

Effects of european
reformation
movements in
colonial latin america
essay sample



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Introduction

In the period from 1492 to 1504, the voyages of Christopher Columbus for Portugal and Spain were the hottest news. European sailors and soldiers conquered and colonized huge areas of the new world. From West Indies, the first land that the Spaniards conquered, they prolonged into the new world. They had conquered big areas including Central and South America by the end of the 16th century. On the eve of the conquest, the population of the Americans was more than 80 million as compared to the European population which was nearly 60 million.

The administration, concept of law, peace, justice and equality were brought up by roman conquerors. Moreover, they established a well balanced bureaucratic colonial system and made Portuguese and Spanish languages mandatory. Afterwards, the Roman Catholic Church became the great organization and the Indians were being converted to Hispanic Christian culture.

The church was considered as the biggest landlord of the colony and also acted as a major economic producer. Nonetheless, soon after the Iberian decline in the 18th century, a reforming impulse led to focus on defense, agriculture export, administrative efficiency, and mining. These alterations were implemented in both Spanish and Portuguese. Certainly, the growth of Iberian and the enlightenment of philosophy deeply influenced the colonial elites. By the end of 1825, with the exception of Puerto Rico and Cuba, all of the Spanish America “ had renounced allegiance to Spain and established Creole republics.”[1]

The first bishopric in Latin America was founded at Santa María la Antigua of Darien in the 1521, after Panama was discovered. Cortes was escorted by a Mercedarian friar as chaplain in Mexico in 1519. Afterwards, Cortés established the very first church in the year 1522. However, evangelisation efforts did not start until twelve Franciscans came there after five years.

These twelve people went to Veracruz in the year 1524 to start evangelization of Latin American countries. A few Dominicans followed their path in the year 1526 and started their efforts. During the thirty years, these 3 groups developed quickly and were in the frontline of evangelization efforts. The very first bishop of Tlaxcala was a Dominican by the name of Juan Garcés whereas in Mexico, the first bishop was a Franciscan by the name of Juan de Zumáragga.

The period between the 15th and the 16th century, when famous explorers like Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci started voyage to discover new locations, was the beginning era of Colonial Latin America. The Spanish rules were also brought frequently into the region by conquistadores, Francisco Pizarro and Hernan Cortes. In 1532 Brazil first settlement was made soon after

The Roman Catholic church established in Latin America. Since then The Roman Catholicism still considers main religion in many of Latin American countries however there has been major growth seen as far as Protestants and Evangelization is concerned. Spanish and Portuguese immigrants arrived in heavy numbers and ruled over Indian population of the region but they

could stay longer being slaved due to the deaths caused by different diseases. Spanish and Portuguese rulers soon imported African slaves.

Simon Bolivar, San Martin and others started independence movements in the 19th century across the region due to which many Federal republics were founded in this region but many of the newly founded countries could not survive due to political confusions and taken over by the military or directed authorities and it continues in 20th century.

Peoples of Latin America found their lives changed after the revolution of Protestants in the region. The sociologists and anthropologists acknowledged that a completely surprising activity took place in Latin America. Suddenly, a Catholic continent covering half of the Catholics of the world transformed into Protestants. Latin America was out of the limit as far as Protestants are concerned as compared to other countries in the region. Nothing of this sort had happened before, as social evolution turned Latin America in an unusual way.

The protestantization enormously changed people's beliefs, their identification and their priorities. The remarkable achievement of evangelization is that in the beginning period from one to ten Latin Americans turned into an evangelical supporter. In many divisions of the continent, evangelical social activities became equal to Catholic activities. Protestant revolution was incredible but history also tells that there was not enough to substantiate for the survival for future.

State and Church

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“ The earliest attempt to establish organized church and mission work in Latin America was made by in Brazil, about the middle of the sixteenth century, by the Reformed Church of Geneva.” [2]

Spanish monarchy and Catholic Churches in the colonial Christendom made an alliance of spiritual power and temporal for the glory of Spanish crown and God. In fact, it was a political agreement in which the church and state worked together for the sake of governance of a Christian kingdom.

However, the first significant step towards evangelization took place in 1531 in Mexico.

In Brazil in 1515, the same “ padroado real” was gifted to the Portuguese monarchs in temporary basis which was later permanently confirmed in 1551. Furthermore, in 1549, in “ Bahia”, Jesuits arrived and led the community’s first captain general to serve in Latin America. However the “ diocese of Bahia” was formed in 1551. In the colonial period, close relationship between church and state was exposed of Clerics selected to political position.

“ For many delegates, Latin America as a whole could be considered an unevangelized area; for others, only such mountain and forest peoples as had never been reached by Catholic missions could be so described.”(2)

Spanish Inquisition

Spanish Inquisition was launched with papal support in 1478 when King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella felt the need of such system. Inquisition was

established to deal with newly converted Jews & Muslims to Protestantism that was against Catholicism and Colonials.

“ Suddenly the great Catholic continent, home of almost half the Catholics in the world, is swarming with evangelicals, above all with Pentecostals. For three centuries Latin America was out of bounds for Protestants.” [3]

History shows different reasons for Ferdinand and Isabella’s objective to introduce inquisition process into Spain. Inquisition was introduced to have unity in religious and political matters of the region and formation of well-organized state for Ferdinand and Isabella and to defend political opposition that was up against the royal Catholics. Another reason was the formation of such federal political powers that would enable the destabilization of poetical opposition. They also wanted to employ powerful minorities in central administration. If there was any dispute regarding the ownership of any property of the local people, it was taken over by the Inquisition.

Within five years of the foundation of the inquisition by the papacy, they handed over the whole system to the royal families to run it further.

Inquisition activities were possibly finished or their influence on the people was affected when Charles I arrived as the new king of Spain.

Unfortunately, the new king left the inquisitional system intact in the region due to which inquisition became more efficient and spread rapidly to all countries in the region. The superior organizations and continuous support of Spanish monarchs enabled superior impact on politics, culture and more importantly religion of the region. The local courts in Peru, Mexico and other

Latin American regions were controlled by the grand inquisitor court. In 1522 <https://assignbuster.com/effects-of-european-reformation-movements-in-colonial-latin-america-essay-sample/>

Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor) established Inquisition into the Netherlands but failed to give an end to Protestantism in the country.

The establishment of Spanish inquisition in 1517 in Sicily was successful but they failed to establish this system in Milan and Naples. The inquisition experiment started in middle of 15th century and after over 2000 experiments, this system was able to give an end to Spanish Protestantism. According to historians Spanish Inquisition organized and explored many of the Protestant lands in different areas of the world.

“ During the sixteenth century the word “ evangelical” began to take on a meaning associated specifically with the Protestant Reformation. In many places around the world to this day, Lutheran churches retain this older sense of the term, as in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” [4]

Other than the important role of this inquisition in religious affairs of the colonies, it was also considered as an institution to serve the Colonial System even though the inquisition activities still depended on approval from Rome. Council of the Suprema, which handled Supreme and General Inquisition, was established in the year 1488 based on six members generally (number of members defers in different history information on inquisition but it never exceeded ten), this authority grew up over the time as it was entertained by power.

The inquisitorial activities slowed down gradually after Enlightenment arrived in Spain. The ideas by Enlightenment were supposed to be biggest fightable

threat to Inquisition because all ideas given by the Enlightenment was favoring to end inquisitorial activities in the region.

Holy Offices processed many on the ideas given by the Enlightenment and sent reports to Charles IV to explain the inefficiency of the courts that were being operated by the Inquisition system and refused to operate them in future. When French Revolution came, the fear of penetration of the French Revolutionary Ideas in the Spanish boundaries caused reactivation of the Holy Office that was affected by the harassment of French Work.

“ The appearance of the Virgin on Latin American soil, speaking the language of the colonized rather than the colonizer, addressing Juan Diego as son and taking the side of the peasant against the bishop, has been an icon of popular religion ever since.” [5]

Conclusion

For almost three centuries, Latin America was a part of Iberian empires and fulfilled the needs of the Portuguese and the Spaniards. Majority of the inhabitants suffered with the affluence of law and order. The natives paid high prices for the gluttony of their defeater and certainly, this set an example for centuries to come. The church presented divine sanctions for the sake of colonial societies when sword and cross arrived simultaneously. However, the colonial church was an extremely conservative force which stood firmly along with power.

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