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied."<sup>105</sup>

Columbus does not specify which of Isaiah's prophecies he had in mind, but among the more than two dozen listed was Isaiah 42:1-4: "Behold my servant: I will uphold him. My elect: my soul lighteth in him. I have given my spirit upon him . . . and the islands shall wait for his law."<sup>106</sup> Another passage was Isaiah 55:5: "Behold thou shalt call a nation which thou knewest not: and the nations that knew not thee shall run to thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he glorified thee."<sup>107</sup> He

also quoted several passages from Psalms that seem to point to his own life: Psalm 2:8, "Ask of me, and I will make nations your inheritance, and the ends of the earth your possession"; and 18:43, 49: "You have made me the head of nations; people I did not know are subject to me. . . . Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O Lord."<sup>108</sup>

In addition to quoting passages in the Bible, Columbus also quoted nonscriptural writings that he believed pertained to his Enterprise to the Indies. One of the most fascinating of these was Seneca's tragedy *Medea*, which predicted that "in the latter years of the world will come certain times in which the Ocean Sea will relax the bonds of things, and a great land will open up, and a new mariner like the one who was the guide of Jason, whose name was Typhis, will discover a new world."<sup>109</sup> The Admiral's son Ferdinand also quoted this passage in his biography of Columbus, and added, "Now it is considered certain that this prophecy was fulfilled in the person of the Admiral."<sup>110</sup>

Notwithstanding his belief that such great prophecies pertained to his life and to his discovery of the New World, Columbus was simultaneously humbled by his search of the scriptures. This fact is demonstrated by one of his final remarks in his introductory letter to Ferdinand and Isabella. In a candid assessment of his spiritual condition, Columbus confessed: "*I am only a most unworthy sinner*, but ever since I have cried out for grace and mercy from the Lord, they have covered me completely."<sup>111</sup>

In November 1504 the Admiral concluded his final voyage and returned to Spain. Here he lived out the last year and a half of his illustrious yet turbulent life. He died in Valladolid, Castile, on Wednesday, May 20, 1506. His last words were "*in manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum*" ('into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit').<sup>112</sup>

Even though some historians have overemphasized the flaws of Columbus's character, he was also a man of vision, conviction, and perseverance. He desired to spread Christianity

throughout the world and believed that he was guided by the Spirit in his discovery of the Americas. His encounter with this new land was in fulfillment of Book of Mormon prophecy, and latter-day apostles and prophets affirm that his discovery helped prepare the way for the Restoration of the gospel.

### EPILOGUE

For Latter-day Saints, the story of Christopher Columbus does not begin with his birth in 1451; nor does it end with his death in 1506. Because they believe that life continues after death, they believe he is now in the spirit world awaiting the resurrection with millions of other spirits who have passed from this life.

Latter-day Saints believe that Wilford Woodruff, while he was serving as the president of the St. George Temple, was visited by the spirits of several great men who requested him to perform vicarious baptisms for them in the temple. Following that experience, President Woodruff explained that he “went into the baptismal font [in the temple] and called upon brother McCallister to baptize [him] for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and fifty other eminent men, making one hundred in all, including John Wesley, Columbus, and others.”<sup>113</sup>

Approximately one hundred years later, when President Ezra Taft Benson was writing about Wilford Woodruff’s experience, he added the following important information about Christopher Columbus and the other “eminent men.” He wrote, “President George Washington was ordained a high priest at that time. You will also be interested to know that, according to Wilford Woodruff’s journal, John Wesley, Benjamin Franklin, and Christopher Columbus were also ordained high priests at the time. When one casts doubt about the character of these noble sons of God, I believe he or she will have to answer to the God of heaven for it.”<sup>114</sup>

### NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, October 1992, 73–74.
2. Delno C. West and August Kling, *The “Libro de las profecias” of Christopher Columbus* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991), 74.
3. See Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise* (New York: Plume, 1991), 92–94, 281. Two excellent discussions about negative literature concerning Columbus are De Lamar Jensen, “Columbus and the Hand of God,” *Ensign*, October 1992, 7; and William D. Phillips Jr. and Carla Rahn Phillips, *The Worlds of Christopher Columbus* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3–8.
4. Some of the most reputable books about Columbus are Samuel Eliot Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1942); Paolo Emilio Taviani, *Columbus: The Great Adventure: His Life, His Times, and His Voyages*, trans. Luciano F. Farina and Marc A. Beckwith (New York: Orion Books, 1991); Paolo Emilio Taviani, *Christopher Columbus: The Grand Design* (London: Orbis, 1985); Phillips and Phillips, *Worlds of Christopher Columbus*; Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley Jr., *The “Diario” of Christopher Columbus’s First Voyage to America, 1492–1493* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); and West and Kling, *Libro de las Profecias*.
5. This article is based on a book by the author, *Christopher Columbus: A Latter-day Saint Perspective* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992).
6. Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 3.
7. Hinckley, in Conference Report, October 1992, 73.
8. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 577.
9. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 427.
10. George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855–1861) 14:55; hereafter cited as *JD*.

11. Brigham Young, in *JD*, 7:13.
12. Orson Hyde, in *JD*, 6:368.
13. Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Progress of Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), 258.
14. Petersen, *The Great Prologue*, 4.
15. Peterson, *The Great Prologue*, 3; emphasis added.
16. George Q. Cannon, in *JD*, 14:55.
17. West and Kling, *Libro de las profecias*, 105.
18. For a discussion on the documents that validate Columbus's birth, see Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:10, 23n17.
19. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:12–14.
20. For more information on Columbus's education, see Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:17–18; Ferdinand Columbus, *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by His Son Ferdinand*, trans. Benjamin Keen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1959), 9; Eugene Lyon, "Search for Columbus" *National Geographic*, January 1992, 12; Helen Nader, "Columbus, Christopher: Adolescence and Youth," *The Christopher Columbus Encyclopedia*, ed. Silvio A. Bedini (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 1:164.
21. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:18–19.
22. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:62.
23. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:62–63.
24. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:62.
25. Columbus, *Life of the Admiral*, 9.
26. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:63.
27. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:63.
28. John P. McKay, Bennett D. Hill, and John Buckler, *A History of World Societies*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 724.
29. McKay, Hill, and Buckler, *World Societies*, 506.
30. The exact starting date when Christopher began his sailing experience is not known. For more information concerning Columbus's age when he began sailing, see Columbus, *Life of the Admiral*, 10, 12. Dunn and Kelley, *Diario*, 253.
31. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:26, 29; Nader, "Adolescence and Youth," 169–70.
32. Columbus, *Life of the Admiral*, 11.
33. Dunn and Kelley, *Diario*, 145.
34. See Columbus, *Life of the Admiral*, 11, 14; Phillips and Phillips, *Worlds of Christopher Columbus*, 105.
35. Bartolome de Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, trans. Andree Collard (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 17.
36. Taviani, *The Great Adventure*, 32–33.
37. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:120.
38. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:122–23, 128nn33, 35; emphasis added.
39. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:90–91.
40. West and Kling, *Libro de las profecias*, 105; emphasis added.
41. Theresa Earenfight, "Joao II," in *The Christopher Columbus Encyclopedia*, 1:396.
42. Columbus, *Life of the Admiral*, 37.
43. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:108.
44. Sale, *Conquest of Paradise*, 67.
45. Dan Carlinsky, "Christopher Confusion," *Modern Maturity*, February–March 1992, 52.
46. C. Edwards Lester, *The Life and Voyages of Americus Vesputius* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1903), 79.
47. W. R. Jones, "Polo, Marco," in *The Christopher Columbus Encyclopedia*, 2:556–57.
48. Dunn and Kelley, *Diario*, 17, 19; emphasis added.
49. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:63–64.
50. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 2:14.
51. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 2:51, 56–57.
52. B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907), 512–13.
53. Spencer J. Palmer, *Mormons and Muslims* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1983), 208.
54. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:116–18.
55. West and Kling, *Libro de las profecias*, 107.
56. See De Lamar Jensen, "Christopher Columbus and the Pinzons of Palos," *BYU Today*, November 1992, 23–25.
57. George E. Nunn, *The Geographical Conceptions of Columbus* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1924), 43.

58. It is interesting to observe how some secular scholars react to the spiritual experiences of Columbus. One example of this took place while he was slumbering on his ship. On this occasion he had perhaps his most remarkable spiritual experience when he heard a “compassionate voice” calling him to repentance. Despite Columbus’s written account of the occurrence, Samuel Eliot Morison says that the admiral was “rendered delirious” (see *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 2:373). Phillips and Phillips attribute the experience to “delusions of grandeur” (see *Worlds of Christopher Columbus*, 237). Kirkpatrick Sale claimed Columbus “imagined a voice from heaven” and that his mind had become a “miasma” (see *The Conquest of Paradise*, 207–8). Paolo Emilio Taviani does not even acknowledge the experience.

59. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:96–98.
60. Nunn, *Geographical Conceptions*, 37, 42.
61. Nunn, *Geographical Conceptions*, 50.
62. West and Kling, *Libro de las profecias*, 105.
63. Dunn and Kelley, *Diario*, 41.
64. Dunn and Kelley, *Diario*, 41.
65. Robert H. Fuson, *The Log of Christopher Columbus* (Camden, ME: International Marine, 1992), 71.
66. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:283.
67. Peter Martyr d’Anghera, *De Orbe Novo*, trans. Francis Augustus MacNutt (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, Knickerbocker Press, 1912), 1:59–60.
68. D’Anghera, *De Orbe Novo*, 1:59–60.
69. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:286, 290–91, 292n6.
70. Fuson, *Log of Christopher Columbus*, 72; emphasis added.
71. Dunn and Kelley, *Diario*, 59.
72. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:295.
73. Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, 1:295.
74. Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, 35.
75. Columbus, *Life of the Admiral*, 58.
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