



Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians

By Jeffrey Burton Russell

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Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians By Jeffrey Burton Russell

Neither Christopher Columbus nor his contemporaries thought the earth was flat. Yet this curious illusion persists today, firmly established with the help of the media, textbooks, teachers?even noted historians. *Inventing the Flat Earth* is Russell's attempt to set the record straight. He begins with a discussion of geographical knowledge in the Middle Ages, examining what Columbus and his contemporaries actually did believe, and then moves to a look at how the error was first propagated in the 1820s and 1830s and then snowballed to outrageous proportions by the late 19th century. But perhaps the most intriguing focus of the book is the reason why we allow this error to persist. Do we prefer to languish in a comfortable and familiar error rather than exert the effort necessary to discover the truth? This uncomfortable question is engagingly answered.

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Review

"Russell conclusively shows how the 'flat earth' myth was concocted and popularized by Washington Irving and a French erudit and how the 'flat error' was declared by Darwininst historians, who compared the denial of Darwin's theory to Columbus's struggle for acceptance by his scholastic religious contemporaries. The book is a delightful, provocative, and persuasive interpretation about a myth that has flitted in and out of popular history."- Colonial Latin American Historical Review

"This book is must reading for all Christians."-Biblical Worldview

"Russell packs a punch in this slender, clearly written, and engagingly argued volume."-Booklist

"Inventing the Flat Earth is a well-written and thoroughly researched account of a fascinating topic. It is strongly recommended."-Science & Christian Belief

"[Russell] has written a scholarly, yet very readable, investigation into [the "flat earth" myth's] background, origins, and consequences. This book also is well-documented and contains a good bibliography and numerous helpful illustrations. It can be of interest to scholars and other serious readers as well as to students in the classroom dealing with problems of medieval-modern intellectual history."-Teaching History

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"Inventing the Flat Earth...is a jewel of a book that provides important new insights into the way historians have interpreted Columbus's achievement." -The New York Times Book Review

About the Author

JEFFREY BURTON RUSSELL is Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has contributed numerous articles to scholarly journals and reference volumes and is the author of 16 other books on medieval history, the history of religion, and intellectual history, including *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (1997).

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