Chapter I: Of the Opinion Held by Some Authors that the Heavens Did Not Extend to the New World

The ancients were so far from thinking that this New World was peopled that many of them refused to believe that there was any land in these regions; and, what is more surprising, there were even some who also denied that these heavens that we behold exist here. For, although it is true that most of the philosophers, and the best of them, believed that heaven was all round, as in fact it is, and that hence it surrounded the earth everywhere and enclosed it within itself, despite all this some of them—and no small number, or those of least authority among the holy doctors—had a different opinion, imagining the fabric of this world like that of a house in which the roof that covers it encircles only the upper part and does not surround it everywhere. They offered as justification for this that otherwise the earth would be hanging in the midst of the air, which seems a thing devoid of all reason, and also that in every building we see that the foundations are in one place and the roof opposite them; and thus logically in this great edifice of the world, all the heavens must be in one place above and all the earth in a different place below.

Chapter II: How the Heavens are Round everywhere and Rotate around Themselves

But to come to our purpose: there is no doubt that what Aristotle and the other Peripatetics believed, along with the Stoics, as to the whole heaven being round in shape and moving circularly in its course, is so patently true that we who live in Peru see it with our own eyes, and it is made even more manifest by experience than it could be through any philosophical argument or demonstration. For in order to know that the heavens are round everywhere, and that they girdle and encircle the earth on every side, and to have no doubt of it, we need only observe from this hemisphere that part and region of the heavens that turns around the earth and that the ancients never saw. We need only to have seen and noted the two poles on which the heavens turn as upon their axes: I mean the Arctic and northern pole that is seen by those in Europe and this other Antarctic and southern pole (whose existence Augustine doubts).

Chapter VI: How the World Has Both Land and Sea in the Direction of Both Poles

Some have put forward, by I know not what signs, that there is another strait to the north similar to that of Magellan. For our purposes, we need only know for certain that there is land here in the south and that it is a land as large as all of Europe and Asia and even Africa, and that in the world’s two poles there are lands and seas embracing each other. Since the ancients lacked experience of this, they could express doubt and issue contradictory statements.

Chapter IX: Of Aristotle’s Opinion of the New World and What It Was that Caused Him to Deny It

In addition to the reasons I have mentioned there was another that moved the ancients to believe that it was impossible for men to pass from there to this New World; and they said that in addition to the immensity of the Ocean the heat of the region that
they call torrid, or burnt, was so extreme that it would not allow men—no matter how daring—to cross it either by land or sea, from one pole to the other. For even those philosophers who affirmed that the world was round, as indeed it is, and that there was habitable land near the two poles, denied in spite of this that human beings could live in the middle region that includes the two tropics, which is the greatest of the five zones or regions into which the cosmographers and astronomers divided the world. The reason they gave as to why this Torrid Zone was uninhabitable was the burning heat of the sun, which is always so close overhead and scorches that whole region and hence causes it to lack water and vegetation. Aristotle was of this opinion, and, though a great philosopher, he was mistaken in this . . .