

Why and the spiritual guidance provided for



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Why was it considered necessary for the Spanish Crown to justify and legitimise the conquest of the Americas and what arguments and means did it employ for this purpose? Every colonial country needs an idea to base its conquest and Spain was no different.

The ideology behind the Spanish conquest of the Americas was the spread of Catholicism. This belief in the conversion of the Indians is what drove the Spanish to conquer, settle and govern the New World. The Castilians modeled their Catholic empire on the Holy Roman Empire of old. They viewed themselves as successors to the Romans. The Castilians regarded themselves as the superior race, who were on a divine mission to achieve a universal Catholic empire. The Castilians felt obligated to extend the faith and conveniently this proved to justify their colonisation of the Americas.

They understood that by giving the natives the protection of the crown, they would lead a better life. This better life would also arise due to the absence of slavery and the spiritual guidance provided for those ignorant of Christianity. If the spreading of the faith was the sole reason for the conquest of the Americas then we must understand how religion was spread. The devout Castilians wished Catholicism to dominate but seemingly they wanted a Spanish Catholic Empire more so. The conversions were mixed between preaching, reasoning, threats and force. This facade of converting the Americans subsequently allowed the Spanish an excuse for conquest and plunder. For them this was the perfect justification, almost as if God was instructing them to take control of these new lands and consequently strip them of their wealth.

The Spanish Crown had great ecclesiastical power in the newly conquered kingdom. This again indicates that it was becoming more of evident that they were on a mission of conquest, not, spiritual enlightenment. These actions give the idea that the divine mission was the Castilian mentality for the justification of their actions and that their own higher mission was far more devious and self-profiting. The mission was no longer religious and had become economically driven. Following several Papal Bulls , Ferdinand begun collecting tithes in the Americas on behalf of the church. This form of taxation was justified by the need to finance the spread of Catholicism.

Now the people were financing their own conversions under the guidance of both the Pope and the Spanish Crown. This money grabbing attitude proves the insincerity of the Spanish religious conquest. In my opinion the ideology of religious conversions as the basis of conquest is a sound idea considering the savagery of the natives religion. If this was without the force and mindless pillaging of the land, it would be a legitimate theory. In practice, it was completely different as the Castilians were lured by the obvious financial windfalls of conquest. The necessity to legitimise the conquest resolves around the difference between Royal ideology and the methods practiced by the colonists. The Castilian conquest was ideological but also consisted of many socio-economic aims. The Spanish justified their colonisation by apparently saving the natives from the blood rituals to the Gods.

These rituals produced the blood which was mixed with cocoa to form a drink. This was then drunk by the priests to enhance clairvoyance. These actions were considered humane by the natives and the colonists were apparently saving them from such heinous acts of brutalism. Further

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justification arose from the Spanish substituting a diet of human flesh with that of beef, pork, chicken and mutton.

In theory, the Castilians were creating a civilised race to compliment this they introduced European architecture and town planning to benefit the natives newfound civility. The Castilians also considered themselves to be providing security and protection through their fortification of the colonies. Was this to protect Spanish or Amerindian interests? In truth it helped the natives but benefited the Spanish more as it provided stability which encouraged other colonists to travel to America. This policy of creating a civil society was further enhanced by the creation of Audiencias and Cabildos who were answerable to the council of the Indies. This provided local governments for the Amerindians which enhanced their voyage towards a civil democratic society. This also gave the Castilians more control over