



Christopher Columbus: A Latter-day Saint Perspective

Arnold K. Garr

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While many books have been written about the life of Christopher Columbus and his New World discoveries, this one has a different thrust—that Columbus was not just a skilled, courageous sailor but was also a chosen instrument in the hands of God.

For Latter-day Saints, this conclusion is implicit in a vision Nephi saw and recorded two thousand years or so before the time of Columbus. In relating that scripture to the fifteenth-century explorer, the author observes, modern prophets and Apostles have noted the significance of America in the Lord's plan for humankind, the historical necessity for its discovery, colonization, and development, and the raising up thereon of a free nation wherein the kingdom of God—the gospel and Church of Jesus Christ—could be restored and prospered, from which place it could go forth to all peoples in the latter days. Clearly the circumstances would call for a discoverer—the right man in the right place at the right time.

This book profiles the man from Genoa who apparently yearned from childhood for the seafaring life and who early began to acquire the nautical knowledge and experience that would make him the most widely traveled seaman of his day and would help him rise to the top ranks in that career. Seized by the spirit of adventure, he began to formulate his plan for the "Enterprise of the Indies," his dream of reaching East by sailing west. And finally, after eight frustrating years of seeking sponsorship in European courts, he persuaded Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to finance the project.

But adventure was not his only incentive. Stronger than that, it seems, was his spiritual motivation. A devout Christian, he gratefully and frequently credited God with all his blessings; he saw himself as a fulfillment of prophecy in this matter, as a literal instrument in God's hands; he was certain that he was God-inspired in his passionate quest for the westward route; and moreover, a major concern of his was to bring Christianity to the natives of the "Indies." Given this kind of spirit and his seafaring skills, and acknowledging his human weaknesses, Christopher Columbus seems to have been the kind of man the Lord could use for His purposes; and, indeed, modern Apostles and prophets quoted in this book affirm that he was that instrument.

This interpretation is borne out also by the story told here of his four voyages to the New World. Published in 1992, the five-hundredth anniversary year of the first and most famous of those voyages, this book brings potent reminders of the important role played by a bold and courageous man who was chosen and guided as an essential forerunner of the restoration of the gospel.



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