
A book by J. H. Parry is always a welcome addition to historical literature; he is a master of his art and this volume is another example of his skill as an historian. The theme is one of the most dramatic in history, and he develops it in a lively and absorbing narrative, drawing extensively on firsthand accounts.

So strong were the geographical misconceptions of the fifteenth century that the discoverers, as Parry puts it, blundered upon a new continent and "were very reluctant to accept the full implications of what they had found" (p. 24). Columbus insisted that he had found Asia, yet, Parry asserts, even his friends had doubts. His discovery of a new continent in 1498 he could not accept as such, nor was it generally accepted for a generation after. Moreover, it is uncertain, Parry states, whether Vespucci after his second voyage (he accepts two of the alleged four) believed that this new land was indeed a separate continent.

Spain's interest in the spice trade as well as in gold receives adequate treatment, and Parry notes the coincidence of Cortés' departure from Veracruz the day after Magellan left Spain. Cortés, he asserts, realized that only by planned settlement and careful exploitation of resources could America yield permanent revenue. The conquests in South America are told with full attention to the background and are enlivened by extensive quotations from the sources. The discovery and exploration of the great rivers, the South Sea, and the Strait of Magellan conclude the work.

The book is lavishly illustrated and contains excellent reproductions of contemporary maps. The bibliography contains only works cited. This reviewer is bothered only by the title, which seems too restrictive in view of the scope of the work. All in all, it is an excellent study, and a first-rate addition to the growing literature in this field.

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