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Garcillasso De La Vega

Excerpt

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THE FIRST BOOK
OF THE
ROYAL COMMENTARIES OF THE YNCAS,
WHICH TREATS OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE NEW WORLD, THE
DERIVATION OF THE WORD PERU, THE IDOLATRY AND
CUSTOMS OF THE INDIANS IN FORMER TIMES,
THEIR ORIGIN, THE LIFE OF THE FIRST
YNCA, WHAT HE DID WITH HIS FIRST
VASSALS, AND THE MEANING OF
THE ROYAL TITLES.
IT CONTAINS TWENTY-SIX CHAPTERS.

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THE FIRST BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

WHETHER THERE ARE MANY WORLDS: ALSO TREATING
OF THE FIVE ZONES.

HAVING to treat of the New World, or of the best and most important parts of it, which are the kingdoms and provinces of the empire called Peru, of whose antiquities and of the origin of whose kings we intend to write; it seems proper, and in conformity with the usual custom of authors, to treat here, at the beginning, of the question whether there is one world or many, if it is flat or round, and also whether heaven is flat or round, whether the whole earth is habitable or only the temperate zones, whether there is a way from one temperate zone to the other, whether there are antipodes, and other like matters. The ancient philosophers treated very largely and curiously on these subjects, and the moderns do not fail to argue and write on them, each following the opinion which best pleases him. But as this is not my chief subject, as the powers of an Indian cannot enable him to presume so far, and as experience, since the discovery of what they call the New World, has undeceived us touching most of these doubts, we will pass over them briefly, in order to go on to the other part of my subject, the conclusion of which I am fearful lest I should not reach. I may affirm, however, trusting in the infinite mercy, that, in the first place, there is only one world; and though we speak of the Old World and the New World, this is because the latter was lately discovered by us, and not because

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there are two, but one only. And to those who still imagine that there are many worlds, there is no answer to be given except that they can remain in their heretical persuasions until they are undeceived in hell. Those who doubt, if there be any such, whether the world is flat or round, may be convinced by the testimony of men who have gone round it, or round the greater part, as those belonging to the ship *Victoria*,* and others. Respecting the heavens,

* The *Victoria* of 90 tons and 45 men was one of the five vessels which formed the squadron commanded by Magalhanes. She sailed, with her consorts, from San Lucar, on September 20th, 1519, on the memorable expedition to discover a way to the Spice Islands by the South Sea. The *Victoria* returned to San Lucar on the 6th of September, 1522, and was thus the first ship that ever circumnavigated the globe. She brought home a cargo of 533 quintals of cloves, cinnamon, nutmegs, and sandal wood. Magalhanes had been killed, in the previous year, at Zebu; but Sebastian del Cano, the pilot who brought home the *Victoria*, received from Charles V a pension of 500 ducats; a coat of arms charged with branches of clove, cinnamon, and nutmeg trees; a globe for a crest; and the motto *Primus circumdediste me*. The *Victoria* afterwards made a voyage to Santo Domingo, in the West Indies; returned safely; made a second voyage to the West Indies; sailed on her return to Spain, but never arrived, "so that it is not known what became of her, or of those who went in her."

The men who formed the crew of the *Victoria*, and to whose testimony, that the world is round, our author appeals in the text, were:—

1. Juan Sebastian del Cano (Capt ⁿ)	16. Juan de Acurio (Mariner)
2. Miguel de Rodas (Master)	18. Lorenzo de Yruña "
3. Martin de Insaurraga (Pilot)	19. Juan de Ortega "
4. Miguel de Rodas (Mariner)	20. Pedro de Indarchi "
5. Nicolas Griego "	21. Ruger Carpentete "
6. Juan Rodriguez "	22. Pedro Gasco "
7. Basco Gallego "	23. Alfonso Domingo "
8. Martin de Judicibus "	24. Diego Garcia "
9. Juan de Santander "	25. Pedro de Balpueta "
10. Hernando de Bustamante "	26. Ximeno de Burgos "
11. ANTONIO PIGAFETTA "	27. Juan Martin "
12. Francisco Rodriguez "	28. Martin de Magallanes "
13. Antonio Fernandez "	29. Francisco Alvo "
14. Diego Gallego "	30. Roldan de Argote "
15. Juan de Arratia "	31. Juan de Apega "

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whether they be flat or round, a reply may be given in the words of the Royal Prophet—*Extendens cœlum sicut pellem*, in which he desires us to see the form and method of the work, giving one as a similitude of the other, and saying:—that the heavens should be spread out like a skin; that is, that they should cover this great body of the four elements, even as a skin should cover the body of an animal, not only the main body but all its parts, how small soever they may be. As to those who affirm that the five parts of the world, which they call zones, are uninhabitable excepting the two that are temperate: that the central one, from its extreme heat, and the two end ones, from the great cold, are uninhabitable; and that it is impossible to pass from one temperate zone to the other, owing to the extreme heat between them; I am able to assure such persons that I was born in the torrid zone, that is in Cuzco, and was brought up in it until my twentieth year, and that I have been myself in the other temperate zone, on the other side of the tropic of Capricorn, to the south, at the extreme end of Charcas, where the Chichas live. I also passed through the torrid zone to come to this other temperate zone where I am now writing, and was three complete days under the equinoctial line, near the Cape of Pasau.* I therefore affirm that the torrid zone is habitable, as well as the temperate zones. I wish I could speak of the cold zones as an eye-witness, as I can of the other three; but I must hand them over to those who know more about them than I do. I would reply to those who say that, owing to their extreme cold they are uninhabitable, that they also may be lived in, like the rest. For it cannot reasonably be imagined that God should have made so large

In 1847 the Council of the Hakluyt Society approved of the drawing of the ship *Victoria* taken from Hulsius, and compared with that given by Amoretti in his edition of Pigafetta's voyage of Magalhanes, as a vignette; and this famous ship has ever since embellished the covers of all the volumes printed for the Hakluyt Society.

* Cape Passaos is in latitude 0° 20' S.

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a part of the world useless, after creating all to be inhabited by man ; and it may be supposed that the ancients were deceived in what they said about the cold zones, as they were about the torrid zone. It ought rather to be believed that the Lord, as a wise and powerful Father, and Nature, as a pious and universal Mother, have remedied the extreme cold by temperate warmth, just as they have tempered the heat of the torrid zone with so much snow, and so many fountains, rivers, and lakes as are found in Peru. That country is varied by many changes of temperature, some parts become hotter and hotter until those regions are reached which are so low and so hot as to be almost uninhabitable, as the ancients said. Other regions get colder and colder until such a height is reached that that land also becomes uninhabitable, owing to the cold of perpetual snow. This is contrary to what the philosophers said of the torrid zone, for they never imagined that it was possible to have perpetual snow under the equinoctial line, without melting at all, at least on the great Cordillera, whatever it may do on the slopes and ravines. It must, therefore, be understood, that in the torrid zone, within the region over which Peru extends, heat and cold does not consist in proximity to, or distance from, the equinoctial ; but in the height or lowness of the land, and the difference is seen on a very short distance, as I shall relate more at length, presently. I say, then, that this would lead to the belief that the cold zones are temperate and habitable, as many grave authors hold, though not from personal knowledge or experience. But it is sufficient that God himself has given us to understand as much ; for when he created man he said, “ Increase and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it.”* From this we may know that it is habitable ; for if it were not, it could not be subdued, nor filled with inhabitants. I trust in His Omnipotence that, in His own time, He will disclose

* Genesis i, 27.

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these secrets (as He disclosed the New World)* for the great confusion and dismay of those audacious ones who, with their natural philosophies and human understanding, desire to measure the power and wisdom of God, as if He could not perform His works in a way which they cannot imagine, there being as much disparity between one intelligence and the other, as there is between the finite and the infinite.

CHAPTER II.

WHETHER THERE ARE ANTIPODES.

To the question whether there are Antipodes or not, it may be replied that, the world being round (as is notorious), it is certain that there are. But for my part I hold that, the lower part of this world not having been completely discovered, it cannot certainly be known what provinces are the antipodes of those on this side, as some affirm. This may be said more truly of the heavens than of the earth; for the poles are opposite each other, and so are the east and west, at any point on the equinoctial.† Nor can it be cer-

* This advocacy of an expedition to explore the unknown Polar regions does infinite credit to the Ynca.

† Most of the old writers on America considered it *de rigueur* to commence their books, on what subject soever they might treat, with a dissertation on the shape of the earth, on the question whether there be antipodes, or on the peopling of the different continents. Father Acosta devotes two chapters to the antipodes, one to disprove the idea of Lactantius that there are no antipodes, and the other to explain away a similar heresy on the part of St. Augustine. Lactantius derided the idea of men being able to stand on their heads; while the objection of St. Augustine merely rested on the vastness of the ocean, and on the very natural belief that it could not be crossed, a belief which he shared with Gregory Nazianzen, and other writers. *Historia natural y moral de las Indias compuesta por el Padre Joseph de Acosta*, lib. i, cap. 7 and 8, Madrid, 1608.

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tainly known whence so many tribes of such different languages and customs, as are found in the New World, can have come from. For if it be said that they came by the sea in ships, there arise difficulties touching the animals that are found in the New World, for how and in what manner could they have been embarked, some of them being more noxious than useful. If it be supposed that they came by land, still greater difficulties arise; for if the domesticated animals of the Old World were brought that way, how is it that others were not brought which have since been conveyed to the New World? If it be that they could not bring so many, how is it that they did not leave behind some of those that are met with? The same may be said of the corn, pulses, and fruit, which are so different from those of the Old World, that with reason they named this a New World. For it is so in all things, as well as regards the tame and wild animals and the food, as the men, who are generally beardless. Therefore, in a matter of such uncertainty, the trouble that is taken to solve it is wasted; so I will leave it alone, especially as I possess less competence than another to inquire into it. I shall only treat of the origin of the Kings Yncas, and of their succession, conquests, laws, and government in peace and war; but before we enter upon these subjects, it will be well that we should say how this New World was discovered, and presently we will discourse more particularly of Peru.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE NEW WORLD WAS DISCOVERED.

Near the year 1484, one year more or less, a pilot, native of the town of Huelva,* in the county of Niebla,† named

* A seaport of Andalusia, close to Palos, whence Columbus sailed on his first voyage to America. It will be remembered that when Columbus, on his arrival in Spain, asked for charity at the door of the convent of

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Alonzo Sanchez de Huelva, had a small ship, with which he traded on the sea, and brought certain merchandise from Spain to the Canaries, where he sold it profitably. And in the Canaries he loaded his ship with the fruits of those islands, and took them to the island of Madeira, and thence he returned to Spain, laden with sugar and conserves. While he was engaged in this triangular voyage, on the passage from the Canaries to Madeira, he encountered so heavy a squall that he was obliged to run before it for twenty-eight or twenty-nine days, during the whole of which time he could not take an altitude, either for his latitude or his course. The crew of the ship suffered the greatest hardships in the storm; for they could neither eat nor sleep. At the end of this long time the wind went down, and they found themselves near an island. It is not known for certain what island it was, though it is supposed to have been the island which is now called St. Domingo. It is very worthy of note that the wind which drove that ship with so much fury and violence could not have been other than the *Solano*, as the east wind is called; for the island of St. Domingo is to the westward of the Canaries, and the wind in that quarter usually appeases rather than raises a storm. But the Almighty Lord, when he wishes to show his mercy, takes the most mysterious things for their opposites: thus he took water from a rock, and sight for the blind from the mud placed in his eyes, in order that these works might the more evidently show the Divine mercy and goodness. He also displayed his piety in sending his Evangelist and true light over the whole of the New World, which was in so much need of it. For the people were living, or rather Rabida, near Palos, he was on his way to the neighbouring town of Huelva, to seek his brother-in-law.

+ Niebla is a town of Andalusia, on the river Tinto, not far from Huelva. Don Juan Alonzo de Guzman was created Count of Niebla by Henry II in 1371; and this title was always assumed by the eldest sons of his descendants the Dukes of Medina Sidonia.

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perishing, in the darkness of a heathenism and idolatry most barbarous and bestial, as we shall see in the course of this history.

The pilot went on shore, took an altitude, and wrote down all the particulars of what he saw, and what happened at sea, both going and coming. Having taken in wood and water, he returned in much doubt, without knowing the direction he should take, and he lost much time. Owing to the length of the voyage, the failure of water and provisions, and the great hardships they had suffered, many of the crew began to fall sick and die, insomuch that, out of seventeen men who sailed from Spain, only five reached Terceira, among whom was the pilot Alonzo Sanchez de Huelva. They went to the house of the famous Genoese, Christoval Colon, the great Pilot and Cosmographer, who constructed sea cards. Colon received them with much kindness, and was glad to learn all that had happened in so strange and long a voyage as that which they said they had undergone. But they arrived so shattered by their past hardships that, in spite of the attentions of Christoval Colon, he could not restore them to health, and they all died in his house, leaving him heir to the work which had caused their death. The great Colon accepted the work with zeal and vigour, having suffered even greater hardships himself (for they lasted longer), and he started on the enterprise of giving a New World and its riches to Spain, as was blazoned on his arms, saying,—

To Castilla and to Leon
A New World has given Colon.

Whosoever wishes to learn the great deeds of this worthy, should read the General History of the Indies which Francisco Lopez de Gomara wrote; for this same work of the conquest and discovery is the one which gives most praise and renown to the most famous amongst famous men. I

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have only added this, because it was wanting in the narrative of that ancient historian, who wrote at a distance from the places where the events took place, receiving tidings from those who came and went, who related many things that happened, but imperfectly. But I heard them in my country from my father and his contemporaries; for in those days their most common conversation was concerning the notable events which happened in their conquests. On these occasions they related what I have said, and other things that I shall recount presently; for, as they had met many of the first discoverers and conquerors of the New World, they heard from them the full account of these events; and I, as I have said, though but a boy, heard them from my elders. Thus the slight attention I then gave to them, will enable me now to write concerning many events of great importance, which relate to this history. I shall say all that I have retained in my memory, with sorrow for that which I have forgotten. The very Reverend Father José de Acosta also relates this history of the discovery of the New World, with regret that he cannot give it complete; for his paternity also wanted a portion of the narrative, like some more modern authors, the ancient conquerors had already passed away when his paternity visited these parts; concerning whom he says these words in his first book and nineteenth chapter:—

“ Having shown that there is no ground for thinking that the first inhabitants of the Indies have reached them by navigation undertaken for that end, it follows that, if they came by sea, it must have been by chance, and by the force of tempests, that they arrived at the Indies; and this, notwithstanding the vastness of the ocean, is not incredible. For the same thing happened in the discovery of our own time, when that mariner (whose name even is unknown to us, that so great a business may not be attributed to any other author but God) having, by reason of a terrible and long continued storm, reached the New World, left as pay-