

cked practices, they were persuaded that it was the work of our God through our
ans, and that we by him might kill and slay whom we would without weapons and
t come near them. [...]

This marvelous accident in all the country wrought so strange opinions of us, that
me people could not tell whether to think us gods or men, and the rather because that
the space of their sickness, there was no man of ours known to die or that was spe-
lly sick. They noted also that we had no women amongst us [and] neither did we care
any of theirs.

Some therefore were of the opinion that we were not born of women, and therefore
ot mortal, but that we were men of an old generation many years past then risen again
immortality.

Some would likewise seem to prophesy that there were more of our generation yet to
me, to kill theirs and take their places, as some thought the purpose was by that
nich was already done.

Those that were immediately to come after us they imagined to be in the air, yet in-
sible and without bodies, and that they by our entreaty and for the love of us did make
e people to die in that sort as they did by shooting invisible bullets into them.

To confirm this opinion, their physicians to excuse their ignorance in curing the dis-
ise, would not be ashamed to say—but [would] earnestly make the simple people
elieve—that the strings of blood that they sucked out of the sick bodies were the
rings wherewithal the invisible bullets were tied and cast.

Christopher Columbus 1451–1506

Between 1492 and 1502, Christopher Columbus, convinced that the world was much
smaller than it is and that the Orient could be easily reached by sailing west, made four
voyages to the New World. On the first journey, on October 12, 1492, he discovered
the island of San Salvador, and from there he went on to find the Bahamas, Cuba, and
Haiti (he named the island Hispaniola). Though he discovered none of the riches that
Marco Polo had spoken about so glowingly, he nevertheless returned to Spain
confident that he had indeed reached the East. He was so certain that he had found the
Indies that he named the people of the islands “Indians.”

During the voyage, Columbus kept a daily journal that, like so many other original
documents of these expeditions, is now lost. Our information concerning the first
voyage comes from an abstract made of Columbus’s journal by the Spanish historian
Bartolomé de Las Casas. The abstract puts Columbus’s observations into the third
person, except when Las Casas thought the admiral’s words should be left intact (these
are noted by quotation marks). Otherwise, the abstract appears to retain all the
essential facts of the journey.

Columbus set out on his second voyage in September 1493. Though he discovered
Puerto Rico, Jamaica, parts of Cuba, the Virgin Islands, and the Lesser Antilles, the
expedition proved to be a financial disaster: still no gold or silver, still no fabulous
cities. Of this voyage there is neither a journal nor an abstract. An aristocratic friend of
Columbus’s, however, accompanied him on the expedition and left an informal
account. Michele de Cuneo’s record of the journey shows how quickly relations
between the Europeans and the natives deteriorated. His cold-blooded narrative of the
skirmish in which Columbus’s crew surprised a band of Carib men and women near
St. Croix represents the first documented battle between the Old World and the New.
It prefigures the many disastrous encounters that would occur between the two worlds
for centuries.

On the third voyage, which departed in May 1498, Columbus discovered Trinidad
and the Spanish Main and came very close to finding the Amazon. He set foot on the
South American continent, but, believing it an island, sailed up to Cuba, which he
ironically thought must be the mainland, the gateway to the land of the Great Khan.
While sailing in the Gulf of Paria, off the coast of Venezuela, Columbus formed a
fantastic theory, which he set out in his journals and in a formal letter to the queen and
king of Spain. He imagined that the earth was not perfectly round but rather pear-
shaped and that he had approached its highest point. Here was to be found the original
Garden of Eden, the “Terrestrial Paradise.”

A great navigator but a poor administrator, Columbus was eventually relieved of his
governorship in the New World. He had not found riches, nor had he been able to
establish a peaceful, successful colony. Arrested by a special delegation, Columbus was
returned to Spain in chains. Frustrated, his mind turning more and more to visionary
goals, he immersed himself in the prophetic books of the Bible and attempted to prove
to the Crown that Spain was destined to liberate Jerusalem from Islam. To provide the

finances for this religious goal, Columbus made yet another voyage to the New World, this time searching for a passage through the newly discovered islands. On this journey, though he discovered Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia, he never found the illusory passage (none would exist until the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914). Throughout the trip, Columbus encountered fierce storms, smashed vessels, mutiny, and madness. He spent an entire year marooned in a small cove off Jamaica; physically ill and profoundly disillusioned, he dreamed of Cathay and recorded the voices he heard from heaven. He miraculously made it back to Spain in November 1504, and for the remaining year and a half of his life wrote report after report insisting on his great accomplishment—his discovery that the Malay peninsula could be reached by sailing west. He died never realizing the magnificence of what he actually did find.

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Text:

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The First Voyage: The West Indies *

[October 12, 1492]

Friday, 12 October

At two hours after midnight appeared the land,¹ at a distance of 2 leagues. They handed all sails and set the *treo*, which is the mainsail without bonnets, and lay-to waiting for daylight Friday, when they arrived at an island of the Bahamas that was called in the Indians' tongue *Guanahani*. Presently they saw naked people, and the Admiral went ashore in his barge, and Martín Alonso Pinzón and Vicente Yáñez, his brother, who was captain of the *Niña*, followed. The Admiral broke out the royal standard, and the captains [displayed] two banners of the Green Cross, which the Admiral flew on all the vessels as a signal, with an F and a Y,² one at one arm of the cross and the other on the other, and over each letter his or her crown.

Once ashore they saw very green trees, many streams, and fruits of different kinds. The Admiral called to the two captains and to the others who jumped ashore and to Rodrigo de Escobedo, secretary of the whole fleet, and to Rodrigo Sánchez de Segovia, and said that they should bear faith and witness how he before them all was taking, as in

* From *The Journal of the First Voyage*. The first printed version of the *Journal* appeared in 1825. It was first translated into English in 1827. The present translation is by Samuel Eliot Morison.

¹ San Salvador.

² For Ferdinand and Isabella, the king and queen of Spain. (Isabella is spelled in Spanish with a Y.)

fact he took possession of the said island for the King and Queen, their Lord and Lady, making the declarations that are required, as is set forth at length in the testimonies which were there taken down in writing. Presently there gathered many people of the island. What follows are the formal words of the Admiral, in his Book of the First Navigation and Discovery of these Indies:³

"I," says he, "in order that they might develop a very friendly disposition towards us, because I knew that they were a people who could better be freed and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force, gave to some of them red caps and to others glass beads, which they hung on their necks, and many other things of slight value, in which they took much pleasure. They remained so much our [friends] that it was a marvel, later they came swimming to the ships' boats in which we were, and brought us parrots and cotton thread in skeins and darts and many other things, and we swapped them for other things that we gave them, such as little glass beads and hawks' bells.⁴ Finally they traded and gave everything they had, with good will; but it appeared to me that these people were very poor in everything. They all go quite naked as their mothers bore them; and also the women, although I didn't see more than one really young girl. All that I saw were young men, none of them more than 30 years old, very well built, of very handsome bodies and very fine faces; the hair coarse, almost like the hair of a horse's tail, and short, the hair they wear over their eyebrows, except for a hank behind that they wear long and never cut. Some of them paint themselves black (and they are of the color of the Canary Islanders, neither black nor white), and others paint themselves white, and some red, and others with what they find. And some paint their faces, others the body, some the eyes only, others only the nose. They bear no arms, nor know thereof; for I showed them swords and they grasped them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance. They have no iron. Their darts are a kind of rod without iron, and some have at the end a fish's tooth and others, other things. They are generally fairly tall and good looking, well built. I saw some who had marks of wounds on their bodies, and made signs to them to ask what it was, and they showed me that people of other islands which are near came there and wished to capture them, and they defended themselves. And I believed and now believe that people do come here from the mainland to take them as slaves. They ought to be good servants and of good skill, for I see that they repeat very quickly whatever was said to them. I believe that they would easily be made Christians, because it seemed to me that they belonged to no religion. I, please Our Lord, will carry off six of them at my departure to Your Highnesses, that they may learn to speak. I saw no animal of any kind in this island, except parrots." All these are the words of the Admiral.

[October 13, 1492]

Saturday, 13 October

At the time of daybreak there came to the beach many of these men, all young men, as I have said, and all of good stature, very handsome people. Their hair is not kinky but straight and coarse like horsehair; the whole forehead and head is very broad, more so than [in] any other race that I have yet seen, and the eyes very handsome and not small.

³ Title of Columbus's original journal.

⁴ Tiny bells used in falconry; these had

proved, along with other trifles, popular with African natives.

Talking through signs

definition of

They themselves are not at all black, but of the color of the Canary Islanders; nor should anything else be expected, because this is on the same latitude as the island of Ferro in the Canaries.⁵ The legs of all, without exception, are very straight and [they have] no paunch, but are very well proportioned. They came to the ship in dug-outs which are fashioned like a long boat from the trunk of a tree, and all in one piece, and wonderfully made (considering the country), and so big that in some came 40 or 50 men, and others smaller, down to some in which but a single man came. They row with a thing like a baker's peel⁶ and go wonderfully, and if they capsize all begin to swim and right it and bail it out with calabashes⁷ that they carry. They brought skeins of spun cotton, and parrots, and darts, and other trifles that would be tedious to describe, and give all for whatever is given to them. And I was attentive and worked hard to know if there was any gold, and saw that some of them wore a little piece hanging from a thing like a needle case which they have in the nose; and by signs I could understand that, going to the S, or doubling the island to the S, there was a king there who had great vessels of it and possessed a lot. I urged them to go there; and later saw that they were not inclined to the journey. I decided to wait until tomorrow afternoon and then depart to the SW, since, as many of them informed me, there should be land to the S, SW, and NW, and that they of the NW used to come to fight them many times; and so also to go to the SW to search for gold and precious stones. This island is very big⁸ and very level; and the trees very green, and many bodies of water, and a very big lake in the middle, but no mountain, and the whole of it so green that it is a pleasure to gaze upon, and this people are very docile, and from their longing to have some of our things, and thinking that they will get nothing unless they give something, and not having it, they take what they can, and soon swim off. But all that they have, they give for whatever is given to them, even bartering for pieces of broken crockery and glass. I even saw 16 skeins of cotton given for three *ceitis* of Portugal, which is [equivalent to] a *blanca* of Castile,⁹ and in them there was more than an *arroba*¹⁰ of spun cotton. This I should have forbidden and would not have allowed anyone to take anything, except that I had ordered it all taken for Your Highnesses if there was any there in abundance. It is grown in this island; but from the short time I couldn't say for sure; and also here is found the gold that they wear hanging from the nose. But, to lose no time, I intend to go and see if I can find the Island of Cipango.¹¹ Now, as it was night, all went ashore in their dugouts.

[October 14, 1492]

Sunday, 14 October

"When day was breaking I ordered the ship's gig and the caravels' barges to be readied, and I went along the coast of the island to the NNE, to see the other side, which was the eastern side, what there was there, and also to see the villages; and soon I saw two or

⁵ Columbus accepted Aristotle's theory that people and things from the same latitude are similar.

⁶ This was the first time that Europeans had seen canoe paddles.

⁷ Gourds.

⁸ About sixteen nautical miles long and seven wide.

⁹ Fractions of a cent.

¹⁰ About twenty-five pounds.

¹¹ Japan; following Marco Polo's report, Columbus thought the island of Japan was approximately fifteen hundred miles from the Asian continent.

three, and the people who all came to the beach, shouting and giving thanks to God. Some brought us water, others, other things to eat. Others, when they saw that I didn't care to go ashore, plunged into the sea swimming, and came out, and we understood that they asked us if we had come from the sky. And one old man got into the boat, and others shouted in loud voices to all, men and women, 'Come and see the men who come from the sky, bring them food and drink.' Many came and many women, each with something, giving thanks to God, throwing themselves on the ground, they raised their hands to the sky, and then shouted to us to come ashore; but I was afraid to, from seeing a great reef of rocks which surrounded the whole of this island, and inside it was deep water and a harbor to hold all the ships in Christendom, and the entrance of it very narrow. It's true that inside this reef there are some shoal spots, but the sea moves no more than within a well. In order to see all this I kept going this morning, that I might give an account of all to Your Highnesses, and also [to see] where there might be a fortress; and I saw a piece of land which is formed like an island, although it isn't one (and on it there are six houses), the which could in two days be made an island, although I don't see that it would be necessary, because these people are very unskilled in arms, as Your Highnesses will see from the seven that I caused to be taken to carry them off to learn our language and return; unless Your Highnesses should order them all to be taken to Castile or held captive in the same island, for with 50 men they could all be subjected and made to do all that one wished. And, moreover, next to said islet are groves of trees the most beautiful that I have seen, and as green and leafy as those of Castile in the months of April and May; and much water. I inspected all that harbor, and then returned to the ship and made sail, and saw so many islands that I could not decide where to go first; and those men whom I had captured made signs to me that they were so many that they could not be counted, and called by their names more than a hundred. Finally I looked for the biggest,¹² and decided to go there, and so I did, and it is probably distant from this island of San Salvador 5 leagues, and some of them more, some less. All are very level, without mountains, and very fertile, and all inhabited, and they make war on one another, although these are very simple people and very fine figures of men."

1492/1825

The Second Voyage: The Cannibals*

[October 28, 1495]

In the name of Jesus and of his glorious mother Mary from whom all good things come. On the 25th of September, 1493, we left Cadiz under 17 sails and all in good order—15

¹² Rum Cay.

* No official journal or abstract of the second voyage has survived. This account was written by Michele de Cuneo, an aristocratic

friend who accompanied Columbus on the expedition. The translation here was prepared especially for this volume by Professor Elissa Weaver of the University of Chicago.

square and 2 lateen sails—and on the 2nd of October we anchored at the Grand Canary Island; the following night we set sail and on the 5th we anchored at Gomera, one of the Canary Islands; and it would take too long to tell you about the glorious reception we were given, the rounds fired by cannons and flame-throwers, all ordered by the lady who governs the island and with whom our admiral was once somewhat in love.¹ Here we refreshed ourselves as much as we needed and on October 10th we set out on our voyage, but due to unfavorable weather we stayed around the Canary Islands three days. On the morning of October 13th, a Sunday, we left the Island of Ferro [Hierro], the last of the Canaries and we headed southwest. On the 25th of October, the eve of Saints Simon and Jude, at approximately 1600 we hit a storm of such force you wouldn't believe it and we thought our time was up. It lasted all night and 'til day and was so bad we couldn't see one another; at the end, as it pleased God, we found each other, and on November 3rd, a Sunday, we sighted land—five unknown islands. Our admiral named the first Santo Domingo since it was discovered on the Lord's day; the second he called Santa Maria la Gallante out of love for his ship, which was called Maria la Gallante. These two were not very large islands; nevertheless the admiral mapped them. If I remember correctly, it took us 22 days to get from the Island of Ferro to Santa Maria la Gallante, but I think one could well make the trip in 16 days of good wind.

On the island of Santa Maria la Gallante we got water and wood. The island is uninhabited even though it's full of trees and plains. We set sail from there that day and arrived at a large island inhabited by Cannibals,² who fled immediately to the mountains when they saw us. We landed on this island and stayed about 6 days since eleven of our men, who had banded together in order to steal, went 5 or 6 miles into the deserted area by such a route that when they wanted to return, they were unable to find their way, even though they were all sailors and could follow the sun, which they couldn't see well for the thick and full woods. When the admiral saw that these men had not returned and were nowhere to be found, he sent 200 men divided into 4 squadrons with trumpets, horns and lanterns, but even they were unable to find the lost men, and there was a time when we were more worried about the 200 men than the others before them. But, as it pleased God, the 200 returned with great difficulty and greater hunger; we judged that the eleven had been eaten by the Cannibals as they are wont to do. However, after 5 or 6 days, the eleven men, as it pleased God, when there remained little hope of ever finding them, built a fire on a cape; seeing the fire, we judged it to be them and we sent a boat and in that way recovered them. Had it not been that an old woman showed them the way back with gestures they'd have been done for since we had planned to set sail on the following day.

On that island we took 12 very beautiful and fat females about 15 or 16 years old and 2 boys of the same age whose genital member had been cut off down to their belly; and we judged that this had been done to keep them from mixing with their women or at least to fatten them and then eat them. These boys and girls had been picked by the Cannibals for us to send to Spain to the king as an exhibit. The admiral named this island Santa Maria di Guadalupe.³

¹ Although Cuneo is the only source of this information, Columbus apparently had fallen in love with the woman who ruled the island of Gomera.

² In the original manuscript the word is *Cam-*

balli; it means either "Carib Indians" or "cannibals."

³ Guadeloupe, named after the famous Spanish shrine.

We set sail from this island of Santa Maria di Guadalupe, the Island of Cannibals, on November 10th and on the 14th we reached another beautiful and fertile island⁴ of Cannibals and we came to a very beautiful port. When the Cannibals caught sight of us they fled, as the others had, to the mountains and abandoned their houses where we went and took what we liked. In these few days we found many islands where we didn't disembark, but others where we did—for the night. When we didn't leave the ship we kept it tied, and this we did so we wouldn't travel on and out of fear of running aground. Because these islands were closely adjoining, the admiral called them the Eleven Thousand Virgins,⁵ and the previous one, Santa Croce.

We had anchored and gone ashore one day when we saw, coming from a cape, a canoe, that is, a boat, for so it is called in their speech, and it was beating oars as though it were a well-armed brigantine. On it there were three or four male Cannibals with two female Cannibals and two captured Indian slaves—so the Cannibals call their other neighbors from those other islands; they had also just cut off their genital member down to their belly and so they were still sick. Since we had the captain's boat ashore with us, when we saw this canoe we quickly jumped into the boat and gave chase to the canoe. As we approached it, the Cannibals shot hard at us with their bows, and if we had not had our Pavian shields⁶ we would have been half destroyed. I must also tell you that a companion who had a shield in his hand got hit by an arrow which went through the shield and into his chest 3 inches causing him to die within a few days. We captured this canoe with all the men. One Cannibal was wounded by a lance-blow and thinking him dead we left him in the sea. Suddenly we saw him begin to swim away; therefore we caught him and with a long hook we pulled him aboard where we cut off his head with an axe. We sent the other Cannibals together with the two slaves to Spain. When I was in the boat, I took a beautiful Cannibal girl and the admiral gave her to me. Having her in my room and she being naked as is their custom, I began to want to amuse myself with her. Since I wanted to have my way with her and she was not willing, she worked me over so badly with her nails that I wished I had never begun. To get to the end of the story, seeing how things were going, I got a rope and tied her up so tightly that she made unheard of cries which you wouldn't have believed. At the end, we got along so well that, let me tell you, it seemed she had studied at a school for whores. The admiral named the cape on that island the Cape of the Arrow for the man who was killed by the arrow.

On the 14th of November we set sail from the island in bad weather. On the 19th we anchored at a large and beautiful island of Indians called, in their language, Boluchen, which the admiral named St. John the Baptist.⁷ As we sailed these 5 days both on the right and on the left we saw many islands all of which the admiral has had clearly mapped. At the island mentioned above we stopped to refresh ourselves and on the 21st we sailed; on the 25th, in the name of God, we anchored at Hispaniola,⁸ an island discovered earlier by the admiral, where we went ashore at an excellent port called Monte Christo. In these few days we had more bad weather and we saw about 10 islands. We

⁴ Now St. Croix.

⁵ The Virgin Islands, named for the legend of St. Ursula and the 11,000 virgin martyrs of Cologne.

⁶ Large, rectangular shields from the northern Italian city of Pavia.

⁷ Now Puerto Rico.

⁸ The large island that Columbus called Hispaniola is the present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

judged the distance from the island of Santo Domingo to Monte Christo to be 300 leagues. We were not able to keep a straight course for the shallows.

On the 27th of November we set sail to go to Monte Santo where the admiral on his last voyage left 38 men, and that same night we anchored at that very place.⁹ On the 28th we went ashore, where we found all of our above-mentioned men dead and still stretched out there on the ground; their eyes were gone and we judged they had been eaten since when the Cannibals decapitate someone they immediately take out his eyes and eat them. They could have been dead 15 to 20 days. We were with the ruler of the place whose name was Goachanari, who, with tears running down his chest, and his men likewise, told us that the ruler of the mountain area named Goacanaboa had come with 3 thousand men and killed them together with some of their own people and robbed them out of spite. We found none of the things the admiral had left there, and having heard this story, we took it to be true. We spent 10 days on this business and on the 8th of December we left the place since it was not healthful because of its swamps, and we went to another place on the same island to an excellent port where we went ashore. There we built 200 houses which are small, like the huts we build at home for hunting birds, and they are covered with grass.

When we had built the settlement¹⁰ for ourselves, the inhabitants of the island, who lived between one and two leagues from us, came to visit, as though we were brothers, saying that we were men of God come down from the sky, and many stood in awe watching us. They brought us some of their food to eat and we gave them some of ours since they behaved like brothers. And here we arrive at the end of our voyage, although I will say more below of another voyage I made later with the admiral when he decided to find terra firma; but now we will speak of other things and first about the search for gold on the island of Hispaniola.

1495/1885

The Third Voyage: The Terrestrial Paradise*

[October 18, 1498]

When I sailed from Spain to the Indies I found immediately on passing 100 leagues west of the Azores a very considerable change in the sky and the stars, and in the temperature of the air and in the waters of the sea. I took great pains in putting this to the test. I found that, from north to south, passing the said islands by the said 100 leagues, the compass needles, which hitherto had varied northeasterly, now varied a full point to the NW. On reaching that line it was as if someone had transported a hill thither.

⁹ The fortress of Navidad, which Columbus had constructed on his first voyage.

¹⁰ Isabella, the first European attempt at a permanent settlement in the New World.

* The first printed version of this text ap-

peared in 1825. It was printed again in 1892-1894. The latter is the version used as the basis for this translation by Samuel Eliot Morison.

Moreover, I found the sea full of a certain weed,¹ resembling little pine branches and heavily laden with fruit like that of the mastic. It is so thick that on the First Voyage I thought that it was a shoal and that the ship would run aground. But until we reached this line we did not come upon a single branch. When we got there, moreover, I found the sea very calm and smooth and although the wind was strong, it never got rough. Furthermore, beyond the said line, towards the west, I found the weather to be very mild and unchanging in character, winter or summer. When I was there I discovered that the North Star described a circle, with a diameter of 5°, and when the Guards are in the Right [E] Arm, the star is at its lowest elevation, and it continues to rise until it reaches Left [W] Arm; then it has 5° [elevation]. From that point it sinks until it once more returns to Right Arm.

On this [Third] Voyage . . . as soon as I succeeded in attaining this line [100 leagues W of the Azores] I immediately found the temperature very mild, and the further forward I went the more it increased; but I did not find the stars consistent with this. I found that, as night fell, I observed the North Star at an altitude of 5°, and then the Guards were at "head"; and afterwards at midnight I observed the Star 10° high, and at daybreak at 15° with the Guards at "feet." I found the smoothness of the sea conformed to this, but not the gulfweed. I was much amazed by this business of the North Star, and hence for many nights I "shot" it with the quadrant very carefully. But I always found that the plumb-bob and line hit the same point [on the scale]. I regard this as something new, and mayhap it will be concluded that in this little space the sky changes so much.

I have always read that the world, both land and water, was spherical, as the authority and researches of Ptolemy and all the others who have written on this subject demonstrate and prove, as do the eclipses of the moon and other experiments that are made from east to west, and the elevation of the North Star from north to south. But I have seen this discrepancy, as I have said. I am compelled, therefore, to come to this view of the world: I have found that it does not have the kind of sphericity described by the authorities, but that it has the shape of a pear, which is all very round, except at the stem, which is rather prominent, or that it is as if one had a very round ball, on one part of which something like a woman's teat were placed, this part with the stem being the uppermost and nearest to the sky, lying below the equinoctial line in this ocean sea, at the end of the East. I mean by the end of the East the point where its land and islands terminate. To confirm this I cite all the arguments written above about the line which passes from north to south 100 leagues west of the Azores. For in crossing this to the westward the vessels keep rising gradually toward the sky and then enjoy milder weather; and the needle varied a point on account of this mildness. The farther and higher we went, the more the needle varied towards the NW. This elevation is responsible for the variation of the circle which the North Star describes with the Guards. The closer one comes to the equator, the higher they will rise and the greater the difference will be in the said stars and their orbits.

Ptolemy and the other scholars who have written about this world believed it spherical, thinking that this hemisphere was round like that in which they lived and which has its center in the island of Aryn,² which is below the equinoctial line between the

¹ Gulfweed.

² In ancient and medieval geography, a sacred

Asian city thought to be the "umbilical" of the world; it divided East from West.

Arabian Gulf and the Persian Gulf; the circle passes over Cape St. Vincent in Portugal in the west and by Cangara and the Seres³ in the east. In that hemisphere I see nothing that stands in the way of its being round, as they claim. But as for this other hemisphere I maintain that it is like a half of a very round pear which had a long stem, as I have said, or like a woman's teat on a round ball. So neither Ptolemy nor the others who wrote about the world had any information about this half, for it was altogether unknown. They merely based their opinion on the hemisphere in which they lived, which is round, as I have said above. And now that Your Highnesses have ordered navigation and search and discovery it is revealed very clearly. For during this voyage when I was 20 degrees N of the equinoctial line I was there in the latitude of Arguin⁴ and those other lands, and the people there are black and the land thoroughly scorched. After I went to Cape Verde Islands [I noticed] that the people in those regions are much darker, and the farther south they are the closer they approach the extreme; so, on the parallel of Sierra Leone, where I was when the North Star at nightfall had an elevation of 5°, the people are extremely black, and, after I sailed westward there, [I met] extreme heat. Once the line of which I spoke was passed, I found the climate increasingly mild, to such a degree that when I made the island of Trinidad, where the North Star at nightfall also had an elevation of 5°, I found the temperature there and in the land of Gracia very mild, the ground and the trees being very green and as beautiful as the orchards of Valencia in April. The people there are of very handsome build and whiter than any others I have seen in the Indies. Their hair is very long and smooth. The people are more intelligent and have more ability, and they are not cowards. The sun was then in Virgo, above our heads and theirs.

All this comes from the very mild temperature which prevails there, and this in turn comes from its being the highest land in the world and the closest to the sky. I therefore assert that the world is not spherical but that it has this other shape which I have already described, and which is in the hemisphere where the Indies end and the Ocean Sea [begins], and its extremity is below the equator. And this view is greatly supported by the fact that the sun, when Our Lord first created it, was at the first point of the East,⁵ and the first light was here in the Orient, here where the world is highest. Although Aristotle was of the opinion that the Antarctic pole or the land beneath it is the highest part of the world and nearest the sky, other wise men opposed him, saying that the highest part is beneath the Arctic pole. By this reasoning it appears that they believed that one part of the world must be higher and closer to the sky than the other, and they did not hit upon this view that it is beneath the equator, for the reason I have stated. This is not surprising, for no sound knowledge was available about this hemisphere, but only very vague information of uncertain character, for no one had ever gone, or been sent, to check on it until now, when Your Highnesses gave orders that the sea and land be explored and discovered.

Holy Scripture testifies that Our Lord created the Terrestrial Paradise and planted in it the tree of life, and that a fountain sprang up there, from which flow the four principal rivers of the world: the Ganges in India, the Tigris and the Euphrates in [blank], which cut through a mountain range and form Mesopotamia and flow into Persia, and the

Nile, which rises in Ethiopia and empties into the sea at Alexandria. I do not find and have never found any Latin or Greek work which definitely locates the Terrestrial Paradise in this world,⁶ nor have I seen it securely placed on any world map on the basis of proof. Some put it at the sources of the Nile in Ethiopia, but others have visited all these countries without finding evidence of it in the mildness of the sky, or in its height towards the sky, by which it might be understood that it was there, or that the waters of the flood, which had risen above, had penetrated to it. Some gentiles attempted to argue that it was in the Fortunate Islands, which are the Canaries, etc. St. Isidore, Bede, Strabo, the Master of Scholastic History, St. Ambrose, Scotus, and all dependable theologians, agree that the Terrestrial Paradise is in the east, etc.

I return to my discussion of the land of Gracia and the river and lake I found there, so large that it may better be called sea than lake; for a lake is a place containing water and if it is large it is called a sea, as in the case of the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. I say that if this river does not originate in the Terrestrial Paradise, it comes and flows from a land of infinite size to the south, of which we have no knowledge as yet. But I am completely persuaded in my own mind that the Terrestrial Paradise is in the place I have described, and I rely upon the arguments and authorities above cited.

May it please Our Lord to grant Your Highnesses long life, health and leisure to be able to pursue this very noble Enterprise by which I think Our Lord is greatly served and Spain receives increase in dominion and all Christians are much consoled and pleased, for the name of Our Lord will here be preached. In all the lands which the vessels of Your Highnesses visit, and on every cape, I order a cross to be set up, and I inform all the people whom I find of the estate of Your Highnesses and how you are fixed in Spain. I tell them of our holy faith as best I can and of the dogma of our Holy Mother Church,⁷ which has her members in the entire world: I tell them of the polity and nobility of all Christians, and of their faith in the Holy Trinity. May it please Our Lord to forgive the persons who reviled and do revile this most excellent Enterprise and who oppose and have opposed it so that it may not go forward, without considering how much honor and glory it is for the royal estate of Your Highnesses throughout the world. They know not what to say to malign it, except that it involves expense and that vessels have not been immediately dispatched laden with gold, without taking into account the shortness of time and the considerable difficulties that have been experienced here. They do not consider that in Castile, in the household of Your Highnesses, there are persons who each of them annually earn greater sums than it is necessary to expend on this enterprise. They likewise fail to note that no princes of Spain ever gained territory outside their borders save now, when Your Highnesses have an Other World here, by which our holy faith can be so greatly advanced and from which such great wealth can be drawn . . .

Thanks be to God.

1492/1825

³ Ancient name for China.

⁵ Aryn. (See footnote 2.)

⁴ Island off the west coast of Africa.

⁶ Columbus had assimilated a great deal of medieval thought concerning the exact location of the biblical Garden of Eden (i.e., the "Terrestrial Paradise").

⁷ i.e., the Catholic church.