

Notes for Thomas Bacon's "New Atlantis"

Richard Walters 2017

Section 1

A group of Spanish explorers on route to China across the Pacific around 1532 set out from Peru, midway up the South American coastline. They made slow progress west for 5 months. Bacon was a traveller, and might have made this very journey. Or, if he didn't he certainly spoke with those who did. The Pacific has a counter-clockwise ocean current between Peru and New Zealand. The arc of this distance of roughly 7 thousand miles would have taken 5 months at 2 miles per hour. If they were then blown north and east by a strong wind for 6 to 8 additional months, that would put them north of Hawaii, somewhere off the coast of the United States. We know from the text that they had 12 months of supplies and made sparing use of them. So, we can assume Bacon's "New Atlantis" or the island of "Bensalem" lies somewhere in that vicinity.

The island inhabitants are cautious, but greet them with mercy and hospitality.

- Sailed for Peru, winds from the south, being pushed north.
- Encounter an island.
- Messenger grants 16 days to heal and receive food, but not to land.
- Sick were in danger of their lives, if they do not land.
- Ambassador speaks with them and they give oath to come on land.
- Conducted to the "strangers house".
- 51 persons total, 17 sick.
- Shows them rooms and infirmary.
- Told to keep indoors for three days and separate.
- General order given to behave by ship's officers.

Section 2

The first place they experience on the island is the "Stranger's House". This place is both a residence for travellers, and a hospital. The government funds the house, and keeps it stocked. Since they have not had visitors in many years, they are told that the house is well stocked to meet any of their needs.

The "governor of the house" tells of the Island's long history, dating back 3,000 years to a time when the seas were better travelled than they were in Bacon's time. He tells a legend of St. Bartholomew's book and letter written in toungues.

- On the 4th day, man with white turban visits. He is a Christian priest.
- Told that they are given 6 weeks to stay and that the stranger's house is well stocked.
- Governor fields questions about their secretive land.
 - Who was their apostle?
 - Pillar of Light Story - Pillar with cross of light at the top in the ocean. Boat could not approach. Wise man of Soloman's house fell down and prayed that God would enlighten them of the pillar's purpose. That boat was able to row forward. They find a small arc with a green palm branch containing a book and letter. Book contained the books of the old testament and new. Letter from Bartholomew. Wherever this arc lands will receive good will from the Lord and Jesus. All could read the letter and book.
- How does this remote island know so much of the world?
- Tells history from 3,000 years ago. In that time there was better seafraring than there is now.

Section 3

The next day the governor of the house tells them about the fate of Atlantis, which Bacon says was America. The civilization there was flooded, and only a few remote ancestors survived in the mountains. He tells a story of how those ancestors over the period of 1,000 years became the tribal indians of America.

Next he tells the story of a well respected King Solamona. It was this king who set up the isolation and secrecy rules for the island nation.

Salomon's House was later established. "It is dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God." Salomon's House is also called "the College of the Six Days Works."

"When the king had forbidden to all his people navigation into any part that was not under his crown, he made nevertheless this ordinance; that every twelve years there should be set forth, out of this kingdom two ships, appointed to several voyages; That in either of these ships there should be a mission of three of the Fellows or Brethren of Salomon's House; whose errand was only to give us knowledge of the affairs and state of those countries to which they were designed, and especially of the sciences, arts, manufactures, and inventions of all the world; and withal to bring unto us books, instruments, and patterns in every kind...."

"...we maintain a trade not for gold, silver, or jewels; nor for silks; nor for spices; nor any other commodity of matter; but only for God's first creature, which was Light: to have light (I say) of the growth of all parts of the world."

There is a long interlude where he describes the "Feast of the Family.

- Talks of the fate of Atlantis (America). And, how the native people forgot of their old nation and wore skins until they went to the hot lands and then went around naked.
- Talks of how they went foreign lands.

- Story of Solamona.
- Salomon's House "It is dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God." Also the "the College of the Six Days Works"
- Mission every 12 years from Salomon's House to collect the knowlege of the world.
- "But thus you see we maintain a trade not for gold, silver, or jewels; nor for silks; nor for spices; nor any other commodity of matter; but only for God's first creature, which was Light: to have light (I say) of the growth of all parts of the world."
- Details about the "Feast of the Family."

Section 4

The Long Interlude continues concerning the ceremony called the "Feast of the Family".

The narrator speaks at length with Joabim, the Jew.

- Continuing Details about the "Feast of the Family."
- Story of Joabim the Jew.
- Talk about Marriage, Lot's offer, lust, and homosexuality.
- Calls "Utopia" a "Feigned Commonwealth".

Section 5 and 6

One of the Fathers of Salomon's House returns in fine array. He takes the narrator on a tour of Salomon's House.

- Foundations
 - "The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible."
- Preparations and Instruments
 - Caves (lower region) - for coagulations, indurations, refrigerations, and conservations of bodies. And for mining of metals. For curing of diseases and prolongation of life.
 - High Towers (upper region) - for insolation, refrigeration, conservation; and for the view of divers meteors; as winds, rain, snow, hail; and some of the fiery meteors also.
- Employments
 - Middle regions - Lakes, pools to collect salt, rocks in the sea where the conduct experiments with sea air and winds. Wells and fountains. Water of paradise. Houses where they experiment with elements and animals. Chambers of Health. Baths for restoration and health. Orchards where they experiment with grafting and making of drinks. Works with animals and genetic engineering?

Other Highlights

- great lakes, both salt, and fresh;
- Artificial Wells and fountains
- Spacious houses where we imitate and demonstrate meteors; as snow, hail, rain.
- Chambers of Health
- Baths
- Orchards and Gardens wherein.. trees and flowers come earlier or later than their seasons.
- Enclosures of all sorts of beasts and birds.
 - Try all poisons and other medicines upon them
- Brewhouses, bake-houses and kitchens

- “And above all, we strive to have drink of extreme thin parts, to insinuate into the body, and yet without all biting, sharpness, or fretting; insomuch as some of them put upon the back of your hand will, with a little stay, pass through to the palm, and yet taste mild to the mouth.”
- Dispensatories, or shops of medecines
- Divers Mechanical Arts, which you have not
- Furnaces of great diversities
- Perspective-houses, where we make demonstrations of all lights and radiations
- Precious stones of all kinds .. and fossils
- Sound-houses, where we practice and demonstrate all sounds and their generation
- Perfume-houses
- Engine-houses
 - “We imitate also flights of birds; we have some degrees of flying in the air.”
- Mathematical House where are represented all instruments, as well of geometry as astronomy, exquisitely made.
- Houses of deceits of the senses

Travelers

- We have twelve that sail into foreign countries
 - Merchants of Light – three who bring us the books, and abstracts, and patterns of experiments of all other parts.
 - Depredators - three that collect the experiments which are in all books.
 - Mystery Men - three that collect the experiments of all mechanical arts; and also of liberal sciences; and also of practices which are not brought into arts.
 - Pioneers - three that try new experiments, such as themselves think good.
 - Compilers - three that draw the experiments of the former four into titles and tables, to give the better light for the drawing of observations and axioms out of them.
 - Dowry-men or Benefactors - three that bend themselves, looking into the experiments of their fellows, and cast about

how to draw out of them things of use and practice for man's life.

- Lamps - three that take care, out of them, to direct new experiments.
- Inoculators - three others that do execute the experiments so directed, and report them.
- Interpreters of Nature - three that raise the former discoveries by experiments into greater observations axioms, and aphorisms.

- One of the Fathers of Salomon's House returns from his travels.
- Tour of Salomon's House
- Foundations
 - "The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible."
- Preparations and Instruments
 - Caves (lower region) - for coagulations, indurations, refrigerations, and conservations of bodies. And for mining of metals. For curing of diseases and prolongation of life.
 - High Towers (upper region) - for insolation, refrigeration, conservation; and for the view of divers meteors; as winds, rain, snow, hail; and some of the fiery meteors also.
- Employments
 - Middle regions - Lakes, pools to collect salt, rocks in the sea where the conduct experiments with sea air and winds. Wells and fountains. Water of paradise. Houses where they experiment with elements and animals. Chambers of Health. Baths for restoration and health. Orchards where they experiment with grafting and making of drinks. Works with animals and genetic engineering?
- Plato "Timaeus"
- Mighty power of Atlantis arrayed aginat egypt and hallas

- Great shaking of the earth, shallows in the Atlantic where Atlantis was.
- "All men who have any right feeling at the beginning of any right enterprise, call upon the gods."