

Spanish Exploration DBQ:

For the period 1486 to 1560, analyze the connection between Spanish exploration and conquest in the Americas and the role of religion.

Historical Background: During the Middle Ages, the Spanish Christians carried out the reconquest (Reconquista) of Spain from the Muslims, creating several Christian states in the Iberian Peninsula. With the marriage of future King Ferdinand of Aragon to the future queen Isabella of Castile, the Christian kingdoms of Spain were united. In 1492, the reconquest was completed when the last Muslim stronghold at Granada was occupied by Spanish forces. Seeking to strengthen their power and prestige, in that same year, Ferdinand and Isabella commissioned Christopher Columbus on a planned westward expedition to India. When Columbus landed instead on the island of El Salvador, European colonization of the New World began.

Document 1:

Source: Diego Rivera, *Battle between the Aztecs and Conquistadors*



Document 2:

Source: Bartolome de las Casas, *History of the Indians*, excerpt on Spanish oppression of the native populations, 1560.

Sunday having arrived, and the time for preaching, Father Antonio Montesinos rose in the pulpit, and took for the text of his sermon, which was written down and signed by the other friars, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Having made his introduction and said something about the Advent season, he began to speak of the sterile desert of the consciences of the Spaniards on this isle, and of the blindness in which they lived, going about in great danger of damnation and utterly heedless of the grave sins in which they lived and died.

"This voice," said he, "declares that you are in mortal sin, and live and die therein by reason of the cruelty and tyranny that you practice on these innocent people. Tell me, by what right or justice do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible slavery? By what right do you wage such detestable wars on these people who lived mildly and peacefully in their own lands, where you have consumed infinite numbers of them with unheard of murders and desolations? Why do you so greatly oppress and fatigue them, not giving them enough to eat or caring for them when they fall ill from excessive labors, so that they die or rather are slain by you, so that you may extract and acquire gold every day? And what care do you take that they receive religious instruction and come to know their God and creator, or that they be baptized, hear mass, or observe holidays and Sundays? Are they not men? Do they not have rational souls?"

Document 3:

Source: King Phillip II of Spain, *The Gold of the Indies*, 1559.

From New Spain are obtained gold and silver, cochineal [little insects like flies], from which crimson dye is made, leather, cotton, sugar and other things; but from Peru nothing is obtained except minerals. The fifth part of all that is produced goes to the king, but since the gold and silver is brought to Spain and he has a tenth part of that which goes to the mint and is refined and coined, he eventually gets one-fourth of the whole sum, which fourth does not exceed in all four or five hundred thousand ducats, although it is reckoned not alone at millions, but at millions of pounds. Nor is it likely that it will long remain at this figure, because great quantities of gold and silver are no longer found upon the surface of the earth, as they have been in past years; and to penetrate into the bowels of the earth requires greater effort, skill and outlay, and the Spaniards are not willing to do the work themselves, and the natives cannot be forced to do so, because the Emperor has freed them from all obligation of service as soon as they accept the Christian religion.

Document 4:

Source: Letter of a Seville merchant to his agent in Peru, 1553.

In order, with the aid of God, to avoid finding ourselves in such straits again, we are sending plenty of merchandise in the fleet, though however much it is, it will hardly be enough, because no other fleet will depart for a year. There is great scarcity of merchandise in New Spain, Santo Domingo, and the other places, and we feel sure that great profits have been made in New Spain; in the last letters from there they write that merchandise was sold for 130 percent and more, and people think it will be much more now, since no ship has come from there for almost a year and a half, and we expect a great treasure of money here.

Document 5:

Source: Pedro de Cieza de León, *Chronicles of the Incas*, 1540.

It is told for a fact of the rulers of this kingdom that in the days of their rule they had their representatives in the capitals of all the provinces, for in all these places there were larger and finer lodgings than in most of the other cities of this great kingdom, and many storehouses. They served as the head of the provinces or regions, and from every so many leagues around the tributes were brought to one of these capitals, and from so many others, to another. This was so well-organized that there was not a village that did not know where it was to send its tribute. In all these capitals the Incas had temples of the Sun, mints, and many silversmiths who did nothing but work rich pieces of gold or fair vessels of silver; large garrisons were stationed there, and a steward who was in command of them all, to whom an accounting of everything that was brought in was made, and who, in turn, had to give one of all that was issued. ...

Document 6:

Source: Pope Paul III, *Sublimas Dei*, May 29, 1537.

We, who, though unworthy, exercise on earth the power of our Lord and seek with all our might to bring those sheep of His flock who are outside into the fold committed to our charge, consider, however, that the Indians are truly men and that they are not only capable of understanding the Catholic Faith but, according to our information, they desire exceedingly to receive it. Desiring to provide ample remedy for these evils, We define and declare by these Our letters, or by any translation thereof signed by any notary public and sealed with the seal of any ecclesiastical dignitary, to which the same credit shall be given as to the originals, that, notwithstanding whatever may have been or may be said to the contrary, the said Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in any way enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null and have no effect.

Document 7:

Source: Juan Sevilla, sailor who visited the Caribbean, in his journal, 1518.

Disease was a major cause of their demise. However, on Columbus' 2nd voyage he began to require a tribute from the Arawak/Tainos. They were expected to yield a certain quantity of gold per capita. Failing that each adult of 14 was required to submit 25lbs. of cotton. For those who could not produce the cotton either, there was a service requirement for them to work for the Spanish. This set the stage for a system of assigning the Arawak/Taino to Spanish settlers as effective slave labor. This system contributed significantly to their lessening numbers.

Document 8:

Source: King Ferdinand's letter to the Taino people, early 1500's.

In the 5,000 years since creation the multitude of these enervations caused men to divide and establish kingdoms in various parts of the world, among whom God chose St. Peter as leader of mankind, regardless of their law, sect or belief. He seated St. Peter in Rome as the best place from which to rule the world but he allowed him to establish his seat in all parts of the world and rule all people, whether Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles or any other sect. He was named Pope, which means admirable and greatest father, governor of all men. Those who lived at that time obeyed St. Peter as Lord and superior King of the universe, and so did their descendants obey his successors and so on to the end of time.

The late Pope gave these islands and mainland of the ocean and the contents hereof to the above-mentioned King and Queen, as is certified in writing and you may see the documents if you should so desire.

Therefore, we request that you understand this text, deliberate on its contents within a reasonable time, and recognize the Church and its highest priest, the Pope, as rulers of the universe, and in their name the King and Queen of Spain as rulers of this land, allowing the religious fathers to preach our holy Faith to you. You own compliance as a duty to the King and we in his name will receive you with love and charity, respecting your freedom and that of your wives and sons and your rights of possession and we shall not compel you to baptism unless you, informed of the Truth, wish to convert to our holy Catholic Faith as almost all your neighbors have done in other islands, in exchange for which Their Highnesses bestow many privileges and exemptions upon you.

Document 9:

Source: Vasco da Gama, journal entry on his trip around Cape of Good Hope, 1498.

The city of Calicut is inhabited by Christians. [The first voyagers to India mistook the Hindus for Christians.] They are of tawny complexion. Some of them have big beards and long hair, whilst others clip their hair short or shave the head, merely allowing a tuft to remain on the crown as a sign that they are Christians. They also wear moustaches. They pierce the ears and wear much gold in them. They go naked down to the waist, covering their lower extremities with very fine cotton stuffs. But it is only the most respectable who do this, for the others manage as best they are able. The women of this country, as a rule, are ugly and of small stature. They wear many jewels of gold round the neck, numerous bracelets on their arms, and rings set with precious stones on their toes. All these people are well-disposed and apparently of mild temper. At first sight they seem covetous and ignorant.

Document 10:

Source: Treaty of Tordesillas, Pope Alexander VI divided the Western Hemisphere between Spain and Portugal, 1494.

Thereupon it was declared by the above-mentioned representatives of the aforesaid King and Queen of Castile, Leon, Aragon, Sicily, Granada, etc., and of the aforesaid King of Portugal and the Algarves, etc.:

[I.] That, whereas a certain controversy exists between the said lords, their constituents, as to what lands, of all those discovered in the ocean sea up to the present day, the date of this treaty, pertain to each one of the said parts respectively; therefore, for the sake of peace and concord, and for the preservation of the relationship and love of the said King of Portugal for the said King and Queen of Castile, Aragon, etc., it being the pleasure of their Highnesses, they, their said representatives, acting in their name and by virtue of their powers herein described, covenanted and agreed that a boundary or straight line be determined and drawn north and south, from pole to pole, on the said ocean sea, from the Arctic to the Antarctic pole. This boundary or line shall be drawn straight, as aforesaid, at a distance of three hundred and seventy leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, being calculated by degrees, or by any other manner as may be considered the best and readiest, provided the distance shall be no greater than above said.

Document 11:

Source: Christopher Columbus, extracts from his journal, 1492.

Whereas, Most Christian, High, Excellent, and Powerful Princes, King and Queen of Spain and of the Islands of the Sea, our Sovereigns, this present year 1492, after your Highnesses had terminated the war with the Moors reigning in Europe, the same having been brought to an end in the great city of Granada... and in the present month, in consequence of the information which I had given your Highnesses respecting the countries of India and of a Prince, called Great Can, which in our language signifies King of Kings, how, at many times he, and his predecessors had sent to Rome soliciting instructors who might teach him our holy faith, and the holy Father had never granted his request, whereby great numbers of people were lost, believing in idolatry and doctrines of perdition. Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians, and princes who love and promote the holy Christian faith, and are enemies of the doctrine of Mahomet, and of all idolatry and heresy, determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the above-mentioned countries of India, to see the said princes, people, and territories, and to learn their disposition and the proper method of converting them to our holy faith; and furthermore directed that I should not proceed by land to the East, as is customary, but by a Westerly route, in which direction we have hitherto no certain evidence that any one has gone. So after having expelled the Jews from your dominions, your Highnesses, in the same month of January, ordered me to proceed with a sufficient armament to the said regions of India...

Document 12:

Source: Pope Innocent VII, The Bull of Grenada, to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, allowed these monarchs claims to new land via the Reconquista, 1486.

Our chief concern and commission from heaven is the propagation of the orthodox faith, the increase of the Christian religion, the salvation of the barbarian nations, and the repression of infidels and their conversion to the faith. Hence it is that Catholic kings and princes, athletes of Christ and tireless warriors battling in that cause, never fail to find in us their deserved assistance and favor. For the more precarious that freely embraced combat for the sake of immortal God, the greater their insistence on diligent and expert pressing of the contest and the better they realize that, beyond the salvation of their souls, the Apostolic See grants them the most abundant recompense. This we gladly confer, and as a reward of their crusade make them rulers, guardians, and keepers of the lands they conquer and of the people their resident.