

Negotiating captivity in the new mexico borderlands by brooks, james f

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If there is one important strategy that was executed over the warring centuries that had significantly impacted human history, that would be no other than religion. Whether advanced or indigenous societies in all corners of the earth, religion, regardless of deity, structure, or belief, has occupied an important facet in the functioning and survival of communities and nations. It has been said that the most successful conquest had been waged under the banner of the three G's: Gold, God, and Glory. True to that statement, most of the most successful European war-fares waged all over the globe in the early centuries were indeed victorious using the aforementioned tactics. To point further, we take into account the case of European's colonization campaign in the Americas. In the name of European expansion, God has been the primary component used for their invasion as the belief of a deity or supernatural being is a universal phenomenon. Religion therefore proved to be a convenient strategy since it is a relatable concept regardless of culture. Initially, the representatives of European and God embodied by the priests (as represented in the movie Black Robe) were welcomed with a degree of warmth. This may be attributed to the keen interests of the natives with the kind of tools these strangers have brought with them. In exchange of simple farming and hunting technologies such as axes, knives, hoes, the European's were able to slowly break and penetrate the prevailing natural defense mechanism of the indigenous tribes. As these simple tools were traded for both basic and luxury commodities of the European's such as fur, food, knowledge etc., what was once transactional kind of relationship between Europeans and tribal members developed into a nonetheless complex association far beyond the exchange system. And as

this kind of trust is gradually established between the two parties, these robed men would also move ahead and slowly introduce the concept of Christianity as the ultimate and only true religion. The motive behind is to first-handedly educate these seemingly barbaric people about the civilized ways of modern society; a smaller plan out of a bigger campaign to colonize tribes and to have them adhere and adapt to the European culture. Since civilization is equated to a society with a formal justice system, modern technology, and a unified religion, it became imperative that these elements are introduced slowly, gradually, and then by force to the host community to afford the campaign's complete success. This was true as discussed in the article "This Evil Extends Especially ... to the Feminine Sex": Negotiating Captivity in the New Mexico Borderlands. Though the context draws heavily from the fact that women and children were active agents in the subversion of dominant structural structures, it also subtly touches on the role of the religion in the dynamics and microcosm of borderland economies. As recorded in history books, the captors (Spanish) baptized the captives (Indians) in an effort to detribalize them and eventually to acculturate them. This then displays an act of "redemption" from the tribal and nomadic ways of the Indians. Hence, membership in the world of Christianity is used as a tool to demonstrate social "belongingness", drawing the lines between the natives/barbaric and the civilized/modern people. From the scenario too, a certain degree of parallelism can be abstracted. As more and more "redeemed" individuals by way of Christian baptism are taken back into the community, it essentially increases the population over time putting much pressure on the members of the less dominant populace. This strategy

merits a kind of social tension beneficial to the captors. By primarily increasing the membership of the population by means of religion, a physical and tangible manifestation of a probable social conflict is being displayed. The psychological influence brought about by this tension makes for a more successful tactic in dividing the members of the tribe and finally conquering them. Generally perceived as superiors over the natives, Europeans also banked on the belief that sickness, natural disasters, social unrest and the likes are evidences of the wrath of God. As they have the technological advancements that could cure diseases, tools to aide calamities, and systematic approaches used to address pressing social matters, these social disturbances are consequentially made to work for the advantage of the colonizers. All these scenarios have become opportunities to preach and educate the natives against their rudimentary ways. All these, in the guise of religious concepts such as salvation, sin, and atonement, paved way to conquering not only the physical population but also the psychological being of the community. From all these instances, to capture the mental state of the natives measured for a more sound success than colonizing them physically. Indeed, religion was both a defense and a weapon used by the colonizers. So much has been recorded about the success of European invasion by means of religion. But a part of the whole propaganda also had its share of failures. One of which is the factions that that resulted from misunderstandings of religious leaders. The differences in opinion lead to weakening of religious strongholds which then impacted the subordinate population. But these are considered minor glitches if we are to look at the broader scale of the influence of religion in the context of colonization upon

being brought to the Americas. References: Brooks, James F. "This Evil Extends Especially...to the Feminine Sex": Negotiating Captivity in the New Mexico Borderlands. *Feminist Studies*. 22. 2 (Summer, 1996): 279-309.