

Hernan Cortés: from Second Letter to Charles V, 1520

<p><i>Idol</i>: a figure of worship <i>Moctezuma</i>: Aztec leader</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why would Cortes replace the idols with pictures of Our Lady & the Saints? (Catholic images) What are his beliefs about idols? 2. What is it ironic that the King (your majesty) forbade killing? 3. In addition to taking out idols from Aztec temples, what other tradition was Cortes trying to stop? 	<p>Three halls are in this grand temple, <u>which contain the principal idols</u>; these are of wonderful extent and height, and admirable workmanship, adorned with figures sculptured in stone and wood; leading from the halls are chapels with very small doors, to which the light is not admitted, nor are any persons except the priests, and not all of them. <u>In these chapels are the images of idols</u>, although, as I have before said, many of them are also found on the outside; the principal ones, in which the people have greatest faith and confidence, <u>I precipitated from their pedestals, and cast them down the steps of the temple, purifying the chapels in which they had stood, as they were all polluted with human blood, shed in the sacrifices. In the place of these I put images of Our Lady and the Saints...</u> I answered, through the interpreters, that they were deceived in expecting any favors from idols, the work of their own hands, formed of unclean things; and <u>that they must learn there was but one God, the universal Lord of all, who had created the heavens and earth</u>, and all things else, and had made them and us; that He was without beginning and immortal, and they were bound to adore and believe Him, and no other creature or thing.</p> <p>I said everything to them I could to divert them from their idolatries, and <u>draw them to a knowledge of God our Lord...</u> Moctezuma and many of the principal citizens remained with me until I had removed the idols, purified the chapels, and placed the images in them, manifesting apparent pleasure; and <u>I forbade them sacrificing human beings to their idols as they had been accustomed to do; because, besides being abhorrent in the sight of God, your sacred Majesty had prohibited it by law, and commanded to put to death whoever should take the life of another.</u> Thus, from that time, they refrained from the practice, and during the whole period of my abode in that city, they were never seen to kill or sacrifice a human being.</p> <p>The figures of the idols in which these people believe surpass in stature a person of more than ordinary size; some of them are composed of a mass of seeds and leguminous plants, such as are used for food, ground and mixed together, and <u>kneaded with the blood of human hearts taken from the breasts of living persons</u>, from which a paste is formed in a sufficient quantity to form large statues. When these are completed they make them offerings of the hearts of other victims, which they sacrifice to them, and besmear their faces with the blood. For everything they have an idol, consecrated by the use of the nations that in ancient times honored the same gods. Thus they have an idol that they petition for victory in war; another for success in their labors; and so for everything in which they seek or desire prosperity, they have their idols, which they honor and serve.</p>
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1. What were the main purposes that Spanish Conquistadors wanted to colonize South America?

2. Do you think the Conquistadors did a good job evangelizing to the natives? Why or why not, give examples.

From Narrative of the Conquest of Peru, by his secretary, Francisco de Xeres, 1530-34

<p>1. What was the Captain trying to teach the Incan people?</p>	<p>He (a Spanish Captain) advanced, with a cross in one hand and the Bible in the other, and going amongst the troops up to the place where Atahualpa (an Incan King) was, thus addressed him: "<u>I am a priest of God, and I teach Christians the things of God, and in like manner I come to teach you. What I teach is that which God says to us in this Book.</u> Therefore, on the part of God and of the Christians, I beseech you to be their friend, for such is God's will, and it will be for your good. Go and speak to the Governor, who waits for you."</p>
<p>2. How did Atahualpa, the Incan leader, respond to the Bible?</p>	<p>Atahualpa asked for the Book, that he might look at it, and the priest gave it to him closed. Atahualpa did not know how to open it, and the priest was extending his arm to do so, when Atahualpa, <u>in great anger, gave him a blow on the arm, not wishing that it should be opened.</u> Then he opened it himself, and, without any astonishment at the letters and paper, as had been shown by other Indians, he threw it away from him five or six paces, and, to the words which the monk had spoken to him through the interpreter, he answered with much scorn, saying: "<u>I know well how you have behaved on the road, how you have treated my chiefs, and taken the cloth from my storehouses.</u>" The monk replied: "The Christians have not done this, but some Indians took the cloth without the knowledge of the Governor, and he ordered it to be restored." Atahualpa said: "<u>I will not leave this place until they bring it all to me.</u>" The monk returned with this reply to the Governor.</p>
<p>3. When blamed for stolen cloth, the Spanish leaders responded in what way?</p>	<p>Then the <u>guns were fired off, the trumpets were sounded, and the troops, both horse and foot, sallied forth.</u> On seeing the horses charge, many of the Indians who were in the open space fled, and such was the force with which they ran that they broke down part of the wall surrounding it, and many fell over each other. <u>The horsemen rode them down, killing and wounding, and following in pursuit. The infantry made so good an assault upon those that remained that in a short time most of them were put to the sword. The Governor still held Atahualpa by the arm, not being able to pull him out of the litter because he was raised so high. Then the Spaniards made such a slaughter amongst those who carried the litter that they fell to the ground, and, if the Governor had not protected Atahualpa, that proud man would there have paid for all the cruelties he had committed.</u> The Governor, in protecting Atahualpa, received a slight wound in the hand. <u>During the whole time no Indian raised his arms against a Spaniard.</u></p>
<p>4. Why do you think the Spaniards reacted in this way?</p>	<p>So great was the terror of the Indians at seeing the Governor force his way through them, at hearing the fire of the artillery, and beholding the charging of horses, a thing never before heard of, that <u>they thought more of flying to save their lives than of fighting.</u> All those who bore the litter of Atahualpa appeared to be principal chiefs. <u>They were all killed, as well as those who were carried in the other litters and hammocks...</u></p>
<p>5. Why did the Spanish choose to save Atahualpa's life?</p>	<p><u>. . . Atahualpa feared that the Spaniards would kill him, so he told the Governor that he would give his captors a great quantity of gold and silver. The Governor asked him: "How much can you give, and in what time?" Atahualpa said: "I will give gold enough to fill a room twenty-two feet long and seventeen wide, up to a white line which is halfway up the wall."</u> The height would be that of a man's stature and a half. He said that, up to that mark, he would fill the room with different kinds of golden vessels, such as jars, pots, vases, besides lumps and other pieces. As for silver, he said he would fill the whole chamber with it twice over. <u>He undertook to do this in two months. The Governor told him to send off messengers with this object, and that, when it was accomplished, he need have no fear....</u></p> <p>[After receiving the huge ransom from Atahualpa, Pizarro charges the Inca with conspiring against him.]</p>
<p>6. Why was Atahualpa sentenced to death?</p>	<p>Then the Governor, with the concurrence of the officers of his Majesty, and of the captains and persons of experience, sentenced Atahualpa to death. <u>His sentence was that, for the treason he had committed, he should die by burning, unless he became a Christian . . .</u></p> <p><u>They brought out Atahualpa to execution; and, when he came into the square, he said he would become a Christian. The Governor was informed, and ordered him to be baptized.</u> The ceremony was performed by the very reverend Father Friar Vicente de Valverde. <u>The Governor then ordered that he should not be burned, but that he should be fastened to a pole in the open space and strangled.</u> This was done, and the body was left until the morning of the next day, when the monks, and the Governor with the other Spaniards, conveyed it into the church, where it was interred with much solemnity, and with all the honors that could be shown it. Such was the end of this man, who had been so cruel. He died with great fortitude, and without showing any feeling . . .</p>