

ATLANTIS: THE ANTEDILUVIAN WORLD

CHAPTER III: THE PROBABILITIES OF PLATO'S STORY

Ignatius Donnelly

Ignatius Loyola Donnelly (1831–1901) was a man of remarkable diversity. Born in Ireland, he was raised in Philadelphia, and as a lawyer, founded a short-lived utopian community in Minnesota. He served as a State Senator, Lieutenant Governor, and a Representative in the U.S. Congress (1863–1868). Donnelly was one of the pioneering supporters for Women's Suffrage. His most lasting contribution proved to be his wide-ranging work *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (1882), seeking to bring together all of the knowledge about the Lost Continent available in his day.

There is nothing improbable in this narrative, so far as it describes a great, rich, cultured, and educated people. Almost every part of Plato's story can be paralleled by descriptions of the people of Egypt or Peru; in fact, in some respects Plato's account of Atlantis falls short of Herodotus's description of the grandeur of Egypt, or Prescott's picture of the wealth and civilization of Peru. For instance, Prescott, in his "Conquest of Peru" (vol. i., p. 95), says:

"The most renowned of the Peruvian temples, the pride of the capital and the wonder of the empire, was at Cuzco, where, under the munificence of successive sovereigns, it had become so enriched that it received the name of Coricancha, or 'the Place of Gold.' . . .

"The interior of the temple was literally a mine of gold. On the western wall was emblazoned a representation of the Deity, consisting of a human countenance looking forth from amid innumerable rays of light, which emanated from it in every direction, in the same manner as the sun is often personified with us. The figure was engraved on a massive plate of gold, of enormous dimensions, thickly powdered with emeralds and precious stones. . . . The walls and

ceilings were everywhere incrustated with golden ornaments; every part of the interior of the temple glowed with burnished plates and studs of the precious metal; the cornices were of the same material."

Plato's Writing is Not Exaggerated

There are in Plato's narrative no marvels; no myths; no tales of gods, gorgons, hobgoblins, or giants. It is a plain and reasonable history of a people who built temples, ships, and canals; who lived by agriculture and commerce: who in pursuit of trade, reached out to all the countries around them. The early history of most nations begins with gods and demons, while here we have nothing of the kind; we see an immigrant enter the country, marry one of the native women, and settle down; in time a great nation grows up around him. It reminds one of the information given by the Egyptian priests to Herodotus.

"During the space of eleven thousand three hundred and forty years they assert," says Herodotus, "that no divinity has appeared in human shape, . . . they absolutely denied the possibility of a human being's descent from a god." If Plato had sought to draw from his imagination a wonderful and pleasing story, we should not have had so plain and reasonable a narrative. He would have given us a history like the legends of Greek mythology, full of the adventures of gods and goddesses, nymphs, fauns, and satyrs.

No Evidence of Plato Moralizing

Neither is there any evidence on the face of this history that Plato sought to convey in it a moral or political lesson, in the guise of a fable, as did Bacon in the "New Atlantis," and More in the "Kingdom of Nowhere." There is no ideal republic delineated here. It is a straightforward, reasonable history of a

people ruled over by their kings, living and progressing as other nations have lived and progressed since their day.

Plato says that in Atlantis there was “a great and wonderful empire,” which “aggressed wantonly against the whole of Europe and Asia,” thus testifying to the extent of its dominion. It not only subjugated Africa as far as Egypt, and Europe as far as Italy, but it ruled “as well over parts of the continent,” to wit, “the opposite continent” of America, “which surrounded the true ocean.” Those parts of America over which it ruled were, as we will show hereafter, Central America, Peru, and the Valley of the Mississippi, occupied by the “Mound Builders.”

Moreover, he tells us that “this vast power was gathered into one;” that is to say, from Egypt to Peru it was one consolidated empire. We will see hereafter that the legends of the Hindoos as to Deva Nahusha distinctly refer to this vast empire, which covered the whole of the known world.

Corroboration From Archaeology and Other Sciences

Another corroboration of the truth of Plato’s narrative is found in the fact that upon the Azores black lava rocks, and rocks red and white in color, are now found. He says they built with white, red, and black stone. Sir C. Wyville Thomson describes a narrow neck of land between Fayal and Monte da Guia, called “Monte Queimada” (the burnt mountain), as follows: “It is formed partly of stratified tufa of a dark chocolate color, and partly of lumps of black lava, porous, and each with a large cavity in the centre, which must have been ejected as volcanic bombs in a glorious display of fireworks at some period beyond the records of Azorean history, but late in the geological annals of the island” (“Voyage of the Challenger,” vol. ii., p. 24). He also describes immense walls of black volcanic rock in the island.

The plain of Atlantis, Plato tells us, “had been cultivated during many ages by many generations of kings.” If, as we believe, agriculture, the domestication of the horse,

ox, sheep, goat, and bog, and the discovery or development of wheat, oats, rye, and barley originated in this region, then this language of Plato in reference to “the many ages, and the successive generations of kings,” accords with the great periods of time which were necessary to bring man from a savage to a civilized condition.

In the great ditch surrounding the whole land like a circle, and into which streams flowed down from the mountains, we probably see the original of the four rivers of Paradise, and the emblem of the cross surrounded by a circle, which, as we will show hereafter, was, from the earliest pre-Christian ages, accepted as the emblem of the Garden of Eden.

Worship of Poseidon Was Widespread

We know that Plato did not invent the name of Poseidon, for the worship of Poseidon was universal in the earliest ages of Europe; “Poseidon-worship seems to have been a peculiarity of all the colonies previous to the time of Sidon” (“Prehistoric Nations,” p. 148.) This worship “was carried to Spain, and to Northern Africa, but most abundantly to Italy, to many of the islands, and to the regions around the Ægean Sea; also to Thrace.” (Ibid., p. 155.)

Poseidon, or Neptune, is represented in Greek mythology as a sea-god; but he is figured as standing in a war-chariot drawn by horses. The association of the horse (a land animal) with a sea-god is inexplicable, except with the light given by Plato. Poseidon was a sea-god because he ruled over a great land in the sea, and was the national god of a maritime people; he is associated with horses, because in Atlantis the horse was first domesticated; and, as Plato shows, the Atlanteans had great race-courses for the development of speed in horses; and Poseidon is represented as standing in a war-chariot, because doubtless wheeled vehicles were first invented by the same people who tamed the horse; and they transmitted these war-chariots to their descendants from Egypt to Britain.



We know that horses were the favorite objects chosen for sacrifice to Poseidon by the nations of antiquity within the Historical Period; they were killed, and cast into the sea from high precipices. The religious horse-feasts of the pagan Scandinavians were a survival of this Poseidon-worship, which once prevailed along all the coasts of Europe; they continued until the conversion of the people to Christianity, and were then suppressed by the Church with great difficulty.

Elements in Plato's Narrative are Supported by External Evidence

We find in Plato's narrative the names of some of the Phoenician deities among the kings of Atlantis. Where did the Greek, Plato, get these names if the story is a fable?

Does Plato, in speaking of "the fruits having a hard rind, affording drinks and meats and ointments," refer to the cocoa nut?

Again: Plato tells us that Atlantis abounded in both cold and hot springs. How did he come to hit upon the hot springs if he was drawing a picture from his imagination? It is a singular confirmation of his story that hot springs abound in the Azores, which are the surviving fragments of Atlantis; and an experience wider than that possessed by Plato has taught scientific men that hot springs are a common feature of regions subject to volcanic convulsions.

Plato tells us, "The whole country was very lofty and precipitous on the side of the sea, but the country immediately about and surrounding the city was a level plain, itself surrounded by mountains which descended toward the sea." One has but to look at the profile of the "Dolphin's Ridge," as revealed by the deep-sea soundings of the Challenger, given as the frontispiece to this volume, to see that this is a faithful description of that precipitous elevation. "The surrounding mountains," which sheltered the plain from the north, are represented in the present towering peaks of the Azores.

Plato tells us that the destruction of Atlantis filled the sea with mud, and interfered

with navigation. For thousands of years the ancients believed the Atlantic Ocean to be "a muddy, shallow, dark, and misty sea, Mare tenebrosum." ("Cosmos," vol. ii., p. 151.)

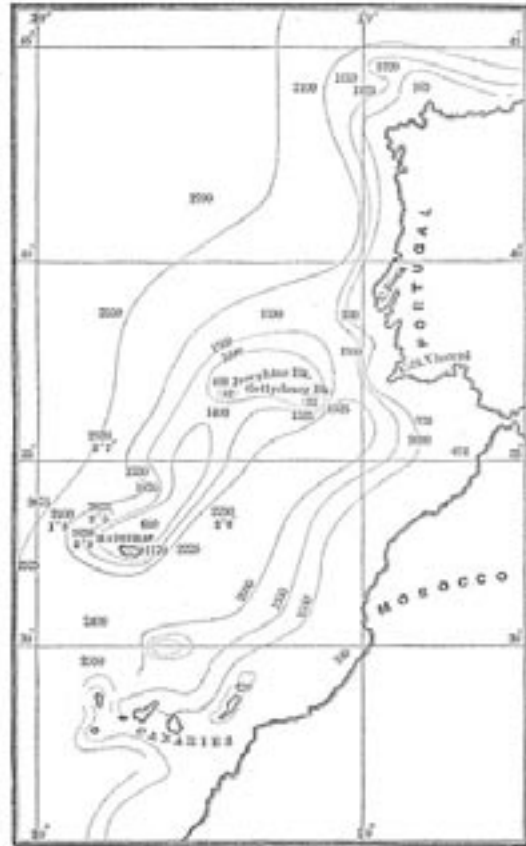


Illustration of Atlantic Islands from Donnelly's *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World* (1882)
From the Rosicrucian Library Collection

Three as a Sacred and Mystical Number

The three-pronged sceptre or trident of Poseidon reappears constantly in ancient history. We find it in the hands of Hindoo gods, and at the base of all the religious beliefs of antiquity.

"Among the numerals the sacred three has ever been considered the mark of perfection, and was therefore exclusively ascribed to the Supreme Deity, or to its earthly representative—a king, emperor, or any sovereign. For this reason triple emblems of various shapes are found on the belts, neckties, or any encircling fixture, as can be seen on the works of ancient art in Yucatan,

Guatemala, Chiapas, Mexico, etc., whenever the object has reference to divine supremacy.” (Dr. Arthur Schott, “Smith. Rep.,” 1869, p. 391.)

We are reminded of the, “tiara,” and the “triple round of sovereignty.”

Ten is also Significant for Atlantis

In the same manner the ten kingdoms of Atlantis are perpetuated in all the ancient traditions.

“In the number given by the Bible for the Antediluvian patriarchs we have the first instance of a striking agreement with the traditions of various nations. Ten are mentioned in the Book of Genesis. Other nations, to whatever epoch they carry back their ancestors, whether before or after the Deluge, whether the mythical or historical character prevail, they are constant to this sacred number ten, which some have vainly attempted to connect with the speculations of later religious philosophers on the mystical value of numbers.

“In Chaldea, Berossus enumerates ten Antediluvian kings whose fabulous reign extended to thousands of years. The legends of the Iranian race commence with the reign of ten Peisdadien (Poseidon?) kings, ‘men of the ancient law, who lived on pure Homa (water of life)’ (nectar?), ‘and who preserved their sanctity.’ In India we meet with the nine Brahmadikas, who, with Brahma, their founder, make ten, and who are called the Ten Petris, or Fathers. The Chinese count ten emperors, partakers of the divine nature, before the dawn of historical times. The Germans believed in the ten ancestors of Odin, and the Arabs in the ten mythical kings of the Adites.” (Lenormant and Chevallier, “Anc. Hist. of the East,” vol. i., p. 13.)

Plato’s Narrative Confirmed by Many Sources

The story of Plato finds confirmation from other sources.

An extract preserved in Proclus, taken from a work now lost, which is quoted by

Boeckh in his commentary on Plato, mentions islands in the exterior sea, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and says it was known that in one of these islands “the inhabitants preserved from their ancestors a remembrance of Atlantis, an extremely large island, which for a long time held dominion over all the islands of the Atlantic Ocean.”

Ælian, in his “Varia Historia” (book iii., chap. xviii.), tells us that Theopompus (400 B.C.) related the particulars of an interview between Midas, King of Phrygia, and Silenus, in which Silenus reported the existence of a great continent beyond the Atlantic, “larger than Asia, Europe, and Libya together.” He stated that a race of men called Meropes dwelt there, and had extensive cities. They were persuaded that their country alone was a continent. Out of curiosity some of them crossed the ocean and visited the Hyperboreans.

“The Gauls possessed traditions upon the subject of Atlantis which were collected by the Roman historian Timagenes, who lived in the first century before Christ. He represents that three distinct people dwelt in Gaul: 1. The indigenous population, which I suppose to be Mongoloids, who had long dwelt in Europe; 2. The invaders from a distant island, which I understand to be Atlantis; 3. The Aryan Gauls.” (“Preadamites,” p. 380.)

Many Writers Speak of the Islands of the Atlantic

Marcellus, in a work on the Ethiopians, speaks of seven islands lying in the Atlantic Ocean – probably the Canaries – and the inhabitants of these islands, he says, preserve the memory of a much greater island, Atlantis, “which had for a long time exercised dominion over the smaller ones.” (Didot Mueller, “Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum,” vol. iv., p. 443.)

Diodorus Siculus relates that the Phoenicians discovered “a large island in the Atlantic Ocean, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, several days’ sail from the coast of Africa. This island abounded in all manner of



riches. The soil was exceedingly fertile; the scenery was diversified by rivers, mountains, and forests. It was the custom of the inhabitants to retire during the summer to magnificent country-houses, which stood in the midst of beautiful gardens. Fish and game were found in great abundance; the climate was delicious, and the trees bore fruit at all seasons of the year.”

Homer, Plutarch, and other ancient writers mention islands situated in the Atlantic, “several thousand stadia from the Pillars of Hercules.” Silenus tells Midas that there was another continent besides Europe, Asia, and Africa—“a country where gold and silver are so plentiful that they are esteemed no more than we esteem iron.” St. Clement, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, says that there were other worlds beyond the ocean.

Attention may here be called to the extraordinary number of instances in which allusion is made in the Old Testament to the “islands of the sea,” especially in Isaiah and Ezekiel. What had an inland people, like the Jews, to do with seas and islands? Did these references grow out of vague traditions linking their race with “islands in the sea?”

The Orphic Argonaut sings of the division of the ancient Lyktonia into separate islands. He says, “When the dark-haired Poseidon, in anger with Father Kronion, struck Lyktonia with the golden trident.”

The Dating of the Destruction of Atlantis

Plato states that the Egyptians told Solon that the destruction of Atlantis occurred 9,000 years before that date, to wit, about 9,600 years before the Christian era. This looks like an extraordinarily long period of time, but it must be remembered that geologists claim that the remains of man found in the caves of Europe date back 500,000 years; and the fossil Calaveras skull was found deep under the base of Table Mountain, California, the whole mountain having been formed since the man to whom it belonged lived and died.

“M. Oppert read an essay at the Brussels Congress to show, from the astronomical observations of the Egyptians and Assyrians, that 11,542 years before our era man existed on the earth at such a stage of civilization as to be able to take note of astronomical phenomena, and to calculate with considerable accuracy the length of the year.

“The Egyptians, says he, calculated by cycles of 1,460 years—zodiacal cycles, as they were called. Their year consisted of 365 days, which caused them to lose one day in every four solar years, and, consequently, they would attain their original starting-point again only after 1,460 years (365 x 4). Therefore, the zodiacal cycle ending in the year 139 of our era commenced in the year 1322 B.C.

“On the other hand, the Assyrian cycle was 1,805 years, or 22,325 lunations. An Assyrian cycle began 712 B.C. The Chaldeans state that between the Deluge and their first historic dynasty there was a period of 39,180 years. Now, what means, this number? It stands for 12 Egyptian zodiacal cycles plus 12 Assyrian lunar cycles.

12 x 1,460 = 17,520	= 39,180
12 x 1,805 = 21,660	

“These two modes of calculating time are in agreement with each other, and were known simultaneously to one people, the Chaldeans. Let us now build up the series of both cycles, starting from our era, and the result will be as follows:

Zodiacal Cycle	Lunar Cycle
1,460	1,805
1,322	712
—	—
2,782	2,517
4,242	4,322
5,702	6,127
7,162	7,932
8,622	9,737
10,082	11,542
11,542	

“At the year 11,542 B.C. the two cycles came together, and consequently they had on that year their common origin in one and the same astronomical observation.”

That observation was probably made in Atlantis.

Ancient Memories Over Vast Periods of Time

The wide divergence of languages which is found to exist among the Atlanteans at the beginning of the Historical Period implies a vast lapse of time. The fact that the nations of the Old World remembered so little of Atlantis, except the colossal fact of its sudden and overwhelming destruction, would also seem to remove that event into a remote past.

Herodotus tells us that he learned from the Egyptians that Hercules was one of their most ancient deities, and that he was one of the twelve produced from the eight gods, 17,000 years before the reign of Amasis.

In short, I fail to see why this story of Plato, told as history, derived from the Egyptians, a people who, it is known, preserved most ancient records, and who were able to trace their existence back to a vast antiquity, should have been contemptuously set aside as a fable by Greeks, Romans, and the modern world. It can only be because our predecessors, with their limited knowledge of the geological history of the world, did not believe it possible that any large part of the earth's surface could have been thus suddenly swallowed up by the sea.

