

# *The personality development of Christopher Columbus*

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*«He gained a world:  
he gave that world its greatest lesson:  
On! sail on!».*

## *Introduction*

At daybreak on October 12, 1492, a Genoese sea captain named Cristoforo Colombo and his crew disembarked from their ship, the *Santa María*. They rowed lifeboats ashore at Watlings Island, in the present-day Bahamas. The tall, redheaded captain trudged a few yards landward, then knelt down on the cool, soft sand. He thanked God for the safe arrival of his three ships. During a dramatic moment, he planted the royal standard of Spain in the earth, as members of his crew roared their approval.

This scene was the triumphant climax of a two month, 9 day voyage; preceded by six years of pleading, waiting, and dreaming by Columbus. By the time they reached land, Columbus' ninety men were exhausted, malnourished, and bordering on mutiny. Only his unrelenting determination, massive self-confidence and charismatic leadership convinced them to continue the sea-crossing that many of them believed would result in their deaths. This was one of the most important expeditions in the history of humankind. It started the exploration, conquest, and settlement of this newfound land. Columbus built the first European settlement in the New World on Haiti's north shore in Christmas day, 1492. He named the establishment Villa de la Navidad, and chose 38 men to remain there when he returned to Spain. The settlement was located near the present-day village of Limonade-de Borde-de Mer <sup>1</sup>.

Many books and articles have been written about the heroic voyages and discoveries of Christopher Columbus. However, none of them have sufficiently addressed the influences of his childhood environment; inclu-

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen A. DEAGAN, «Searching for Columbus' Lost Colony», *National Geographic*. Vol. 172, núm. 5, november 1987, pp. 672-675.

ding the Renaissance milieu, his family, religion and education, in the development of his personality. This work will consider the personality development of Christopher Columbus through the use of archival documents, his letters, the writings of his son, Fernando, and research by contemporary scholars.

### *The Renaissance Milieu*

Young Columbus lived in the midst of the Italian Renaissance. As the Renaissance advanced, kings and princes took over feudal lands and built strong national governments. Trade and commerce flourished. Many Italians moved from their farms to the growing towns and cities, and a new force-independent city states-arose. Genoa, Milan, Florence, Pisa and Venice became practically independent, and they were among the most populated cities in Europe. Great advances took place in scholarship and the arts. It was an age of adventure and curiosity, and everything that concerned man and his life on earth became relevant <sup>2</sup>.

During the fifteenth century, men began to place importance on humanism and individual achievement. There were great advances in techniques of painting, sculpture and architecture. Three important happenings aided the spread of learning-rulers and popes began to gather great libraries; scholars founded academies throughout Italy to study and translate ancient literature; and about 1440, Johannes Gutenberg of Germany invented movable type. Columbus was born between August 26 and October 30, 1451 in Genoa <sup>3</sup>.

Fifteenth-century Genoa had strong walls, grand patrician palaces, and churches built in black and white marble stripes. Some Genoese lived luxuriously. The Banca di San Giorgino; with its large possessions, mainly in Corsica; formed the most stable element in the state. Many Genoese were successful traders who bought and sold commodities in Aragon, Castile and Portugal. They also took part in ventures along the African coast and in the Atlantic isles <sup>4</sup>. Genoese shipping was completely in private

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<sup>2</sup> Luisa-PIERROTTI-CEI, *Life in Italy During the Renaissance*. (Barcelona, Spain, Liber, 1977); Hans BARON, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966); Denys HAY, *The Italian Renaissance in Its Historical Background*. (London, Cambridge University Press, 1961.)

<sup>3</sup> Archivio di Stato di Genova-Not. Gerolamo Ventimiglia, filza 2, núm. 266, 1479, agosto 25, Genova, Contrada Di San Siro, Nello Scagno Di Lodisio Centurione.

<sup>4</sup> Ennio POLEGGI & Paolo CEVINI, *Genova*. (Roma, Bari, Laterza, 1981); Peter LAVEN, *A Comprehensive History of Renaissance Italy, 1464-1534*. (New York, Capricorn Books, G. P. Putnam, 1967); Daniel WALEY, *The Italian City-Republics*. (New York, McGraw Hill, 1969.)

hands and therefore its direction was controlled by the immediate prospect of profits. Genoese seamen engaged in a thriving fishing industry, and exported coral and other items to the East. They also imported salt, oil, nuts, raisins and other commodities <sup>5</sup>.

Several events of great consequence to the Genoese occurred while Columbus resided in Liguria. In 1453, the Turks conquered Constantinople (Istanbul), including the Genoese colony of Pera. The shutting off of Venetian trade routes through the Mediterranean by the Turks forced Europeans to search for new routes to the East. Meanwhile, conflict took place in Genoa between the aristocracy and the upper middle class for political control of the city <sup>6</sup>.

When it became apparent to Pietro Campofregoso, the Doge (chief magistrate) of Genoa, that he could not win in his struggle against Alfonso <sup>7</sup> for political control of the city; in 1458 he transferred the overlordship of Genoa to Charles VII of France. But French suzerainty ended three years later. Then in 1464, factions in Genoa obtained the protection of Francesco Sforza, the Duke of Milan. Nevertheless, Genoa lost its flourishing colony of Caffa (Feodosiya) on the Black Sea to the Turks in 1475. Political instability, civic conflict and economic uncertainty were commonplace in Genoa when Columbus was living there <sup>8</sup>. Hence, the republic could not provide the intellectual and cultural inspiration necessary to spur him on to his great voyages of discovery.

Faced with environmental circumstances inimical to his self-actualization, Columbus seems to have turned to nature for solace. At the time, many Europeans began to demonstrate a renewed interest in nature. But Columbus alone of the explorers expressed a delight in observing natural objects-leaves, flowers, and birds <sup>9</sup>. In describing what he found on the island of Espanola, Columbus wrote:

«I was charmed by the beauty and luxuriant foliage of his river and its pellucid water... I was also taken by the multitude of palm trees of different kinds, the tallest and most beautiful I had yet seen, and by the infinite number of other large and ver-

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<sup>5</sup> Peter LAVEN, *Renaissance Italy, 1464-1534*. (London: B. T. Batsford, 1966), pp. 68-69; Richard EHRENBERG, *Capital & Finance in the Age of the Renaissance*. (London, Jonathan Cape, 1928), pp. 21-63.

<sup>6</sup> Paul COLES, «The Crisis of Renaissance Society Genoa: 1488-1507», *Past and Present*. April 1957, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Alfonso V. King of Aragon and Sicily, became king of Naples in 1443 after defeating Rene of Anjou. His splendid court at Naples was a center of arts and letters.

<sup>8</sup> Bella DUFFY, *The Tuscan Republics: Florence, Siena, Pisa, and Lucca with Genoa*. (New York, G. P. Putnam, 1903), pp. 315-323.

<sup>9</sup> J. R. HALE, *Renaissance Europe: Individual and Society, 1480-1520*. (Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1971), p. 47.

dant trees. The little birds and the verdure of the fields tempted me to stay there forever»<sup>10</sup>.

The beauty of the island of Fernandina also charmed Columbus, where he heard:

«The song of nightingales and other small birds, a song so sweet that the Admiral could not tear himself away»<sup>11</sup>.

Christian humanism also influenced Christopher Columbus. During the Renaissance, Christian humanists were theists, who turned their attention from heaven to study of God's creation and a delight in the world of man. They believed that man's special dignity resided in his ability to harmonize ancient wisdom and the teachings of Christ in a way that was **pleasing to God**<sup>12</sup>. During his third voyage, Columbus attempted to determine through the writings of Pliny, Ptolemy, Aristotle, and other classical writers; the Holy Scriptures; and his own astronomical and geographical observations; where the earthly paradise lay<sup>13</sup>.

Christian humanists believed that they could enjoy their human existence to the utmost, while still pursuing the goal of eternal salvation. The total impact of the Renaissance had made the comforts of life seem more important, and the economy and its needs achieved greater prominence. Columbus and other mariners were sent on long voyages primarily for economic reasons, but there was also a spirit of religious crusading in these enterprises. Columbus was well aware of the dual purpose of his missions. In a letter addressed to Lord Raphael Sanchez, Treasurer of Spain, Columbus wrote:

«I promise, that with a little assistance afforded me by our most invincible sovereigns, I will procure them as much gold as they need»<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Fernando COLON, *Historia del S. D. Fernando Colon, Nella quale s'ha particolare e vera relatione dell' Ammiraglio D. Cristoforo Colombo, suo padre, Nuovamente di lingua spanuola tradotte nell'Italiana dal S. Alfonso Ulloa*, Venice, 1571, capitolo 30, p. 74.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, Cap. 26, p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> Andre CHASTEL, *The Age of Humanism: Europe 1480-1530*. (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1963), pp. 105-123; Eugenio GARIN, *Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance*. (New York, Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 221-222.

<sup>13</sup> R. H. MAJOR, *Cristopher Columbus: Four Voyages to the New World, Letters and Selected Documents*. (New York, Corinth, 1962), pp. 133-146.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

In that same letter, he also stated:

«I conceive to be the principal wish of our most serene King, namely, the conversion of these people to the holy faith of Christ»<sup>15</sup>.

### *Proximity to the Sea*

Christopher Columbus' career as mariner was made possible by the nearness of his home to the sea. Genoa, a port city on the Ligurian coast, had a natural harbor of first rank, and Genoese ships traded throughout the Mediterranean region. Sailors and fisherman cruised about the sparkling blue sea. During fair weather, gentle breezes from the Mediterranean caressed great stretches of sandy beaches and colorful, fragrant plants. At a very early age, Columbus must have come into contact with seafarers and heard their tales of adventure. Around 1465, like many other boys of Genoa, Columbus began to learn how to use oars and sails<sup>16</sup>. He learned seamanship the old way, the hard way and the only way, in the school of experience.

During the time of Columbus, the life of a sailor on the Mediterranean was one of danger, daring and combat. Columbus could have learned to deal with the hazards, uncertainties and struggles of the voyage of 1492, through his experiences with the hazards, uncertainties and struggles of his early Mediterranean expeditions. What were maritime conditions like on the Mediterranean Sea in those days? Tarducci (1891), wrote that:

«The states along its coast, especially the Italian, were in perpetual warfare... Squadrons of privateers, armed at every point, roamed the sea in every direction... Every vessel had to be always prepared for war... and the least of the evils dreaded by the pilot, as he left port, were headwinds and furious storms. Terrible, above all, were the chase and attack, on both sides, by Christians and Mussulmans... In that rough school Christopher Columbus got his growth and education»<sup>17</sup>.

Columbus' first documented naval expedition occurred between October 1470 and March 1472, with John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria. The Duke had hoped to recover Naples for his father, King Reinier (Renato). The republic of Genoa decided to aid the Duke with ships and money. During the unsuccessful struggle, Columbus sailed on a dangerous mis-

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> COLON, *Historia del S. D. Fernando Colombo...*, *op. cit.*, cap. 4, pp. 10-12.

<sup>17</sup> Francesco TARDUCCI, *The Life of Christopher Columbus*. Vol. I. (Detroit, H. F. Brownson, 1891), p. 46.

sion to capture the galley, *Fernandina*, from the harbor of Tunis<sup>18</sup>. During Columbus' next recorded voyage, he sailed aboard the Genoese ship, *Roxana*, in 1474. This expedition attempted to help the trading factory of Genoa on Chios to defend itself against the Turks. Chios (Khios) is an island located off west coast of Turkey. Columbus may have made another sea trip to the island during the following year. He undoubtedly took part in other Mediterranean excursions, and thereby gained invaluable experience in seamanship.

Then in May 1476, Columbus took part in a fateful voyage. He joined an armed convoy organized by Genoese officials, for the purpose of transporting valuable cargo to Lisbon, England and Flanders. Columbus sailed aboard the Flemish vessel, *Bechalla*, as foremast after it had passed the Strait of Gibraltar, just off the southern coast of Portugal. During the fighting, cannonballs struck the *Bechalla*, and the ship slowly sank into the icy waters. Columbus managed to reach shore, over six miles distant, by grasping onto a piece of floating wreckage<sup>19</sup>.

### *The Influence of His Family*

Columbus' boyhood was rather commonplace for the time in which he lived. He was the son and grandson of weavers who had lived in various towns of the Genoese Republic for at least three generations. Giovanni Colombo, Christopher's paternal grandfather, earned a living by weaving woolen cloth in the village of Moconesi. The village was located in the Fontanabuona valley above Chiavari, a seaport about twenty miles east of Genoa<sup>20</sup>. His son, Domenico Colombo, had completed an apprenticeship and become a master weaver by September, 1440. Domenico rented a house just inside the Porta dell'Olivella—the eastern gate of Genoa. About 1445, he married Susanna Fontanarossa, the daughter of a weaver who lived in the valley of the Bisagno River, near the Olivella gate. She brought Domenico a small dowry<sup>21</sup>.

As a youth, Christopher appears to have been very involved with his family. He helped his father at the loom, and the influence of his father

<sup>18</sup> Salvador de MADARIAGA, *Vida del muy magnífico señor don Cristóbal Colón*. (Buenos Aires, Editorial Sudamericana, 1942), pp. 25-53.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel ELIOT MORISON, *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages, A. D. 1492-1616*. (New York, Oxford, 1974), p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Archivio di Stato di Genova-Not. Quilico Albenga, filza unica, núm. 68, 1429, Febbraio 21, Genova, Borgo Di Santo Stefano.

<sup>21</sup> Archivio di Stato di Genova-Not. Benedetto Peloso, filza 1, núm. 96, 1439, Aprile 1, Genova, Presso La Porta Del Palazzo Ducale; Archivio di Stato di Genova-Pandetta Notariorum Combustorum, c. 118 r. 1440, Settembre 6, Genova, Nel Parlatorio Del Monastero Di Santo Stefano.

might account in part for the constructive direction of his life. Domenico Colombo was a moderately successful businessman, who owned one or more looms, bought his own wool, sold the finished cloth, and taught apprentices their trade. He moved his family to a house with a courtyard and a garden, near the Porta Sant'Andrea in 1455. Early in 1470 his gild placed Domenico on a committee to examine the rules and regulations for master clothiers in Savona, with a view to adopting them in Genoa. Commercial opportunities were better there. By March 1st, he had moved his wife, children and business establishment to Savona, where he also sold wines<sup>22</sup>.

Domenico Colombo seems to have been an optimistic, popular and plausible man. He appears to have been a confident person with ability and common sense, who was able to inspire his children to aim for success. He encouraged Christopher to work hard to develop his own talents. Susanna seems to have been a serious, practical, retiring person, who was dedicated to the welfare of her family. In three notarized deeds that mention her, she is always in legal agreement with her husband's wishes. She also endorsed Domenico's handling of her dowry, against her brother's demands. There was, at least on the surface, a sufficiently harmonious relationship between Domenico and Susanna to ensure that family affairs ran smoothly<sup>23</sup>.

Christopher was the eldest of Domenico and Susanna's surviving children. The principle of primogeniture<sup>24</sup>, popular in Genoa during the fifteenth century, favored him. Since Christopher was the eldest son, he had the right of inheritance of the entire family estate<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, he could feel more privileged and financially secure than his less fortunate brothers and sister. There was a brother named Giovanni who died as a young man, and his sister named Bianchinetta about whom very little is known. Christopher had close affectionate relationships with his other two brothers. He planned the great voyage of discovery with his next eldest brother, Bartolomeo (Bartholemew), who became his right-hand man in all of his enterprises. The youngest brother, Giacomo (Diego), assisted in the governance of Hispanola. After ascertaining that Giacomo was inept as a

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<sup>22</sup> Archivio di Stato di Savona-Not. Giovanni Gallo, cartolare 408-11, c. 42 v. 1470, Marzo 2, Savona, Nel Palazzo Delle Cause; Archivio di Stato di Genova-Notai Giacomo e Giovanni Calvi, filza 2, núm. 373, 1470, Settembre 28, Genova, In Banchi, Sotto Il Porticato dei Dinegro.

<sup>23</sup> Henry HARRISSEE, *Christophe Colomb*. (Paris, Tross, 1884), pp. 4-20.

<sup>24</sup> The custom of primogeniture became established during the thirteenth century, to prevent the division of estates into increasingly smaller and less valuable parcels of land.

<sup>25</sup> Philippe ARIES, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 369-373.

seamen and a colonist, Christopher helped him to obtain holy orders<sup>26</sup>. Christopher and Bartolomeo named their new capital, Santo Domingo, after the patron saint of their father.

### *The Influence of the Catholic Church*

During the time of Columbus, virtually all Genoese were Roman Catholics, and religion was one of the main integrating forces of their society. The Reformation did not begin in earnest until after the death of Columbus, and therefore it had no important impact upon him. There was no separation of church and state in fifteenth century Genoa, and religious leaders sometimes became doge of the city. In 1462 and 1463, Archbishop Paolo Campofregoso, became the chief magistrate<sup>27</sup>. Columbus was born in the parish of San Stefano<sup>28</sup>; and, it is likely that he and his family attended Church services there.

The Catholic Church, with its emphases on hierarchy, the seven sacraments, and relatively elaborate rituals, impressed Columbus. He seems to have been especially inspired by the Catholic doctrine of salvation by merit gained through faith. Columbus regarded his enterprise to find a short sea route to the Indies as a sacred mission. Therefore, he believed that he must succeed:

«These great and marvellous results are not to be attributed to any merit of mine, but to the holy Christian faith», he wrote<sup>29</sup>.

He daily read the Divine Office, observed all church festivals, cultivated the company of ecclesiastics, headed every letter with a little cross, and often concluded with the prayer:

«Jesus and Mary-Be with us on our way»<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Palazzo Comunale di Genova-Cassaforte della sala del Sindaco, già nell'Archivio del Banco di San Giorgio, filza delle Apodisie di Antonio Gallo, anno 1502. Aprile 2, Siviglia; Archivio di Stato di Genova-Archivio di San Giorgio, Litterarum Officii Sancti Georgii, 1499-1503, pp. 127 e 128, del Cancelliere Antonio Gallo. 1502, Dicembre 8, Genova.

<sup>27</sup> Paolo Emilio TAVIANI, *Christopher Columbus: The Grand Design*. (London, Orbis, 1985), pp. 38-43.

<sup>28</sup> Richard DAVEY, «The Boyhood and Youth of Columbus», *The National Review* (London). October 1892, p. 216. A parish is a district that has its own church and clergyman. For centuries a «Christian community» meant a small area in which a group of people lived and did nearly everything together, including prayer and worship. Catholic traditions and laws concerning parishes developed in such situations.

<sup>29</sup> MAJOR, *Christopher Columbus: Four Voyages to the New World, Letters and Selected Documents*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> MORISON, *The European discovery of America: The Southern Voyages, A. D. 1492-1616*, op. cit., pp. 52-53.



Confident of being the instrument of God, Columbus met the hardships at sea with: «faith in the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen»<sup>31</sup>.

In a letter written aboard the *Nina*, on February 15, 1493, to Santangel; which was forwarded to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Columbus referred to his divinely inspired calling.

«I know that you will take pleasure at the great victory with which Our Lord has crowned my voyage,... the eternal God, Our Lord, Who gives to all those who walk Christendom ought to feel joyful and make great celebrations and give solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity... since not only Spain but all Christians will hence have refreshment and profit»<sup>32</sup>. Columbus wrote.

### *His Educational Experiences*

Young Christopher Columbus did not receive much formal education. In his time, most children learned what was necessary in their kinship units, in elementary schools operated by guilds, and through observations and apprenticeships. Irving (1828), erroneously concluded from the writings of Columbus's son, Fernando Colombo, that young Christopher:

«Was sent to the university of Pavia, where he studied geometry, geography, astronomy and navigation»<sup>33</sup>.

Landstrom (1966), examined the records of the University, and found that Columbus «is not included in the rolls of students»<sup>34</sup>, there. Tarducci (1891), also disclaimed the myth of Columbus' university education, which he attributed to an exaggeration by Fernando<sup>35</sup>. Studies by Morison (1942), show that «He (Columbus) had very little formal schooling,... and he never learned to read write until he went to Portugal»<sup>36</sup>.

However, Fernando never actually claimed that his father attended the university of Pavia. In his *Historie*, he merely stated «Dico adunque,

<sup>31</sup> The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, XI, i.

<sup>32</sup> «Columbus' Letter to Santangel», February 15, 1493, on board the *Nina*, first illustrated Latin Edition (Basle, 1493), courtesy of the New York Public Library, Rare Books & MSS Div., MSS 303, New York, N. Y.

<sup>33</sup> Washington IRVING, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. Vol. I. (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1828), p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Björn LANDSTROM, *Columbus*. (New York, Macmillan, 1966), p. 23.

<sup>35</sup> TARDUCCI, *The Life of Christopher Columbus*, Vol. I, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel ELIOT MORISON, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: The Life of Christopher Columbus*. Vol. I. (Boston, Little, Brown & Company, 1942), pp. 7-13.

che nella fua picciola eta imparo lettere, & stutio in Pavia tanto, che gli bastaua per intendere i cosmografi,... ancora si diede all'Astrologia, & alla Geometria»<sup>37</sup>. (I say therefore, that in his youth he learned letters and studied in Pavia enough to understand cosmography,... he also studied astrology and geometry). The Pavia of which Fernando wrote, was probably an elementary school established by Genoese weavers for their sons at the Vicolo di Pavia, in the quarter of St. Stephen. Genoese schools customarily taught the rudiments of seamanship in addition to academic subjects to all pupils, regardless of their professional ambitions<sup>38</sup>.

While in Portugal, Columbus was among people who could teach him Portuguese, Castilian, Latin, and mathematics and astronomy for celestial navigation. After learning to read and write, he studied the works of ancient and medieval cosmographers; such as Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, and Marco Polo's travels. He also acquired additional experience in seamanship. Columbus became preoccupied with the goal of finding a short sea route to the Indies. He received encouragement for this idea by corresponding with Paolo Toscanelli, a learned man of Florence. Toscanelli believed that Japan lay only 3,000 miles west of Lisbon.

Columbus made commercial voyages for Genoese merchants with business establishments in Lisbon between July 1478 and August 1479. He sailed to the Portuguese colony of Madeira during this period, and also returned to Genoa for a short visit on August 25, 1479<sup>39</sup>. Genoese families acquired extensive sugar plantations in the Madeira Islands between 1480 and 1503<sup>40</sup>. Columbus married a Portuguese lady named Felipa de Perestrello. Christopher and Felipa lived in Madeira, but Felipa died shortly after the birth of their only child, whom they named Diego.

Columbus and his son moved to Spain in 1485. Christopher continued to read books about cosmology which he found in Spanish libraries and monasteries. Then he met Friar Antonio de Marchena, who became his loyal supporter. Marchena introduced the Italian navigator to Queen Isabella. In his journals, letters and writings, Columbus demonstrated a remarkable familiarity with Holy Scripture; the works of Aristotle, Seneca, Ptolemy; Ahmed-Ben-Kothair, the Arabic astronomer; Isidorus, the Spanish chronicler; Duns Scotus, a British philosopher; Wolfridus Stra-

<sup>37</sup> COLON, *Historia del S. D. Fernando Colombo...*, op. cit., cap. 3, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> John BOYD THACHER, *Christopher Columbus: His Life, His Work, His Remains*. Vol. I. (New York, AMS, 1967), p. 288; TAVIANI, *Christopher Columbus: The Grand Design*, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> Archivio di Stato di Genova-Not. Gerolamo Ventimiglia, filza 2, núm. 266, 1479, Agosto 25, Genova, Contrada Di San Siro, Nello Scagno Di Lodisio Centurione.

<sup>40</sup> COLES, «The Crisis of Renaissance Society Genoa: 1488-1507», op. cit., p. 19.

bo, the German geographer; Joachim of Calabria, and many other ancient, medieval and Renaissance writers <sup>41</sup>.

### *The Personality of Columbus*

What traits did Christopher Columbus exhibit in adulthood? The biographer who knew him best-his son, Fernando Colombo, described him as «affable in conversation with strangers and very pleasant to the members of his household, though with a certain gravity. In eating and drinking, and in the adornment of his person, he was very moderate and modest. He was so strict in matters of religion that for fasting and saying prayers he might have been taken for a member of a religious order. He was... an enemy of swearing and blasphemy <sup>42</sup>... he behaved very honorably... and... never turned from the path of honesty <sup>43</sup>. He was a man of wisdom, courage, and foresight» <sup>44</sup>.

Research by Taviani (1986), demonstrates that Columbus «stood aside... two ages: his theoretical approach to philosophy, theology, and... scientific concepts were medieval. His eagerness for scientific investigation and keen interest in nature as well as his capacity for accepting facts and phenomena so far unknown were peculiar of the Renaissance» <sup>45</sup>. According to Taviani's findings, Columbus «was a Christian and a Catholic in the modern sense, influenced by medieval teachings»... <sup>46</sup> He was «a generous, self-taught geographer, and a great sailor» <sup>47</sup>

Taviani's studies show that Columbus «was strong-willed, tenacious and almost mulish... He was courageous, patient, imaginative and possessed of an excellent memory. In the decisive moments of his countless adventures, he nearly always managed to mould his intuitions and manifold qualities into effective action... <sup>48</sup> However, Columbus was not without shortcomings. «He lacked the two qualities that make a man into a true politician: the capacity to make firm decisions for the long run and a profound psychological knowledge of his fellows, which is indispensable for

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<sup>41</sup> MAJOR, *Christopher Columbus: Four Voyages to the New World, Letters and Selected Documents*, op. cit., pp. 139-142; THACHER, *Christopher Columbus: His Life, His Work, His Remains*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 288.

<sup>42</sup> COLON, *Historia del S. D. Fernando Colombo...*, op. cit., cap.3, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, cap.5, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, cap. 14, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> Paolo Emilio TAVIANI, «Columbus The Man: A Psychologically Modern Man of the Middle Ages», in Donald T. GERACE (et al.), *Columbus And His World* (Fort Lauderdale, CCFL Bahamian Field Station, 1987), p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

appointing the right man to the right position»<sup>49</sup>. Columbus possessed a high achievement motivation and a powerful goal-directed will, developed out of hope, expectation and competence. He was obviously a man of great vitality, who was self-taught and enjoyed learning. Columbus was also self-reliant and confident. But as a man of one idea, and that a radical one, he was regarded as tiresome by most people, and he was shunned by many. He died in poverty in Valladolid, Spain, on May 20, 1506-almost forgotten.

### *Conclusion*

The personality development of Christopher Columbus was influenced by the Renaissance milieu, his family life, the Catholic Church, the proximity of his home to the sea, and by opportunities for study afforded to him while he lived in Portugal and Spain. It is impossible to determine what internal factors influenced his development, although he was obviously an intelligent, strong-willed man, with a high achievement motivation. Perhaps his unusual need to achieve was influenced by parents who set high standards and who gave him warm and generous encouragement. Columbus regarded his enterprise to find a short sea route to the Indies as a sacred mission. Therefore, he must succeed. He demonstrated great moral and physical courage when faced with mutinous sailors, armed rebels, savage Indians, and terrible storms at sea.

Columbus made important discoveries during his four voyages to the Western Hemisphere. The eminent historian, Samuel Eliot Morison, wrote that the first sea-crossing of Columbus was «The most important voyage of discovery in all history»<sup>50</sup>. According to Morison: «A glance at the map of the Caribbean may remind you of what he accomplished: discovery of the Bahamas, Cuba, and Hispaniola on the First Voyage; discovery of the Lesser Antilles, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and the south coast of Cuba on his Second, as well as founding a permanent European colony; discovery of Trinidad and the Spanish Main, on his Third; and on the Fourth Voyage, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia. No navigator in history... discovered so much territory... None other started so many things from which stem the history of the United States, of Canada, and of a score of American republics»<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel ELIOT MORISON, *The Oxford History of the American People*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 26.

<sup>51</sup> MORISON, *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages, A. D. 1492-1616*, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

Christopher Columbus achieved greatness—a greatness based upon the excess amount of his contributions to society in relation to the amount of his gains from society. A eulogy written about Marcus Brutus: by William Shakespeare in his play, *Julius Caesar*, applies to Columbus: «His life was gentle, and the elements So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up And say to all the world "this was a man!"»<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> William SHAKESPEARE, *Julius Caesar*, Act V, scene 5.