

theory, seeking probably for something more substantial than an ocean to support so great a mass, said that it was supported by great pillars. What did the pillars rest on? Priests answered that they were supported by the sacrifices of the virtuous, without which the Earth would collapse. On reading ancient history, one wonders that it did not collapse long ago. Anaximander, in the sixth century B. C., concluded that the earth must be a cylinder, floating in the centre of the vault of heaven, of which only the upper side was inhabited (for of course any one would fall off the lower side.) The Mediterranean was in the centre of this half, Europe being to the north of it, and Asia and Africa to the south.

Plato thought that the abode of man must be a cube, the cube being the most perfect of forms.

While the western world was still thinking of the earth as flat, the ancient East had imagined it as a sphere, with great mountains at the poles. A Hindu idea was that the northern half of the earth was a great mountain, rising out of the equatorial sea, and reaching right up to the clouds, and beyond them to the abode of the gods, and serving as the axis round which the stars revolved. The southern hemisphere was a mountain inverted, reaching down to the abode of demons. A later Hindu conception was that the earth was a large circular shell, supported by four elephants standing on the back of a tortoise. It is not known what the tortoise stood on, but as it symbolized creation, it may not have needed to stand on anything. Ptolemy thought of the earth as a tomato, with the poles in the middle of vast plateaus.

To come to more recent times, Columbus, remarkable as having the foolish idea that there was land west of the Atlantic, and still more remarkable as proving his idea, to the discomfiture of those who laughed at it, did not think of the earth as round, but thought that his new western hemisphere rose to a lofty mountain at the equator, thus making the earth pear-shaped. Dante, a century earlier, in his "*Divina Commedia*", had a "*Mountain of Purgatory*" placed more than thirty degrees below the equator, to be exactly balanced by Jerusalem.