

DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIAN DISCOVERY

These were a series of “Papal Bulls” (proclamations from the Pope) that said if you arrive on a foreign land and the inhabitants were not Christians, they were essentially enemies of Christ.



Pope Nicolas V

From Bull Romanus Pontifex:

"capture, vanquish, and subdue the Saracens, pagans, and other enemies of Christ, put them into perpetual slavery, take all their possessions and property."

The inhabitants were essentially equivalent to the moose and the deer. This proclamation was made 40 years before Columbus sailed to the New World.

Johnson v. M'Intosh (1823) was a Supreme Court ruling by Justice Marshall that created precedent for Doctrine of Discovery into US Law. It ruled that Europeans “discovery of North America superseded any American Indian claims to all the land. The Court went on to say that the Indians did not own land outright, but that they had rights to occupy lands and only the discovering nation (US) could settle those land rights.

A movement of repudiation the Doctrine of Discovery started in 2009 with the Episcopal Church, World Council of Churches, Society of Friends (Quakers), and Unitarian Universalists. More recently the United Church of Christ, Presbyterian and Evangelical Lutheran Churches have joined. This is a good first step, but we all need to also contemplate our next steps to decolonize. [L] [SEP]

This Doctrine of Christian Discovery thinking is so deeply embedded in the mindset of this country that it was cited as recently as 2005 by the United States Supreme Court in ruling against the Oneida in the case Sherrill vs. the Oneida Nation. [L] [SEP]

