

## Torquemada, the Inquisition, And the Expulsion of the Jews

by Timothy Rush

Even after 1492, when the Jews were expelled from Spain, there was no anti-Semitism. It was not a religious question. It was not a racial question. Their expulsion from Spain in 1492 had been a military question—the Jews had allied with the Moors, and for military reasons of state security, the Hapsburgs could no longer have the Jews in Spain.

*Fernando Quijano, "Black Legend hides the truth about America's Discovery," speech delivered Sept. 2, 1990 (EIR, Oct. 19, 1990).*

The essential conflict between Europe and Islam must be seen in the context of the earlier alliance between Charlemagne and the Baghdad Caliphate's Haroun el-Rashid. The origin of the conflict is essentially traced to the period approximately 1000-1400 A.D., when Europe was dominated by the so-called 'ultramontane' partnership of usurious Venetian financier-oligarchy and the Norman chivalry. This partnership authored all of the crusades, from the Albigensian Crusade and the Norman Conquest of England through the Fourth Crusade and beyond.

This came to an end, temporarily, with the collapse of the ultramontane system of the Venetian-Norman tyranny in the so-called New Dark Age of Europe's Fourteenth Century. During the period of the Fifteenth Century Renaissance prior to the fall of Constantinople, and beyond, European leading policy was the peace of faith doctrine of Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa.

Later, with the rise to power of a deadly adversary of that Renaissance, the Spanish Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada, and Torquemada's expulsion of the Jews from Spain (and condemnation of the Moors, too), the modern form of religious warfare was launched. . . .

To understand the modern Venetian and later Anglo-

Dutch Liberal operations against Islam, we must study the way in which Grand Inquisitor Torquemada's 1492 decrees (dictated to the Spanish monarch) set into motion the internal religious warfare, led by the Habsburgs, in Europe, which continued until the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia.

*Lyndon LaRouche, e-mail reply to a correspondent, Jan. 7, 2005.*

The Hitler regime typifies nothing other than the "Beast-Man" concept of Martinist ideologue Joseph de Maistre, and of such Maistre followers as Friedrich Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt's beloved Nazi philosopher, Martin Heidegger. However, as Maistre himself insisted, . . . his proximate model for what we have come to know as the Nazi and Nazi-like model echoed by Vice President Cheney today, was the Spanish Grand Inquisitor.

This role of the Spanish Inquisition, and its continuing ideological tradition via Franco's Spain, is of crucial significance for the endangered security of the American continents today. . . . [It] is no mere literary-historical curiosity. The abuse of the nations and peoples of South and Central America, chiefly by the U.S. and Britain, since, especially, 1982, has built up an accumulation of both left- and right-wing revivals of, ironically, often U.S.-backed Synarchist hatred against the U.S., which has turned those looted parts of the hemisphere into a hotbed of potential we dare not ignore. The right-wing admirers of the tradition of the Spanish Inquisition are, ultimately, the great source of internal danger to the Americas as a whole, from this quarter. The left-wing varieties are, like British agents Danton and Marat, and also the Jacobin Terrorists, the political cannon-fodder fertilizing the ground for the com-



*This Synagogue of the Transition, built in Toledo in the mid-14th century, reflects the highly developed and well-established position of Judaism in the Spain of the Convivencia, the “living-together” of the three major Western religions.*

ing of a reactionary Synarchist tyrant like Napoleon or Hitler.”

*Jeffrey Steinberg, The Children of Satan, 2004, pp. 113-4.*

Fernando Quijano made his astounding 1990 assertion while nominally a leading associate of Lyndon LaRouche, who at the time had been subject to a political show-trial and was incarcerated in Federal prison. It would not be until LaRouche was freed from parole conditions ten years later, that investigations could assemble the true picture of Quijano’s perfidy. He had become an agent of such neo-con controllers of Central American death-squads as Iran-Contra associate Nestor Sanchez, and had embraced the tenet of the geopolitical poison summarized in Samuel Huntington’s *The Soldier and the State* (1957): “You don’t know who you are unless you know who you hate.” Among Quijano’s associates today in the circles of St. Catherine of Siena church and Christendom College in Northern Virginia, are ardent opponents of Pope John Paul II, who eagerly desire the Pope’s passing, to open a return to a “Crusader Church Militant.”

It is time to return to the real stage of history, to see just how the rise of Torquemada’s Inquisition and the Expulsion of the Jews was neither historically inevitable (the Spanish destiny idea—a *cosa de España*) nor justifiable. Ironically, both defenders and detractors of the Inquisition, accept as a given that it is, centrally, a *Spanish* phenomenon; when, in fact, it must be seen as simply one, particularly vivid, arena for the interplay of European-wide forces building the Renaissance and the nation-state commonwealth mission, on one

side, and the “blood and soil,” “clash of civilizations” oligarchic forces seeking to crush the Renaissance in religious war, on the other.

Quijano’s one sentence justification of the expulsion of the Jews is a whopper by any stretch of the imagination. For one, the Hapsburgs did not cement their control over Spain until the succession of Charles V of Austria as Charles the First of Spain in 1517. The Spain of Isabel and Fernando<sup>1</sup> was a wholly different matter of many rich possible outcomes, ultimately frustrated by the currents which directed the Inquisition.

But, more fundamentally, the notion that the Jews were some kind of Fifth Column, whose mortal threat to “state security” could only be excised by mass expulsion, is a staggering misrepresentation of the profound Iberian identity of the Jewish community of Spain, an identity and contribution akin to the role of Jews in Germany in the interval from the time of Moses Mendelssohn to the rise of the Nazis. After their 1492 expulsion, the Jews of Spain became known as the “Sephardim,” from the Hebrew word for Spain, *Sepharad*. So deep was their cultural identification with Spain, despite the shattering nature of the expulsion, a “second diaspora,” that Sephardim communities from Morocco to the Balkans were still speaking a form of Castilian, called *Ladino*, 400 years later. Some of the purest living versions of medieval Spanish ballads (*romances*) have been collected in modern times in these Sephardic communities. A refugee Sephardic congregation in Canada in the 1980s, dedicated its synagogue as *Kehi-*

1. Spanish usage is adopted in this article as a general rule for names of people and places: hence, Fernando rather than Ferdinand.



*lla Anshei Castilia*, (congregation of the people of Castile). In the early 1990s, as geopolitical maneuverings lit conflagration in the Balkans, 57 Sephardic Jews of Sarajevo successfully sought return, not to Israel, but to Spain.

The story of the Moslem-Jewish-Christian intermingling in the Iberian Peninsula from 711, when the invading Moslems overthrew the Visigothic kingdoms of Iberia, to 1492, a cultural florescence known as “Convivencia,” (literally, “living together”), is magnificently told in such recent histories as María Rosa Menocal’s *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, and Jane S. Gerber’s *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*. The Andalusian poetic flowering, brought to southern France and Italy by the troubadours, inspired much of the work of Dante and his successors, setting the cultural and political stage for the outpourings of the Italian Renaissance in the 15th Century (See Muriel Mirak-Weissbach’s work, cited in “Suggested Readings” below). An enormous reservoir of the learning of the ancient Greeks, became known throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, only through the translation projects based in Spain of the Convivencia, involving Arabic and Hebrew language transmission modes.

Though this Convivencia suffered many ebbs and flows in its long course (one of its gravest setbacks was the invasion of fundamentalist Berber tribes, the Almoravids and Almohads, overrunning the Iberian Moslem kingdoms in the late 12th Century), its resiliency was astonishing. Quite contrary to the conventional view that the Christian Reconquest of the peninsula was the Iberian component of the contemporary Crusades, and that it inevitably brought with it a surge of intolerance, the Reconquest which had its most rapid period of advance in the first half of the 13th Century, initially revived the spirit of the previous flowering of Convivencia in the Córdoba in the late 10th Century reign of Abd al-Rahman III. The great translation school of Christian King Alfonso X

“the Wise” (reigned, 1252-84), was only one manifestation of this revival, already presaged in the multilingual (Castilian, Hebrew, Latin, and Arabic) inscription on the tomb of his father, Fernando III, who had carried out the dramatic conquests of Seville and Córdoba. Historians variously ascribe to both Fernando and Alfonso the self-appellation of “king of the three religions”; it can aptly be claimed by both. Dom Diniz of Portugal (reigned 1279-1325) represented the same kind of figure in the Portuguese kingdom.

The echo of the quality of the Jewish contributions to “convivencia” Iberia, in similar contributions to Germany starting in the late 18th Century, is captured in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s play *Nathan the Wise*. Not only does Lessing base the character of the Jew, Nathan, on

the character of his cherished friend and collaborator Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), but the famous “Parable of the Rings” which is the pivot of the lessons of tolerance so fervently advanced by Lessing, is expanded from a story in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*—which, in turn, was based on a story first recorded in Spanish and Hebrew literature of Spain in about 1100! In the original, a King Pedro of Aragon summons a wealthy Jew, one Ephraim Sanchus, and demands which of the two religions, Christianity or Judaism, was superior. He intends to trap the Jew and have a pretext to confiscate his goods. Either Ephraim will offend the King by defending Judaism as superior; or he will admit the superiority of Christianity, in which case he will have to convert. Ephraim outwits the King, by relating the story of a jeweler who, upon leaving on a trip, had given each of his two sons a precious ring. The two sons had that morning asked Ephraim to identify which ring was the most valuable, but when Ephraim told them that they should await the return of the jeweler, they abused him and beat him. The king exclaims that this certainly was unseemly behavior. “Let thine ear hear what thy mouth speaketh,” rejoins Ephraim. “The brothers Esau and Jacob, they also, have each a precious jewel and, if thou wouldst know which one possesses the better stone, then send a messenger to the Great Jeweler above, for ’tis He alone who knows the difference.” King Pedro recognizes the wisdom of this answer and dismisses Ephraim with honor and gifts.

Lessing’s additions to the tale are crucial for an additional quality of the Convivencia model, which moves it beyond just a plea for religious tolerance. As in the Italian intermediate versions, he adds Islam to the contest as to which is the superior religion. And he adds a crucial quality to the ring, this time given in copies to each of three sons of a loving father who cannot decide which of his sons should be given the “true ring” and thus inherit the family domains. Lessing’s ring has the special power to make its possessor beloved of man and God. When the three sons quarrel over which has the true



*Alfonso X "The Wise," King of Castile, who ruled in the mid-13th century, presided over a renaissance of learning which involved Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He was known as the "king of the three religions." His father's tombstone contained writing in Hebrew and Arabic, as well as Castilian and Latin.*

ring, and seek recourse in a judge to decide, the judge at first declares that *none* of the three bitterly quarreling sons can have the true ring—none of them has the power to make himself beloved of the other two. The brothers naturally protest, at which point the judge extends his verdict: "Let each son vie with his two brothers to bring to light the promised virtue of the ring he wears upon his finger! Let each son always nourish this great virtue to shine forth through gentleness, a loving spirit, deeds of kindness, and a most fervent piety and devotion to his God! Then, in days to come, when the magic powers contained within these rings, worn by your children's children, will brighten up the world, I'll call you once again before this seat of judgment, after a thousand thousand years have passed. On that day a wiser man will sit upon it and hand down his decision. And now, depart!"

### **The "Ultramontane" Dagger: The Crusades and the Dominican Inquisition**

The companion showcase of Convivencia to Spain in the early 13th Century was the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II Hohenstauffen in Sicily, and his respectful relations with the successors of the legendary Saladin, the late 12th Century Sultan of the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean. It is noteworthy that Boccaccio's version of the Ring Parable, as does Lessing's after him, inserts the name of Saladin as the Moslem ruler summoning the Jew to the religious interrogation, and subsequently granting the wisdom of the lesson of the parable.

The religious fanaticism and venal confiscatory motives behind the Crusades, as steered behind the scenes in the "ultramontane" interests of the Venetian-Norman alliance, fell like a thunderclap on Frederick II's court. Before the storm subsided, all direct descendents of Frederick had been hunted down and killed (see Dante's poignant recounting of this persecution in his *Divine Comedy*). In an earlier phase of the Crusades, Bernard de Clairvaux had made sure that the incipient Renaissance tendencies of Abelard were crushed, as Bernard mobilized feudal contingents for the voyage to the Holy Lands. In the Fourth Crusade of 1204, the Venetians skipped the Holy Lands altogether and sent the Crusaders to sack Constantinople, held by Eastern Orthodox Christian rulers.

Wherever the Crusader hordes passed in Europe on their way to Mediterranean destinations, they lost few opportunities to pillage and massacre the small Jewish communities dotting the routes. Thus was the renowned center of Jewish learning in Mainz obliterated in 1096 by contingents of the First Crusade. Later, Jews were entirely expelled from England in 1290 by Edward III, and intermittently expelled and then allowed return in France, starting with Philip the Fair in 1306.

At the height of the Crusades, in the late 12th Century, the Ultramontane forces added a new element to their armamentarium: Inquisition. It was only a pale forerunner of what Torquemada would unleash in Spain three centuries later, but it carried the germs of the subsequent virulence within it. Pope Lucius III issued a decretal in 1184 which first established a procedure for ecclesiastical findings of heresy, with punishment assigned to lay (secular) power. A decretal of Pope Innocent III, in 1199, for the first time placed heresy within the Roman law provisions dealing with treason, and wide-ranging further applications of Roman Law precedents were ratified at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. With the founding of the Franciscan mendicant order in 1209, and more especially that of the Dominicans in 1220, the popes of the time found precisely the kind of friars—imbued with better training in the doctrinal matters relevant to ferreting out heretics than that of the regular clergy, and operating without allegiances to specific localities—which could staff a special inquisitorial procedure. In the midst of the Crusade to snuff out the Albigensian (Cathar) heresy in southern France, Pope Gregory IX issued a Letter to the prior of the Dominican convent of Regensburg, authorizing a travelling group of Dominican inquisitors, with a clearly implied death penalty provision (the doctrine of "animadversio debita," the "debt of hatred"). Burning at the stake was a punishment widely adopted by secular criminal procedures of the time. But it was a revolution in Church procedure, since heresy previously was considered, in the tradition of St. Augustine, as a deviance at worst punishable by excommunication and confiscation of property. The next year, 1232, saw the definitive founding of an Inquisition as an institution.

This original form of the Inquisition, although it lasted

for several centuries, was limited in both scope and territory. It was convened only sporadically, never had a permanent headquarters, always functioned in close coordination with resident bishops, and was concentrated in southern France, with a lesser offshoot into the Spanish kingdoms of Aragon and Catalonia (Barcelona), because of a spill-over effect of the Cathar heresy into that traditionally independent-minded area. It was never established in Castile, which, with approximately 5 million inhabitants, dwarfed the population of the kingdom of Aragon (comprising the jointly administered territories of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia) by a ratio of three to one.

### The Cusa Option

The forces behind the Inquisition, especially the Dominicans (known popularly as the “Hounds of the Lord,” based on a pun in Latin) had a difficult task in fundamentally breaching the Convivencia traditions of Spain. One of the major stumbling blocks was the sheer size of the Jewish community in Spain. Comprising between a quarter and a half million Jews, it constituted the overwhelming majority of all Jewry in Europe at the time, and had been an active force on the Iberian peninsula back to before the time of Christ. Another stumbling block was the jurisdiction of the Inquisition itself: It could only punish heresy, and thus, by definition could not be applied directly against Jews, who by never professing the Christian faith, could not stray from it. A third obstacle, was the long Spanish medieval tradition whereby kings took on as a special obligation the protection of Jews and other minorities as their personal vassals. A fourth, was the continuing vigorous application of contrary principles within the Church itself.

This last element was epitomized by the role of the great Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64) in the re-building of the Papacy after the shattering Great Schism. For half a century preceding the Council of Constance in 1415, there were two, and even for a period, three, rival Popes. Cusa not only assisted in the re-establishment of the functioning and authority of a single Pope based in Rome, but was a towering figure in the Council of Florence (1438-41), which reunited the Eastern and Western Churches for the first time in over 400 years.

Cusa’s contributions to the founding of modern science and statecraft cannot be summarized here (see Wertz, *Toward a New Council of Florence*), but of special relevance is Cusa’s response to the Ottoman Turk capture of Constantinople in 1453. The fall of Constantinople was no cause for sorrow in Venice, which had strategic understandings with the Ottomans. Venice may even have helped the Turks to breach Constantinople’s walls, in revenge for the success of the Council of Florence thrust, which brought a surge of Platonic Christian studies into the center of the burgeoning Italian Renaissance. But for the rest of Christendom, it was a disaster of enormous magnitude. A Crusade had been preached by Pope Eugenius IV in 1444, and it was a natural reaction to return to the



*Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, shown here, represented the antithesis of the Inquisition approach, as he showed by responding to the capture of Constantinople by the Muslims by writing the “Peace of Faith.”*

Crusader mentality of “Death to the Infidel.”

Instead, Cusa wrote one of the crowning ecumenical works of the age, *De Pace Fidei*, “On the Peace of Faith.” In this dialogue, situated in heaven, representatives of every possible faith and culture—Jew, Christian, Arab, Tatar, Indian, Chaldean, Persian, and many more—converse with the Holy Spirit and fathers of the Church such as St. Paul. They all converge on the concept that the search for wisdom may have many paths but there can only be one true Wisdom, through which divergent religious rites can lead a believer. But those rites can never substitute for the ineffable God-head himself.

Such a work brought to a high-point, a long-standing current which argued that “water is stronger than fire”—that is, that uncoerced conversions, leading to baptism (hence, “water”), was more efficacious than the methods of the sword and the Inquisition (“fire”). That current had had a staunch and brilliant advocate in the Catalan Ramón Llull (1232-1315), who composed a dialogue in Arabic, in which the three characters were a Jew, a Christian, and a Moslem. It is noteworthy that the first compiler of a manual of Inquisition practice, Nicolau Eymerich, fulminated against Llull and tried to have his work banned, later in the 14th Century; and that Cusa’s library included one of the most extensive collections of Llull’s works then in existence.

Cusa’s collaborators at the Council of Florence, included the outstanding Spanish Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, Tomás de Torquemada’s uncle. Juan de Torquemada had previously served as Pope Eugenius IV’s official theologian at the Council of Basle. At the Council of Florence, Juan led the

theological debates with the representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church on such questions as the Eucharist and Purgatory, which led to the final reunion agreement. During the Council, he was elevated to the cardinalate by Pope Eugenius IV, who described him as the “defender of the faith.” He also distinguished himself, along with Nicholas of Cusa, in criticizing the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, which include the fraudulent Donation of Constantine used to justify ultramontane claims (i.e., that the Pope wielded ultimate political as well as spiritual authority).

A decade after the Council, Juan wrote a defense of the Conversos (Jews converted to Christianity) when the Conversos came under attack for being fatally “tainted” with Jewish blood. He himself may have had a Conversa grandmother or great-grandmother; but he was defending passionately a central tenet of the Church, that with baptism and acceptance of Christian faith, all Christians were on an equal footing, irrespective of previous belief or ancestry. Another of Cusa’s closest collaborators was the deacon of Lisbon, Fernão Martins, who directly transmitted the work of the Council of Florence into Portugal, and who, on Cusa’s death in 1464, served as one of the three executors of Cusa’s estate. Later, he was to convey the famous map of Cusa collaborator Toscanelli, to Columbus (see below).

Thus, far from Spain being “fated” to succumb to the “unity of faith” mission subsequently attributed to it by most historians, there was indeed a historical option of great weight and tradition, that might have led to a different outcome in the momentous year of 1492.

## Breaking Spain

Even though St. Dominic came from northern Spain, the Dominican order made little progress in the direction of stifling the Convivencia during the 13th Century. Dominican Ramón de Peñafort did succeed in inserting certain anti-Jewish provisions in the *Siete Partidas* compendium of law assembled under King Alfonso X, but these were advisory only and never took hold. Similarly treated were Ramón’s anti-Jewish provisions in the *Fueros* (codes of feudal rights and privileges) of Aragon.

The next two centuries were to see the wall breached, and then crumble.

The mid-1300s were decisive in the change of historical vector. The impact of the Black Death was not quite as severe in Spain as in other parts of Europe, but had a devastating effect nevertheless. It proved fertile ground for a popular upswell, nurtured by the Dominicans, which blamed the Jews for the calamity. Then in the 1360s, the Iberian peninsula became entangled in the next phase of the Little Dark Age breakdown, which became known as the Hundred Years’ War. Civil war raged in Castile as Enrique of Trastámara challenged the reign of King Pedro (dubbed “The Cruel” in later official histories). The triumphant Enrique held it against Pedro that many of the leading Jewish families had aligned

with Pedro, and for a time encouraged the growth of anti-Jewish sentiment.

However when, in the late 1370s, a Dominican archdeacon of Ecija, Ferrant Martínez, began incendiary anti-Jewish preaching in Andalucía, the *aljama* (also known as *judería*, the Jewish district) of Seville, successfully petitioned Enrique for protection. The same protection was forthcoming from Enrique’s successor, Juan I, in anti-Jewish upsurges sparked by the Dominican Martínez, in 1382 and 1388.

But when Juan died, in October of 1390, his son, Enrique III, was only 11 years old. Ferrant Martínez exploited the weakened position of the crown, to push the Seville tinderbox to complete explosion. Intersecting a period of economic distress, Martínez unleashed a mob in June 1391, which ransacked the Jewish quarter, killing several hundred and leaving the *judería* in ruins. The mob then moved on to non-Jewish targets among the privileged classes. A wave of anti-Jewish pogroms moved with startling speed through the rest of Andalucía and much of Castile, Valencia, Murcia, and even into Catalonia, in the immediate summer months. In Valencia, an estimated 250 were murdered; in Barcelona, 400.

The kings and other authorities brought the wave of violence under control, less quickly in Castile, more quickly in the other realms. A Jewish chronicler reported that in Aragon, “Many of the governors of the cities, and the ministers and nobles, defended us, and many of our brethren took refuge in castles, where they provided us with food.” But the damage was done. In many cases, those not murdered were compelled to convert; in districts less directly threatened, many converted anyway, to remove themselves from the line of fire. Although there had been a trickle of conversions before (most notably that of Salomon ha-Levy of Burgos, a rabbi who converted to become a notable church prelate with the name of Pablo de Santa María, a short while before the pogroms), 1391 marked the advent of a large and growing number of *Conversos*, Jews converted to Christianity. They also became known as New Christians; and more pejoratively “Marranos,” a term of obscure origin but later claimed to come from a word meaning “swine.”

The community which remained Jewish, lost not only many of its members to the wave of conversion, but also much of its leadership and quality of rabbinical scholarship. Two of the most prominent rabbis, Isaac b. Sheshet of Zaragoza and Valencia, and Simon Duran of Majorca, fled Spain completely. As the intensity of yeshiva (rabbinical study centers) life declined, there was a rise of Cabbalistic mysticism. The decline in the numbers, wealth, and vitality of the Jewish community would be continuous for almost a hundred years, though there was a spark of renewal in the decade just before the expulsion.

## The Conversos

The next wave of conversions came hard on the heels of the first. Fray Vicente Ferrer, a Dominican whose fervent

preaching achieved even greater renown than that of Martínez, sparked a new, although less severe wave of anti-Jewish violence in the Murcia-Valencia area around 1410. The subsequent surge in converts ultimately surpassed even those of 1391, and extended to Castile and Aragon. In this climate, the converso Pablo de Santa María, now Chancellor of Castile, was able to promulgate the *Ordenamiento de Doña Catalina*, which decreed that Jews and Moslems had to wear special identifying badges, could only dress in coarse clothing in public, and could not occupy higher trades and offices, including medicine. The ordinance was unenforceable and generally disregarded, but furthered the anti-Jewish climate. Then in 1414, the schismatic Pope Benedict XIII arrived to personally preside over the famed Disputation of Tortosa. Leading rabbis were forced to defend Jewish belief in the face of a phalanx of Old and New Christian interrogators. Although most accounts indicate the rabbis held their own, the hostile environment led to a further increase in conversion.

Why did such a large number of Jews convert, rather than face martyrdom or find a way to emigrate? The smaller Jewish populations of other parts of Europe in the preceding centuries had often accepted the fate of death rather than conversion. Further, if we accept the obvious point that many of the first conversions were forced (*anusim*, in the Hebrew term for unwilling converts, and there was an acknowledged body of rabbinic sanction for this, including from Maimonides), then

why did not many of the unwilling later find opportunity to re-settle, or otherwise return to Judaism, once the initial spasms of persecution abated—as the persecutions did?

The answer which many recent scholars have derived, including Jewish ones, is that most of the converts were not *anusim*, but *meshumadim*—that is, voluntary converts. True, the 1391 pogroms and continuing hostile climate fostered by Vicente Ferrer's preaching, constituted more than a little "push." But the tremendous numbers who "never looked back" can only be understood in relation to the long and distinguished role Jews had played in the Convivencia environment. They had been involved in matters of culture and economic entrepreneurship for centuries, way beyond those enjoyed by other Jewish groups in Europe. This higher involvement, had loosened the insularity which could feed a martyr's response. And in passing over to becoming Christians, many gained renewed access to cultural, economic, and government functionary activities that were gradually closing down to them as Jews, but which they saw as part of their heritage.

The first half of the 1400s, when this wave of conversions began to work its way into second and third generations of extraordinary achievement, was also the period when the breakthroughs centered in the Italian Renaissance were spreading rapidly into the Iberian Peninsula. The Conversos were among the groups most alive to this new influence.

## The Catholic Encyclopedia On Tomás De Torquemada

The following is an excerpt from the current on-line entry of the *Catholic Encyclopedia* on Tomás de Torquemada, a view contrary to the tenets of Pope John Paul II, but a demonstration of how active certain unreconstructed apologists for a renewed medievalism in the Church are today.

"First Grand Inquisitor of Spain, born at Valladolid in 1420; died at Ávila, 16 September, 1498. . . . The Infanta Isabella chose him as her confessor while at Segovia, and when she succeeded to the throne of Castile in 1474 he became one of her most trusted and influential councilors, but refused all high ecclesiastical preferments, choosing to remain a simple friar.

"At that time the purity of the Catholic Faith in Spain was in great danger from the numerous Marranos and Moriscos, who, for material considerations, became sham converts from Judaism and Mohammedanism to Christianity. The Marranos committed serious outrages against Christianity and endeavoured to judaize the whole of Spain. The Inquisition, which the Catholic sovereigns had been

empowered to establish by Sixtus IV in 1478, had, despite unjustifiable cruelties, failed of its purpose, chiefly for want of centralization. In 1483 the pope appointed Torquemada, who had been an assistant inquisitor since 11 February 1482, Grand Inquisitor of Castile, and on 17 October extended his jurisdiction over Aragon.

". . . The Marranos found a powerful means of evading the tribunals in the Jews of Spain, whose riches had made them very influential and over whom the Inquisition had no jurisdiction. On this account Torquemada urged the sovereigns to compel all the Jews either to become Christians or to leave Spain. . . . Chiefly through his instrumentality the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492.

"Much has been written of the inhuman cruelty of Torquemada. . . . Whether Torquemada's ways of ferreting out and punishing heretics were justifiable is a matter that has to be decided not only by comparison with the penal standard of the fifteenth century, but also, and chiefly, by an inquiry into their necessity for the preservation of Christian Spain. The contemporary Spanish chronicler, Sebastian de Olmedo . . . calls Torquemada 'the hammer of heretics, the light of Spain, the saviour of his country, the honour of his order.' "

by Timothy Rush

Conversos or their descendents reached special prominence in four particular areas: civil administration, the intelligentsia, the Church, and medicine. Exemplary of those who rose to the highest ranks of civil administration in Castile was Diego Arias Dávila, the finance minister of King Enrique IV, Isabel's half-brother and predecessor. In Aragon, the Converso Santangel, de la Caballería, Santa Fe, and Sánchez families were major powers. Luis de Santangel, treasurer to Fernando the Catholic, was a principal financier of Columbus's voyage. The historian Henry Kamen observes that in Aragon, "at the very moment that the Inquisition began to function, five conversos—Luis de Santangel, Gabriel Sánchez, Sancho de Paternoy, Felipe Climent, and Alfonso de la Caballería—held the five most important posts in the kingdom." There is evidence indicating that Fernando of Aragon himself had Converso ancestors several generations back, and there are those who argue an even more distant Converso element in Isabel's background.

The notable churchmen of converso background, in addition to the above-mentioned Pablo de Santa María, who became bishop of Cartagena and then Burgos before advancing to papal legate, included his eldest son Gonzalo, who became bishop successively of Astorga, Plasencia, and Sigüenza; his second son, the famed Alonso de Cartagena, who followed his father as bishop of Burgos; the previously mentioned Cardinal Juan de Torquemada; Juan Arias, bishop of Segovia and son of Diego Arias Dávila; and Hernando de Talavera, in succession Isabel's confessor, bishop of Seville, and archbishop of Granada. Alonso de Cartagena headed the Spanish delegation to the Council of Basel (1434-39), where he gave an address on behalf of "the Spanish nation" that has remained renowned to this day as an impassioned declaration of emerging Spanish nationhood.

In the field of medicine, both Jew and Converso remained a mainstay of the households of the nobles and of the court. It was a Jewish surgeon who, in 1469, successfully removed two cataracts from the eyes of King Enrique IV, restoring the king's eyesight. Among the notable Converso physicians was Francisco López Villalobos, court physician to both Fernando of Aragon and Charles V.

No area, however, so reflected an overwhelming Converso predominance as the field of literature and the translation of classical works. Very few of the notable scribes and history chroniclers, poets, novelists, and playwrights of the next two centuries were not of some Converso background. From the very first large-scale generation of Conversos, emerged yet another of the Pablo de Santa María family, his brother Alvar García de Santa María (ca. 1380-1460). Declared a noble by King Juan II (Isabel's father) in the early 1400s, he rose to be secretary of the royal council, and official chronicler of the reign. Three secretaries of Isabel—Fernando Alvarez, Alfonso de Ávila, and Hernando del Pulgar—were of Converso background, as were the official chroniclers Diego de Valera and Alonso de Palencia. The career of Alonso

de Palencia (1423-92) is particularly instructive. He was in Rome serving the Vatican during the pontificate of one of the greatest of the Renaissance Popes, Pope Nicholas V. Returning to Spain in 1453, he rose to become Latin secretary and chronicler of the reign of Enrique IV (a monarch whom he detested), and then, with much greater will, he wrote one of the principal accounts of the reign of Fernando and Isabel.

The greatest Spanish poet of the first half of the 14th Century, Juan de Mena (1411-56), was a Converso. Educated at Salamanca and Rome, he made a famous first Spanish translation of the *Iliad*. Among the greatest poets and composers at the end of the century was Converso Juan del Encina (ca. 1468-1529). And Converso, too, was Fernando de Rojas, author of *La Celestina*, hailed as the masterpiece of 15th Century Spanish literature and the first true modern play in broader European cultural development.

### 'Limpieza de Sangre'

The forces which had spurred the initial persecutions of Jews now had to face an unexpected result: The Conversos, forced into existence by the initial persecution, had assumed a greater role in the life of the country than any unmolested Jewish community would ever have done. The tradition of Convivencia was certainly not broken. Even though most of the Conversos had become sincere Christians, their ancestry and their prominent role in fostering the spread in Spain of the influence of the Italian Renaissance movement constituted a stumbling block to those who wished to repudiate the intermingling elements which one can rightly call "the true Spain."

Some of the most retrograde "Old Christian" elements, especially ones who wanted to challenge centralized regal power and regain prerogatives for recalcitrant landed nobility and urban elites, solved this problem by imputing to Conversos, not failures of faith, but corruption of blood. It was argued on *racial* grounds, that all descendents of Jews were inherently tainted, corrupted, evil-minded, sinister. All such must be excluded from holding any office in public life or the church; only those who could prove *limpieza de sangre*, "purity of blood," could be eligible for such positions of authority.

This doctrine only exploded with force in a handful of locations in the five decades leading into the Inquisition, but those episodes are telling. The most important was in Toledo, the historic center of Convivencia and the leading city of Castile, in 1449. A group of nobles, seeking to unseat the weak king Juan II, chose to attack his chief minister Alvaro de Luna, who correctly was perceived in the popular mind as the true power in the kingdom. Luna was of Converso descent; his supporters included a notable number of Jews and Conversos. Alvaro de Luna needed money for the continuing conflicts with the remaining Moslem kingdom of Granada; he asked a Converso to collect the war tax. The insurgents who rose up and took the city, led by chief city magistrate Pero Sarmiento, seized on these circumstances to make the first official proclamation of a Limpieza de Sangre statute, the

famous *Sentencia-Estatuto*.

Quite contrary to the “inevitability” school of Spain’s descent into the Inquisition’s fanaticism, the promulgation of the *Sentencia-Estatuto* created a shock of enormous magnitude, reaching all the way back to the Vatican. In late September 1449, Pope Nicholas V issued one bull denouncing any exclusion of Christians from office based on blood origins, and a second bull the same day, excommunicating Sarmiento and his colleagues. Hard on the heels of the Pope’s vigorous action, came a series of remarkable rebuttals of the *Sentencia* from some of the leading Spanish Christian authorities of the day. These included Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, then with the Pope in Rome. But the most thorough of the rebuttals which comes down to us today, is from Old Christian Dominican master and bishop of Segovia, Ávila, and Cuenca, and formerly confessor and Chief Chancellor of King Juan II, Lope de Barrientos (1395-1465). As one excellent recent study reports, Lope “raises the obvious objection that this persecution discourages others from converting and leads to ‘blasphemy’ among those already converted, who say that it would have been better not to become Christians. . . . From a moral-historical viewpoint, Barriento argues (as does [Juan de] Torquemada) that the prophets and apostles were all Jews, and logically the later would have been persecuted as conversos” under the spirit of the *Estatuto*.

Lope noted that there were notorious heretics in Basque country and Bohemia, but no one could argue that all Basques and Bohemians should be stigmatized. And Lope noted that since large numbers of Jews had converted to Christianity in Visigothic Spain (the 7th Century), could any Christian of Spain now argue he was not a descendant of those early conversos? Lope appended a special memorandum prepared by an assistant, with a devastating list of all the “best families” of Castile which had Converso blood in the family background.

But as notable as was the vigor of the initial reaction, was the sorry and tangled record of the eventual follow-through. For the events in Toledo were not just a jockeying for position, but part of a pattern of full-blown civil war and breakdown. Full-scale battles were fought in the city, with great destruction visited especially on Converso residential areas. The king was not in a position to regain his control by military means alone, and in ensuing negotiations, petitioned the Pope to lift the Pope’s excommunication of Sarmiento’s group, and in 1451, even gave the *Estatuto* sanction as local Toledo law. The complexities of the situation went further. Alvaro de Luna, to free himself of the charges that he favored Jews and Conversos, got the crown to petition the Pope for an Inquisition to ferret out backsliders among the Conversos; and Pope Nicholas V granted the request! The initiative died, however, with Alvaro de Luna’s own death in 1453, arrested and executed by Juan II himself in an attempt to defuse the growing revolts in the kingdom.

For the 30 years preparatory to the full founding of the Spanish Inquisition in 1480, this was the pattern: general tran-

quility for Jews and Conversos, but with at least two further flare-ups of dramatic anti-Converso rioting (Ciudad Real and Toledo again, in 1467, and Córdoba and Jaén in 1473), imbedded in periods of virtual civil war. Although leading Church prelates had vigorously defended the Conversos from the racialist attacks, these same prelates—including some of the foremost Converso bishops—issued strong ecclesiastical condemnations of Judaism. (The fact that some Conversos were among these bishops, has been wildly misused by some to propagate the astounding charge that “the Conversos themselves” instigated the Inquisition!) Although these in themselves did not call for or foster physical threats to Jews, they provided a certain climate for the virulent propaganda of a naked racialist nature, which was circulated widely by discontented Old Christian elements. Most significant of these was the  *Fortalitium fidei contra Judaeos*  of the notorious Alonso de Espina, Observantine Franciscan friar and confessor to Enrique IV of Castile. The crudeness of his themes and language rivals that of the Nazis of 450 years later. In the words of one eminent historian, he “raked together, from the chronicles of all Europe, the stories of Jews slaying Christian children in their unholy rites, of their poisoning wells and fountains, of their starting conflagrations, and of all the other horrors” conceivable. Adds another historian: for Alonso, the Jews were “traitors, homosexuals, blasphemers, child murderers, assassins (in the guise of doctors), poisoners, and usurers.” And all Conversos, were secretly Jews.

## Enter the Inquisition

For fully the first three-quarters of the 15th Century, Spain’s dominant kingdoms of Castile and Aragon had consistently weak kings and periods of outright civil war. Isabel of Castile (1451-1504) and her husband Fernando of Aragon, (1452-1516), faced periods of virtual house arrest as children, married without sanction of their families in 1469 amidst tumultuous conditions in both kingdoms, and were only able to consolidate their reign in the 1474-78 interval, facing down both civil war and invasion from Portugal. They nevertheless established the basis for Spain to follow the direction of Louis XI’s France and Henry VII’s England, in that greatest of the Renaissance’s achievements in statecraft, the development of a nation-state in which the welfare of the people, not the privileges of the titled and powerful, was the justification for the state.

This is not the place to review in any detail the enormous accomplishments of Isabel and Fernando. In summary, however, they painstakingly created a new public administration and freed much of economic activity from holdover feudal taxes and prerogatives. They reshaped the *Santa Hermandad* (“Holy Brotherhood”) as a quasi-military constabulary force that suppressed rampant brigandage and other crime that had made all roads and many towns unsafe in the realm. They attacked the lax morals and poor theological training of many of the prelates, and consistently improved the quality of indi-



*Torquemada became the Grand Inquisitor for the areas of Spain controlled by Fernando and Isabella in 1483, and stayed in office until his death in 1498. The institution he established lasted virtually intact for 330 years.*

viduals raised to high office in civil and ecclesiastical administration. They started the circulation of a new currency valid for each of the respective kingdoms, where 156 different coinages had previously held sway, and began the process of unifying the two kingdoms into one state, a unification which would only reach completion in 1517. And they backed the explorations of Christopher Columbus, the extraordinary mariner trained in Portugal by circles collaborating with the key figures of the Council of Florence, and equipped with a map from Nicholas of Cusa's friend, the great Florentine astronomer and mathematician, Paolo dal Pozzo Toscanelli.

Not least in the catalogue of accomplishments, particularly in Isabel's case, was a keen sense of justice and personal courage in dispensing such justice in the face of hostile uprisings and danger to her person. And as noted above, she and Fernando kept a roster of exceptionally able Jews and Conversos in high government and church service.

With justice, her chronicler Fernando del Pulgar (a Converso) could write: "It was certainly a thing most marvelous, that what many men and great lords did not manage to do in many years, a single woman did in a short time through work and governance."

The painful and troubling question which any student of the period has to ask is, how could these monarchs—with all the good they accomplished—acquiesce in, or (in the estimate of some) encourage, the eruption of the Spanish Inquisition in exactly these years?

To get at at least an approximate answer, it is necessary to review the nature of the Inquisition itself and the role of its first Inquisitor-General, Tomás de Torquemada. Whatever mixture of religious fervor and "converging motives" Isabel and Fernando may have had, they had other proven inclinations which would have kept the balance even, except for the virulence of the "Beastman" factor which intervened.

From 1477 to late 1478, Isabel and Fernando established their court in Seville, as they mopped up the last resistance to their rule in the districts of local nobles. The Converso population of Seville was relatively small—roughly 2,500, of an estimated 250,000 in the Iberian kingdoms as a whole. But yet another Dominican firebrand, one Alonso de Ojeda, was then whipping up a furor over supposedly lax New Christians who were allegedly "Judaizing" the kingdom. It was, of course, the city in which Ferrant Martínez had first unleashed mobs against the Jewish quarter in 1391, and Andalucía as a whole was the part of Spain in which tensions involving Old and New Christian, Jew, and Moslem, were the most raw. Ojeda attempted to overwhelm the Monarchs with an array of evidence of supposed apostasizing by the Conversos, to create a climate of emergency, and he did succeed in inducing Isabel to request of Pope Sixtus IV, the papal permission for setting up an Inquisition in Castile, which had never known one before.

However, it was obvious to less fanatical Christian authorities—including the powerful archbishop of Seville and intimate of the Monarchs, Pero Gonzalez de Mendoza—that whatever evidence of laxness among Conversos could be adduced, there was laxness in belief among all Christians, New and Old, and the New could not be condemned without an effort to remedy the Church's own dereliction in inculcating more rigorous doctrine. So for the period of 1478 to early 1480, the Pope's bull was not published, and an intense preaching and catechizing effort was launched.

But by early 1480, the proponents of the Inquisition convinced Isabel and Fernando that more severe methods were required. Fernando, in a letter of a few years later, wrote that "We could do no less, because we were told so many things about Andalucía." The first Inquisitors were appointed, both Dominicans, and tribunals began in Seville in early 1481. The first *auto de fe* (a public procession, a sermon, reading of charges and verdicts, and executions of the sentences) took place Feb. 6. Six "relapsed" Conversos were burned, after a fiery sermon preached by Ojeda. During a summer lull resulting from an outbreak of the plague—which took the life of Ojeda himself—the Inquisition concentrated on forcing nobles in outlying districts, to turn in the many hundreds of Conversos who had fled Seville, and later thousands more in the rest of Andalucía, who had sought refuge in the feudal fiefdoms. Isabel and Fernando backed up the Inquisition's demand firmly, probably to further break the nobles who had so recently been in open revolt against the crown, and the fugitive Conversos were forced back into the grip of the Se-

ville tribunal. More trials and *autos de fe* proceeded apace.

By early 1482, more inquisitors and an expanded administrative apparatus were deemed necessary. The Pope's permission was obtained to name seven more inquisitors, all Dominicans, among them Tomás de Torquemada. A branch of the Inquisition was set up in Córdoba in 1482; in Ciudad Real and Jaén a year later; in Toledo in 1485; and by 1492, had added Ávila, Valladolid, Sigüenza, Segovia, and Medina del Campo, on the Castilian side of the ledger. Meanwhile, Fernando had re-activated the largely moribund Aragon Inquisition (which dated back to 1238), and in late 1483, arranged Vatican approval to have one head of the Inquisition for both Castile and Aragon, the first Inquisitor-General of all Spain: Tomás de Torquemada.

From these beginnings, a repressive apparatus of extraordinary dimensions rapidly grew beyond what were likely to have been Isabel and Fernando's original intentions. A *Golem* had been created, which utilized unprecedented ferocity and ruthlessness to destroy large portions of the Converso community and the entirety of the Jewish population, in less than a generation.

## Procedures

Most of the procedures were inherited from the earlier Inquisition of the 1200s, which were in turn largely borrowed from Roman Imperial precedents. These procedures started with the arrival of inquisitors in a given locale, and the declaration of an Edict of Grace. During this period, individuals were urged to come forward to confess whatever their aberrations from doctrine might be. Such as did so, were penanced (often involving loss of property or public shame), but the procedure went no further. The inquisitors simultaneously assembled evidence and sought denunciations of heretical belief or action from any accusers as would step forward. The identities of accusers were kept secret. The accused would be arrested, the charge read, and a secret tribunal begun. The accused were not given right to defense personnel. If "full proof" (sworn testimony of two witnesses, the accused caught in the act, or a confession) was not available, the inquisitors were empowered to use torture, under condition that the confession needed to be confirmed the next day, ostensibly freely. For those condemned, there were a variety of penalties, ranging from further penances and confiscations, to burning at the stake for "unrepentant" heretics. In the latter case, since canon law did not permit the Church to take life directly, the convicted would be delivered to a secular authority, in a procedure called "relaxation," and the sentence carried out.

The overall character of the proceedings was both penitential and judicial. It was considered that no one would face charges unless the initial body of evidence was sufficient to demonstrate guilt. Occasionally inquisitors would acknowledge false accusation, and release the accused. But in the large majority of cases, the guilt was assumed, and the duty of the inquisitors was to "reconcile" as many of the accused as

possible with the Church.

However, from the early 1200s to the late 1400s, use of this instrument was sufficiently intermittent so that one could call it the activity of inquisitors, rather than an Inquisition.

All this changed in the Spanish Inquisition of Torquemada.

Defenders of the Spanish Inquisition argue that the lack of safeguards for the accused were a standard feature of almost all judicial procedure of the age; that the institution indeed served a penitential purpose as much as a judicial one; that burning at the stake was a non-infrequent punishment in other judicial venues of the age, and was used by Calvin and other later Protestant sects as well. All true.

But there are three factors which make the Spanish Inquisition a wholly different phenomenon, a "cultural electroshock," which cast its shadow of religious brutality large over the succeeding 150 years of European history.

First was the vastly expanded "combustible material," literally and figuratively. Instead of intermittent pockets of Cathar heretics or the like, as in the 1200s, the "target population" was all Conversos—somewhere over a quarter of a million of them, in constant contact with Old Christians and with Jews.

Almost any Converso had something to fear. Besides denunciations from embittered Old Christian adversaries, on some occasions they faced accusations from Jews who either believed the Conversos to be willing apostates from Judaism who should be punished, or resented the fact that some of the Converso prelates were among the most vociferous in preaching anti-Jewish doctrine. Many Conversos continued to live in, or close to, Jewish districts. They were open to charges of "judaizing" tendencies on this account, or on account of lingering Jewish customs in their households—not signs of actual religious belief but simply habit, very far from heresy (which involves conscious repudiation of central tenets). The inquisitors were provided a long list of supposed "signs" of secret backsliding, including changing linen on Saturdays; turning one's face to the wall in the last moments before death, and not lighting a fire on Saturdays (the Jewish Sabbath). In one case, an especially zealous inquisitor in Seville was known to climb to the rooftops on Saturday to note any homes which did not have smoke coming out of their chimneys.

Many Conversos would thus voluntarily come to the Inquisitors, to confess to lesser real or invented activity that they thought would trigger "reconciliation" in this first phase, and take them out of the line of fire (as if were) for the later horrific possibilities. The Inquisitors, of course, knew this, and often insisted that the proof of sincerity of such "self-denouncers" was that they had to provide names of others who shared in the backsliding. And any who so "self-denounced," had to live with the knowledge that any return accusations in later years, would subject them almost automatically to the maximum penalty of burning, since they had



*The banner of the Inquisition, shown here at right, includes the symbolic representations of mercy and justice. Those who were not condemned to death, were often forced to wear the “sanbenito,” a coarse document depicted here, in processions of public humiliation.*

exhausted the room for “reconciliation,” The fact that anyone accused in the subsequent phase of the procedures, had all their property immediately sequestered pending the outcome of the trial, thus putting their family into extreme distress, was an additional motive for pre-emptive “cooperation.”

Ironically, as in Nazi Germany among many non-observant Jews, the virulence of the Inquisition’s assault actually awakened in some Conversos, a renewed Judaism not there before.

After the expiration of the Edict of Grace, inquisitors began acting on the secret denunciations, or on the collateral evidence gleaned from those who had “voluntarily” confessed. No direct accusation was initially made to those rounded up. They were kept guessing as to the charges. In their heightened paranoid state, they would sometimes confess to things that in fact were not related to the charges the inquisitors already had drawn up. When the accusation was finally presented, it was stripped of any details which were deemed to jeopardize the identities of the accusers. The accused were allowed to bring forward witnesses on their behalf, but since charges were so riddled with gaps or vagueness to disguise the identity of accusers, seeking witnesses was extremely difficult—not to mention the reluctance of many so called, to put themselves into the net of the inquisitors’ attention. As the Spanish Inquisition developed, there was also granted a limited right to defense counsel. But these defense assistants were as hampered as the accused themselves in contesting the charges, and were “court-appointed.” In some cases, they were sent by the Inquisition to ostensibly counsel the accused

but in actuality, to try to ferret out additional inculpatory information.

Those who continued to insist on their innocence to the tribunal—a distinct minority, given the coercion of the initial phases—would next be subject to torture. In the cases in which torture yielded a confession, it was required that the victim confirm the confession the next day. If the victim abjured the confession, in theory torture could not be re-applied; but the Inquisition often violated this proscription, deeming the initial torture merely “interrupted,” not terminated.

The results of all these procedures were that only a tiny minority of those accused, escaped without punishment. Large batches of the accused would be assembled, without the nature of punishment made known to them, until the next date of an *auto de fe*. There, they would be led through the streets in a special coarse garment, called a *sanbenito*, and in front of a large populace in some

large outdoor space, listen to lengthy sermons and then have their sentence pronounced. Lesser degrees of Judaizing or other activity deemed heretical, might merit the shame of having to wear the *sanbenito* at a succession of Church days, or some confiscation of property. Others were consigned to varying lengths of prison. Those considered obdurate in false belief, were handed over to a secular authority and consigned to the flames. If any of the so condemned asked to be reconciled with the Church in their last hour, they were garrotted before being tied to the stake, so as to be spared the slower agony of the fire. In its initial period, the *auto de fe* was a primarily religious act and combined equal elements of shame and punishment. It was only under Philip II’s notorious Inquisitor-general Fernando de Valdés, three generations later, that it became, in the words of one historian, “a public festivity rather like bullfighting or fireworks.”

## An Institution

The second factor, building directly on the first, is that the Spanish Inquisition soon became a national institution rather than simply an occasional special procedure of the Church. Given the dynamics highlighted above, there was almost an explosion of self-denunciations and accusations from the first (although as the Inquisition spread, there were a few notable instances of certain locales where no one—Old and New Christian alike—would cooperate.) The inquisitors made sure this mass of “evidence” was conveyed to the Crown with the admonition, “See, the dangers of secret Judaizers are even worse than we thought.” So much material for investigation

poured in over the first ten years of the Inquisition, that in the 1490s, the Edict of Grace was often suspended, because the accumulation of previous accusations made new ones superfluous.

At the same time, the inquisitors (and this was a technique especially refined by Tomás de Torquemada) constantly whipped up an atmosphere of hysteria, claiming that the Conversos and Jews were plotting uprisings that threatened the kingdom (especially in light of the concurrent War of Granada; more on this below).

These factors intersected Isabel and Fernando's all-consuming drive to forge a functioning nation-state, rather than a collection of feuding feudal fiefdoms. The two factors intertwined to give Torquemada and Co. an opportunity to create an institutional framework of extraordinary scope.

From its beginnings in Seville in the 1478-81 period, the Inquisition spread its tribunals to all corners of the land within five years. A veritable army of staff developed around it. When Torquemada travelled, he had a retinue of 250 armed men as his escort. In Seville, the Inquisition commandeered one of the major fortresses of the city for its activities there. And in 1483, the giant step of making the Inquisition an official *council of government* was taken.

Previously Isabel and Fernando had operated with four such councils: the Council of Castile, the Council of State, the Council of Finance, and the Council of Aragon. The newly formed *Consejo de la Suprema y General Inquisición* (Council of the Supreme and General Inquisition), was the only one with jurisdiction over the entirety of the two joined kingdoms. The fact that the Inquisition was thus so clearly able to insinuate itself as part of the emerging *national* institutions of Spain, rather than an arm of Vatican jurisdiction, is a clue as to the special power it exerted.

Isabel and Fernando were determined to build the force of an emerging nation in all areas, including emphatically in curbing the reach of secular power of Rome into Spain, and in confronting the legacy of corruption and demoralization in the Church, carried over from the extended period of Church breakdown in the 1250-1438 period. Similar efforts, of course, were proceeding from the faction of Cusa in the Vatican apparatus, overlapping the emerging set of reforms identified with Erasmus of Rotterdam. Thus there is no easy way to characterize the intricacies of this "fault line," either in Spain or in such other "nation-state laboratories" as France and England of the time.

Suffice to say that the upshot in Spain, was that, having given their consent to the establishment of an Inquisition in Castile, and a revived Inquisition in Aragon, the Monarchs were assiduous for these reasons in keeping the Vatican out of the functioning of the Inquisition as much as possible. This led to bitter disputes with three successive Popes—Sixtus IV (pontificate, 1471-84), Innocent VIII (1484-92), and Alexander VI (1492-1503). These were not the extraordinary Renaissance Popes of the mid-15th Century. Their efforts to rein in

the Spanish Inquisition were sometimes motivated by concern over iniquitous procedure, but just as often, flowed from their desire to benefit from confiscations of property, and the lucrative practice of giving penances, or of reversing previous findings, in appeals directly to Rome.

The third factor, was the nature of Inquisitor-General Torquemada himself.

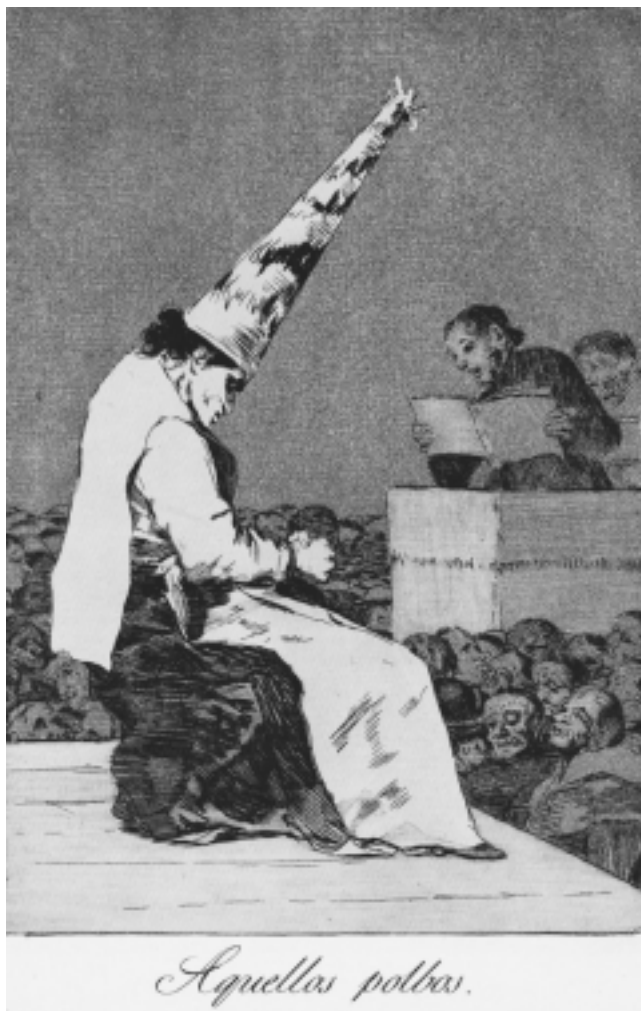
## The Prior of Santa Cruz

Tomás de Torquemada was born in Valladolid in 1420. The name of the town of his ancestry, Torquemada, was a corruption of an old Roman fortress-town, "Turre Cremata" (Burnt Tower). Like his uncle, the Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, he entered the Dominican Order, and rose in his middle years to be prior of the monastery of Santa Cruz in Segovia for 22 years. It was as prior of Santa Cruz that he came to know Isabel, during her lengthy stay in the city after marriage, but before she assumed the crown in 1474. A number of biographers assert that he was her confessor for a period around that time.

All accounts depict Torquemada as an extreme ascetic, without any penchant for personal wealth, and with no relish for high ecclesiastical office. It is said that Isabel at one time later offered him the Archbishopric of Seville. He reputedly turned it down.

However, he was of the Dominican mold of Ferrant Martínez, Vicente Ferrer, and Alonso de Ojeda, in his all-consuming drive to castigate Spain's Jews and bring down the Conversos for their alleged secret Judaizing. He achieved a position of power just as the Crown had its own reasons to acquiesce in a large-scale Inquisition, and as a final phase of the 800-year-long struggle between Christians and Moslems (known in Spain as *Moros*), created exceptional conditions for alleging a national security emergency requiring exceptional measures. For exactly in the year the Inquisition came into existence—1480—a foolhardy foray by the ruler in the remaining Moslem Kingdom of Granada (which had been a de facto vassal of the Crown of Castile for several centuries) gave Isabel and Fernando the pretext to embark on one final long series of campaigns, culminating in the surrender of Granada to the Monarchs on Jan. 2, 1492. This was harrowing, almost continuous fighting or besieging, requiring enormous commitment of men and funds. What emerged on the Spanish side was a new kind of fighting force, equipped with breakthrough technology in artillery, which was to be the basis of almost a century of Spanish pre-eminence as a military power all over Europe. Torquemada rushed special funds to Fernando's aid in the early great contest over Loja, and later attached himself as chaplain to Fernando's troops for four months during the great siege of Málaga. Consistent with his character, Torquemada urged Fernando to put all the surrendering Moros to the sword. Fernando enslaved them, but spared their lives.

Torquemada was not in the forefront of the group of Dom-



This drawing from Goya's "Los Caprichios" is entitled "Those Specks of Dust," and evokes the spirit of the Inquisition's condemnation of those considered to be indelibly stained with Jewish or Islamic ancestry.

inicans who forced the issue of creating an Inquisition in the "wedge city" of Seville, but he definitely took an interest in the matter, from his Segovia priory. He first appeared in Seville in 1481, when he drafted a preliminary guide for inquisitors to spot the signs of Judaizing. In February 1482, he was named one of seven inquisitors in the expanded structure confirmed by the Pope in that month. In the course of 1483, he rose to dominate the Castilian Inquisition, and in October of that year, he was named by Fernando, with accord of the Pope, chief inquisitor of Aragon. In that year also, the *Suprema* structure was created, and Torquemada assumed the functions of Grand Inquisitor. He took command of the entire structure, from commending or reproving inquisitors, to establishing the smallest details of procedure (such as setting the minimum age someone could be tried for apostasy—14 years old in the case of a boy, 12, in the case of a girl.)

The best way to understand Torquemada's use of power is to think of neo-conservative acolytes of Leo Strauss, such as Dick Cheney or Paul Wolfowitz today. There's a bit of historical inversion in the comparison, since, in fact, it was the direct exemplar of Torquemada as the Beastman explicitly recognized by core Synarchist theorist Joseph de Maistre, which infused the thinking of Strauss and his Synarchist henchmen, Kojève and Schmitt. (See *Children of Satan* in Suggested Reading.) But think of the conscious use of "Big Lie" techniques, the conscious exercise of irrationality and terror beyond what onlookers or other political figures can psychologically handle in terms of preceding parameters of accepted practice, and you approach understanding both the neo-con fascist apparatus at work in the United States today, and Torquemada's Inquisition of yesterday. It also helps to re-read Shakespeare's study of the Beastman in a timeframe directly overlapping that of Torquemada: the play *Richard III*.

For the flavor of Torquemada's vengefulness, an instance gleaned by the dean of American scholars of the Inquisition, Henry C. Lea, from the records of the Inquisition itself, will suffice: "There was a fully organized Inquisition at Medina, with three inquisitors, an assessor, a fiscal and other officials, assisted by the Abbot of Medina as Ordinary. They reconciled some culprits and burnt others, apparently without referring the cases to him [Torquemada], but when they found reason to acquit some prisoners they deemed it best to transmit the papers to him for confirmation. He demurred at this mercy and told the tribunal to try the accused again when the Licentiate Villalpando should be there as *visitador*. Some months later Villalpando came there, the cases were reviewed, the prisoners were tortured, two of them were reconciled and the rest acquitted, and the sentences duly published as final. Torquemada on learning this was incensed and declared that he would burn them all. He had them arrested again and sent to Valladolid, to be tried outside of their district, where his threat was doubtless carried into effect."

As his tribunals fanned out from city to city, Torquemada nurtured an intense propaganda machine, building a case that the Inquisition was needed to deal with a threat that constituted nothing less than a national emergency. One of the items that he made sure circulated widely, was a forged correspondence ostensibly involving "the Jews of Spain" asking "the Jews of Constantinople" for their advice on what to do in the face of forced conversions in Spain. The Jews of Constantinople, in these crude inventions, reply: "dissimulate" and when "our Spanish brethren" have won the confidence of the Old Christians, "strike back." A hugely influential tract of several decades earlier, was resurrected for wide circulation in these same years: the *Alborayco*, a vituperative attack on Conversos for being like Muhammad's legendary horse, *al-buraq*, "the lightning," which was neither horse nor mule, neither male nor female.

But for Torquemada's Inquisition to truly shatter the Converso factor in Spain, it was necessary to break the Converso

higher officials around the court and the Church itself. Since these were circles with the wealth and connections to appeal to Rome to reverse whatever were the Spanish Inquisition's verdicts, the issue of whether Spanish authorities—or the Pope—had final say in appeals, was a hotly contested battleground. Similarly contested, was the issue of who had authority to name inquisitors, and whether inquisitorial activity needed to obtain sanction of local bishops, who often tended to ameliorate the Inquisition's savagery.

The ensuing struggle came to a head in Torquemada's efforts—fully backed by Fernando—to extend the Castilian form of the Inquisition to Aragon, whose pre-existing inquisitorial structure was moribund. The cities of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia, had some of the deepest traditions of rights of consultative and decision-making assembly—the *Cortes* tradition—of any place in Europe. Aragon's *Magnum Privilegium* codified these ancient rights, and the oath that the Aragonese nobility, church, and town councils swore to a monarch assuming the throne, began with the words, "We, who are as good as you. . . ."

In the period of Fernando's early manhood, Barcelona and parts of surrounding Catalonia rose up in outright rebellion against the Aragonese crown, and Fernando personally led the troops to quell the uprising. It was Torquemada's good fortune—and a disaster for the Conversos in Aragon—that Fernando thus had his own reasons of state to want to bring these recalcitrant councils of civic leaders and nobles to heel. In one of the starkest ironies of the period, it was because these *Old Christian* elements had proven so troublesome to Fernando, and because these Old Christian elements *showed solidarity* with the Conversos, that Fernando saw in the Inquisition his instrument to break them.

In April 1482, the battle barely begun, Pope Sixtus IV responded to concerns from Old and New Aragonese Christians alike, with one of the most extraordinary Papal bulls of the entire period. The Pope protested "that in Aragon, Valencia, Mallorca, and Catalonia the Inquisition has for some time been moved not by zeal for the faith and the salvation of souls, but by lust for wealth, and that many true and faithful Christians, on the testimony of enemies, rivals, slaves, and other lower and even less proper persons, have without any legitimate proof been thrust into secular prisons, tortured, and condemned as relapsed heretics, deprived of their goods and property, and handed over to the secular arm to be executed, to the peril of souls, setting a pernicious example, and causing disgust to many." Fernando, in reply, pretended to disbelieve the authenticity of the bull. After a five month stalemate, the Pope backed off.

Never again would the fundamental character of the Inquisition be questioned, although an account of the many disputes over the issue of indulgences, appeals, naming of inquisitors, and disposition of confiscated goods, over the subsequent decade, is a story too extensive to relate here. Fundamentally, the Popes of the period were jealous of their

prerogatives and chance to control the lucrative traffic in indulgences; but the Papal States were too threatened by the unstable politics of the time, especially the looming threat of French invasion of the Italian peninsula (which did indeed happen in the mid-1490s), to alienate the one growing power capable of counteracting the French: the Spanish crown.

The resistance of the Aragonese grandees and city councils was far from over. In 1484, when Torquemada, now-Grand Inquisitor of all Castile and Aragon, appointed the first two inquisitors for Aragon, public opposition was so great that Fernando hastily had to issue a circular letter repeating one of Torquemada's favorite assertions: "If there are so few heretics as is now asserted, there should not be such dread of the Inquisition." When the city of Teruel, a hundred miles south of Aragon's leading city of Zaragoza, simply refused to let the inquisitors enter the city, protesting that "they were coming to set up an Inquisition that will repeat the excesses committed in Castile," Torquemada issued an excommunication and interdict against the city and its magistrates. When Teruel's clergy obtained papal letters releasing them from the interdiction, the Inquisition decreed that all office holders were summarily dismissed. When the town fathers appealed directly to Fernando, Fernando called out troops in both Aragon and Castile to back up the Inquisition. Teruel capitulated.

But there remained the main bastion of resistance, Zaragoza itself. In early 1485, Torquemada arranged two demonstrative *autos de fe*, and arrested one of the most prominent Conversos, Leonardo Eli. Standard accounts of the Inquisition to this day, repeat Inquisition propaganda about uprisings of Conversos in Seville in 1481, and Toledo in 1485, as justifications for Torquemada's constant claim that Conversos and Jews were inherently a *national security* threat to the state, ready at any moment to rise up and aid the Moslems in Granada or the rival throne of Portugal. These instances in Seville and Toledo have been shown by recent historiography to be spurious. But the uprising of Conversos in Zaragoza can not be disputed—and it proved to be Torquemada's trump card in shattering the stubborn resistance of Aragon. In response to Torquemada's provocations, a wealthy family of Conversos plotted and carried out the assassination—in the Zaragoza cathedral no less—of inquisitor Pedro Arbués de Epila.

Torquemada had his martyr, and he made the most of it. If the plotters calculated that the population would rise up and back them, they could not have been more utterly mistaken. All opposition crumbled, Arbués was avenged with the brutal public executions of the main conspirators (two of them had their hands cut off before they were hanged, drawn and quartered), and in the course of 1486, the Inquisition ran riot. In Zaragoza alone, there were 14 *autos de fe*, in which 42 people were burned alive, 14 were burned in effigy, and 134 others were subjected to imprisonment, flogging, and public humiliation. Members of some of the most illustrious Converso families of Aragon were implicated. Sancho de Pomeroy, one of the top five officials of the kingdom, was executed. Alonso



Shown here is a page of the original Edict of Expulsion signed by Ferdinand and Isabella on March 31, 1492.

de la Caballería, vice chancellor of Aragon, refused to recognize the authority of the Inquisition and Torquemada. He succeeded in having Pope Innocent VIII take the case out of Torquemada's hands. Torquemada refused; the Pope held firm; and in the end, after reviewing the court papers, the Pope absolved de la Caballería. In another notable case, Fernando himself intervened on behalf of his treasurer, Luis de Santangel. Contrary to Fernando's customary briding at Papal indulgences, in this case he sought Papal intervention on behalf of his court official himself. It saved Luis de Santangel's life, but Santangel had to suffer the disgrace of walking in a procession of penitents, clad in a *sanbenito*.

There remained but one class in all of Spain over which the Inquisition had no jurisdiction: the bishops. By decree of Boniface VIII in the late 13th Century, only the Vatican itself could initiate proceedings against a bishop. Torquemada petitioned the Vatican in 1487 for this last jurisdictional prey, but Pope Innocent VIII held firm. Torquemada proceeded anyway, to attempt the destruction of two of the most prominent and highly regarded Converso bishops in Castile, Juan Arias Dávila of Segovia, and Pedro de Aranda of Calahorra.

In the case of Arias Dávila, who had had the temerity to refuse the Inquisition permission to operate in his diocese, Torquemada systematically targetted not only Arias but his deceased father, his mother, and other relatives. Arias, in his 80th year, was summoned to Rome to answer the charges; the Pope appears to have absolved him, for Arias was given significant tasks as a papal legate in his last years. The even more distinguished Pedro de Aranda, who in the early 1480s had served as president of the Council of Castile, was summoned to Rome on Torquemada's charges and was not so fortunate. He died, disgraced, in 1500.

How many people fell victim to the Inquisition under Torquemada? The estimate of Isabel's chief chronicler and scribe, the Converso Hernando de Pulgar, has held up well to the current day: In the first decade, 1480-90, 2,000 victims were burned at the stake, and another 15,000 charged, and forced to endure severe humiliations, penances, and confiscation of property. In the next decade, the burnings were sporadic but locally devastating. In Toledo, for instance, some 250 were burnt. In nearby Ávila, where Torquemada had successfully petitioned the crown to allow him to raze the Jewish cemetery and build on its site, an imposing monastery dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas, there had been no reports of apostasy until Torquemada arrived to direct the building project. Between 1492 and 1498, the year of Torquemada's death, 127 people were burnt in Ávila.

This toll, however, only begins to delineate the impact on the Converso population. For every Converso who fell into the Inquisition's control, at least as many simply fled. In the first two years after the tribunal was established at Ciudad Real, 52 of the accused were burned alive, but 220 were condemned to death "in absentia." They had gone underground, in other parts of the country or abroad. Similarly, in the Barcelona *auto de fe* of June 1491, 3 were burned *in vivo* and 139 burned *in absentia*. In a Mallorca *auto* of May 1493, 3 were burnt live, and 47 in effigy. These were exceptionally weighted toward the "absent," but almost nowhere were those who burned, a greater number than those who were condemned in absentia. And in all larger *autos*, the number "penanced" far outnumbered all other categories. In addition, there were the even larger numbers of those who "voluntarily confessed" in the Edict of Grace phase. In the first year of the Inquisition's operations in Toledo, for instance, 2,400 Conversos so confessed, a huge percentage of the Conversos in the city. They thus avoided confiscation of goods, but were "rehabilitated" only for a cash payment.

## The Expulsion of the Jews

The idea of the wholesale expulsion of the Jews, was first preached with any broad effect by the incendiary Alonso de Espina in the 1460s. The argument was simple: If the "backsliding" Conversos were to be successfully pulled out of their "Judaizing" habits, all temptation resulting from contact with the Jews themselves had to be broken.

In 1483, Torquemada succeeded in getting the Crown to issue an order expelling all Jews from Andalucía, on these grounds. There is evidence that this indeed occurred in the case of Seville. In most other areas, it was of limited effect, in many cases simply the occasion for a bribe to a local official.

But Torquemada began to lay the groundwork for the Inquisition to directly confront the Jews, even though the Inquisition had no direct jurisdiction in that area. Thus in 1485, shortly after Torquemada moved the headquarters of the Inquisition from Ciudad Real to Toledo, he decreed that all rabbis had the obligation to turn in to the Inquisition, any information they had on any contacts between Jews and Conversos, on pain of death if they should not do so. Soon, the whole Jewish congregation was so instructed. The fact that some Jews did cooperate with the Inquisition, was not forgotten by a few among the Conversos. After the Expulsion in 1492, when some Jews who left, found exile too difficult to bear, and were re-admitted to Spain as New Christians, the handful of embittered Conversos struck back by denouncing these "Exile New Christians" to the Inquisition in their turn.

However, the Edict of Expulsion in 1492 is such an order-of-magnitude greater rupture than any of these preliminary developments, that it requires deeper discussion.

The climate for the expulsion was prepared by one of the propaganda coups of the period, a gigantic hoax, the equivalent in some ways to the "Weapons of Mass Destruction" fabrications of the Straussians in the Bush Administration regarding Iraq in our current day. This was the famed "Santo Niño de la Guardia" (Holy Child of La Guardia) case.

It was not the first "blood libel" case against Jews in Spain. But the history of previous incidents of charging Jews with ritual murder of a Christian were rare in Spain, and there had been none for several decades. When, in early summer 1490, a Converso named Benito García, was caught with a confessional wafer in his possession (allegedly a sign that he planned an act desecrating the host, implicitly sacrilege against the body of Christ), Torquemada took immediate charge of the case, including having the trial moved to his home base of Segovia, when it should have taken place in La Guardia's district seat of Toledo. In the course of a year of torture, García gradually revealed, under intense "leading" interrogation, details of how he, with five other Conversos and six Jews, had kidnapped and ritually killed a 6-year-old boy several years earlier, an act designed to mock the suffering and crucifixion of Christ.

On Nov. 16, 1491, Torquemada had two of the culprits pulled apart by red-hot pincers, and the rest burned, their case and verdict made known from one corner of the combined kingdoms to the other. A cult of the "Saint-Child of La Guardia" promptly sprang to life, replete with reputed miracles. There was only one thing wrong with the picture: No child anywhere had been reported missing, and no remains were found at the location where the child was said to be buried. No "confession" matched the details of any other. The

case was simply manufactured.

Within six weeks of the ending of the La Guardia case, the last king of Granada, Boabdil, surrendered to Isabel and Fernando. Torquemada saw his opening. He pressed the case for the complete expulsion of the Jews from the combined kingdoms. The atmosphere was heated up by the La Guardia case. The religious fervor of having wrested the last corner of the peninsula from the Moslems after 800 years, was palpable. Isabel and Fernando, who had financed the protracted, intense, 12 years of the Granada War with large contributions from the Jews of the kingdoms, and with key court Jews such as Don Abraham Seneor and Don Isaac Abravanel collecting war taxes from others, no longer had need of such financial assistance mediated through the Jewish community. And, most of all, the virulence of the preceding decade of the Inquisition's rampage, had cowed any Conversos who would have protested the move, and neutralized any Old Christians who still adhered to *Conviencia* traditions. Notable is the case of the Queen's scribe, Hernando de Pulgar, a Converso who had protested the establishment of the Inquisition in the first half of 1480s, but at the time of the expulsion, presented himself as a public defender of the tribunals.

Isabel and Fernando did not instigate the Expulsion order, but under the pressures of the moment, they did not stand up to Torquemada. On March 31, 1492, the fateful order was signed (though not proclaimed until a month later). All Jews had until the last day of July 1492, to dispose of all their property that could not be carried, and quit the kingdoms. Historian Henry Kamen touched on much of the truth when he summarized the moment: "The deliberate stimulation of a feeling of crisis (aggravated by alleged converso plots, by the murder of Arbués, by the episode of the La Guardia infant), and the universal response to the great 12-year-long crusade against Granada, pressured public authorities to conform and stilled the protests of individuals."

A famous story that all but the most recent accounts of the Inquisition relate as fact, claims that the two most prominent court Jews, Seneor and Abravanel, approached Isabel and Fernando with a payment—in effect, a bribe—of 30,000 ducats, if the order were rescinded. Torquemada burst into the room holding high a crucifix, flung the crucifix on the table, and proclaimed, "Judas once sold the Son of God for 30 pieces of silver. Your Highnesses think to sell Him again for 30,000. Here you have Him. Sell Him, then, but acquit me of all share in the transaction." The story only cropped up some 70 years later, and is almost certainly apocryphal. But it accurately conveys the psychological control Torquemada had established by this time.

## A Second Exodus

The order of expulsion fell like a thunderclap on the diminished but still substantial Jewish community, heir to a thousand years of notable Jewish life and achievement in Iberia. In the decade before the expulsion, there had been a



*Shown here is the dome of the Great Mosque of Cordoba, which was built in A.D. 786-787. This is just one example of the architectural jewels left by the Islamic presence in Spain.*

relative strengthening of Jewish communal life, and even a strange sense of being less “in the line of fire,” seeing the Conversos taking the brunt of anti-Jewish sentiment. Suddenly all that was shattered, and most of the Jews could only seek to comprehend such a sudden cataclysm in terms of God punishing his Chosen for sins and transgressions. Many Sephardic accounts compared the new Jewish suffering to that of the Prophets and patriarchs in Hebrew scripture. A mystical current in Sephardic Jewish thinking seized on the expulsion to claim it was God’s sign that it was time for an in-gathering of Jews in the land of Zion. Almost all were aware that the expulsion occurred just a day or so before the 9th of the month of Av in the Jewish calendar—the fateful day, according to tradition, in which both the first and second destructions of the Temple in Jerusalem had occurred.

How many Jews were forced to leave Spain? The best

current estimates are that between 100,000 and 150,000 Jews were still in Spain at the time. Of these, at least a third accepted conversion rather than exile. This large number included the leading court Jew, the 80-year-old Abraham Seneor. His sponsors at the baptism ceremony were none other than Isabel and Fernando. Of those who did leave, another third found conditions in exile too terrifying or uncertain to endure. They returned to Spain in waves over the succeeding half dozen years. The returnees, along with many of those who converted rather than leave in the first place, were manifestly involuntary converts who were not easily incorporated into the long-standing, earlier Converso population. They would provide in later years much new raw material for the Inquisition.

The chronicler Andrés Bernáldez, who avidly promoted the work of the Inquisition, nevertheless provided the following harrowing account of the caravans of Jews forced to take to the roads of Castile and Aragon that hot summer: “Confiding in their vain blind hopes, [they] left the lands of their birth, children and adults, old and young, on foot and in wagons, and the *caballeros* on asses and other beasts, and each journeyed to a port of embarkation. They went through roads and fields with many travails and [mixed] fortunes, some falling, others rising, others dying, others being born, others falling sick, so that there was no Christian who did not feel sorry for them and always invite them to be baptized. And some sorrowfully converted and stayed, but very few. And on the way the rabbis heartened them, and had the women and youths sing and play tambourines to cheer the people, and so they went through Castile and arrived at the ports. . . . When those who went to embark through Puerto de Santa María and Cadiz saw the sea, they shouted loudly and cried out, men and women, great and small, in their prayers demanding mercy of God, and they expected to see some marvel of God and that he would open a path through the sea for them.”

Basically the Jews left by whatever port or land exit was nearest. A number went to the independent kingdom of Navarre in the Pyrenees to the north (only to be expelled from there in 1498 when Navarre fell under control of Spain). From the east and northeast, the Jews embarked for southern France, the northern Italian states, or Naples. In the south, many embarked for Moslem-held lands in North Africa, where small enclaves of Jews still existed. And in the west, the largest numbers of all, found temporary refuge—for a price of one *cruzado* apiece—in Portugal. Many never made it to their destinations, falling prey to pirates at sea, unscrupulous captains who sold them into slavery, or to deadly outbreaks of disease. A substantial group, including Isaac Abravanel and

his family, made it to the welcoming kingdom of Ferrante II in Naples—only to have large numbers of their own group, as well as thousands of Neopolitans, succumb to the plague, and be thrown into further flight when the French overthrew Ferrante in 1494. Those who went to Portugal had a similar stormy further odyssey, facing cruel pressures from King Joao II to convert (one of his strategies was to separate a group of Jewish children from their parents and send them to far-off Sao Tome in the African Gulf of Benin, relenting only if the parents converted). Large numbers moved on to other destinations in North Africa or northern Europe after only six months in Portugal.

Eventually, the largest single component of this Second Diaspora relocated into the eastern Mediterranean, where Sephardic communities took root in Salonika, Aleppo, and a number of other locations, under a generally welcoming edict from Sultan Bayezid II. Other notable Sephardic communities took root in Amsterdam and the New World.

### The Expulsion of the *Moriscos*

In the last years before his death in 1498, Torquemada split his time between his duties as Inquisitor General and the building of his great Monastery of St. Thomas in Ávila. He rode with a retinue of 250 liveried soldiers for protection, dined with a reputed unicorn horn or a scorpion tongue next to his food to ward away poison, and had to constantly dispatch a trusted Dominican associate, Fray Alfonso Badaja, to Rome as his advocate in Papal investigations of Torquemada's abuses. His continuing close ties to the Monarchs is illustrated in an incident in 1497, when the Monarchs had come to his Monastery for a visit. There they received the devastating word that their only son and direct heir, Prince Juan, had died of a sudden malady, in a city some distance away. They arranged for the body to be brought to them at Torquemada's Monastery, and buried on its grounds.

Even in his last year, he was laboring on the third revision of his *Instrucciones*, the bible of Inquisitorial practice which he had first compiled in 1483. When he died, he left behind an institution that would function with very little change in procedure for another 330 years. Although it never exerted as dramatic an overall influence, nor took as many lives in a short period as it did under Torquemada, and although its targetted victim populations shifted from Conversos to Lutherans and Erasmians, then to the converted Moslem population (*Moriscos*), then back to a second wave of Portuguese Conversos at the turn of the 17th Century, its fundamental character was firmly set. Henry Charles Lea, dean of the historians of the Inquisition, noted the reports of Venetian envoys in the early 16th Century, "who lauded its [the Inquisition's] services in the suppression of heresy, and to whom, as practical statesmen, it was an object of wonder and admiration, as a machine perfectly devised to keep the people in abject subjection. . . . The envoys were profoundly impressed by the



*Cardinal Francisco Ximenez de Cisneros was a prime mover against Spain's Muslims in the late 15th century, although, paradoxically, he was also a promoter of Renaissance ideas.*

universal awe which it inspired. As early as 1525, Gasparo Contarini tells us that everyone trembled before it, for its severity and the dread entertained for it were greater even than for the Council of Ten." The Council of Ten was the inner core of Venice's deadly and efficient secret police which controlled a system of anonymous channels of denunciation akin to the Inquisition's. High praise indeed!

The use of this instrument through its remaining three centuries is beyond the scope of this study. But a quick sketch of the events leading to the expulsion of the population of Moslem background provides haunting parallels to those which produced the expulsion of the Jews, with a time lag of roughly one century.

The terms of capitulation granted by the Monarchs to Granada in 1492 were of a piece with earlier Iberian traditions of Convivencia. The *Moros*, as the Spanish termed them, could retain their religion, customs, and language, but subject to Spanish governors. Many of the Granadan Moslem elite chose to emigrate, but the large bulk of the population (now *Mudéjares* in the lexicon of cultural/religious variants of the times) stayed. Inigo López de Mendoza, the Count of Tendilla, was named governor, and Hernando de Talavera, archbishop of Granada. Both represented enlightened policies. Talavera emphasized conversion only through voluntary persuasion, respect for Mudejar culture, and the use of Arabic in church functions.

Clerics, led by the Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros, intervened, starting 1499 with a tougher policy of mass baptisms and persecution of the handfuls of Christians who had converted to Islam, known as *Muladies*. This led to a series of revolts. In 1501, all *Mudéjares* of Granada were forcibly baptized, and a huge bonfire of precious Arabic books symbolized the end of the terms of the capitulation. The newly appointed Inquisitor of Córdoba, Diego Rodríguez Lucero, became notorious as one of the most corrupt and vindictive

of all officials of the Inquisition. When Talavera protested Lucero's iniquities, Lucero turned on Talavera himself, accusing the archbishop and his family of Judaizing. Talavera was acquitted of all charges in Rome in 1507, but died, close to 80 years old, soon thereafter. In 1502, Isabel forced all Mudéjares in the rest of Castile, to choose baptism or exile, and almost all chose baptism. In the crown of Aragon, the power of the landed nobility, which utilized a large Moslem population as its principal source of farm labor, and of the Cortes (the parliament), kept Convivencia arrangements in force until 1526. At that time, Charles V (Carlos I of Spain) ordered the forced conversion of all Mudéjares in these remaining jurisdictions of Spain. Thus had been created a huge new "Converso" population, called *moriscos*, with all its attendant tensions and ambiguities.

For the next 40 years, the primary thrust of policy was the effort to convert the Moriscos in fact, and not just in name. But with the strengthening of the Inquisition in the 1560s under Philip II and his Inquisitor General Fernando de Valdés (the most notorious Grand Inquisitor since Torquemada), tensions built rapidly. They exploded in the Morisco revolt which broke out in Granada in 1568, and settled into protracted warfare in the inhospitable Alpujarra mountains. It was a savage war, with unparalleled atrocities on both sides. In the end, the Spanish authorities forced over 80,000 Moriscos to leave their homes in Granada, and resettle in Castile, only transferring the unrest to new territory. In September 1582, Philip II's council of state proposed a general expulsion. Although backed by both Church and Inquisition, the measure was not acted upon. When Philip III assumed the crown in 1598, opposition to expulsion by his personal confessor, and the powerful Duke of Lerma, kept the provision in the background. But with a 1609 change of heart by the Duke of Lerma, the scales tilted in the opposite direction. Over the next six years, roughly 300,000 of the 320,000 Moriscos in Spain were expelled, starting with the most populous Morisco area of Valencia (roughly half of the total). It was an exodus several times larger than that of the Jews 120 years earlier. It shattered the last substantial element of the Convivencia legacy, and brought even more economic dislocation than the considerable negative economic effects of the persecution of the Conversos and the expulsion of the Jews in the late 1400s.

## The Hapsburgs and Venetians

In mid-1488, when the court was in residence in Valladolid, Isabel and Fernando received an embassy from Maximilian, son of the Hapsburg Emperor Frederick IV of Germany. The Hapsburg emissaries solicited Spain's cooperation in designs against France, both to restore Hapsburg control over the duchy of Burgundy, wrested from them by King Louis XI of France a few years before, and to restore to Spain the provinces of Roussillon and Cerdagne, similarly seized by

France when Aragon's rule in the region was disrupted by rebellion in Catalonia in the 1470s. The Spanish Monarchs agreed to the proposal.

Spain's disastrous dance with the Hapsburgs intensified in the mid-1490s, when Isabel and Fernando betrothed both their only son, Juan, and their first-born of four daughters, Juana, to offspring of the Hapsburg House. When Juan died in his 17th year, the succession fell jointly to his sister Juana and Juana's husband, Philip of the Hapsburg provinces of the Netherlands, unless there were male offspring in the meantime produced from the marriages of Juana's younger sisters. The string of misfortunes to Fernando's lineage, the Trastámara royal line, is too long to enumerate here; suffice to say, the succession did pass to Juana and Philip with Isabel's death in 1504. But Philip's early death two years later, and Juana's madness—which came on during years spent in Hapsburg environs in the Low Countries—left Fernando as regent of the unified kingdoms until Juana and Philip's first son, Charles V of Austria (Carlos I on the Spanish side), became the single Hapsburg ruler of all the combined Austrian and Spanish possessions in phases during the period 1517-20.

There were thus dual devastating blows to Spain's further development as a nation-state in the line of statecraft passed from the Council of Florence to the France of Louis XI and the England of Henry VII: one, the rise of the Inquisition, blighting many of the political channels through which a further development of such a Commonwealth policy would have been effected, and linking the image of man to a definition of "the purity of blood" rather than the light of the soul; and two, the passing of the Spanish crown to the control of the Hapsburgs. This meant that Spain could be harnessed to Venice-instigated religious wars as the pre-eminent "marcher-lord" factor of anti-Council of Florence "Catholic Orthodoxy" for the next century.

Not that Venice was on the side of "Catholic Orthodoxy." It was on the side of Venice, and the statecraft of an emerging form of sophisticated transnational merchant-banker empire. In this duplicitous game, Venice would emerge at the end of the 16th Century as a "judicious critic" of the very Spanish Inquisition it had hailed at the beginning of the century. The man who issued this "revisionist history" of the Inquisition was the Servite friar and theological advisor of the *Serenissima Repubblica*, Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623). The crucial role of Sarpi in its full dimensions cannot be touched on here. But a summary statement of one of the leading historians of the Inquisition, Edward Peters, gives the flavor of how successful Sarpi's propaganda was, including on Peters itself: "During the 17th Century Venice was the one Catholic power generally admired in Protestant Europe. Its republican form of government, its control of ecclesiastical authority, and its often acerbic relations with Rome singled it out to many northern Europeans as a progressive society, and in the usual denunciations of inquisitions, the Venetian In-

quisition was often made the exception. Part of the ‘myth of Venice’ was the result of the historical and apologetic work of Paolo Sarpi, Venice’s literary spokesman to the rest of the world,” resting especially on his *Historia della Sacra Inquisizione*.

### Cervantes’ Revenge

But it would be wrong to imagine that Spain fell under some kind of dark spell after 1492, or even 1520. It was too vigorous an arena for the Convivencia heritage and the nation-building impulse from the Italian Renaissance. Like any arena of larger battles, its positive currents continued to make a fundamental mark on history, however negative the overall trajectory. Thus great achievements in city-building and enlightened instances of treatment of the Indians were embedded in Spain’s New World colonization efforts, alongside plundering, de facto enslavement, and the establishment of neo-feudal latifundia.

The figure of Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (1436-1517) perfectly illustrates the multifaceted and paradoxical character of many key figures in the period of the Inquisition. Serving in the Rome of the great Renaissance Popes of the mid-15th Century as a young man, Cisneros rose to become confessor to Isabel and Fernando in the early 1490s, and in 1495, was named Cardinal and Archbishop of Toledo, the highest Church office in the land. He was a supporter of the Inquisition and instigated the harsh forced conversion policies which turned Granada toward rebellion in 1499-1501, and overturned the gentler proselytizing achievements of Hernando de Talavera. But when the Inquisitor-General who succeeded Torquemada, Diego Deza (another paradoxical figure who had been a prime sponsor of Columbus’s venture, and a noted promoter of the work of the Italian Renaissance) attempted to silence the great humanist and philologist Antonio de Nebrija for his work correcting the errors in the Vulgate Bible, it was Cisneros who defended Nebrija.

Under Cisneros’ protection, Nebrija contributed mightily to one of the greatest accomplishments of Cisneros’ long life: the 1515 publication of the Polyglot Bible, in which the text is made available for scholars in parallel columns of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, one of the outstanding works of scholarship of the Renaissance. And while the great university of Salamanca, founded in the mid-1200s by Alfonso the Wise, had succumbed to *limpieza de sangre* statutes in 1482, Cisneros made sure that the university, which he himself founded and endowed, the renowned university of Alcalá de Henares, had no such *limpieza* restrictions. In a final irony, Cisneros confronted and crushed the venal and vicious Inquisitor Lucero of Granada; but then assumed the post of Grand Inquisitor himself from 1507 until his death, ten years later. Although proceeding at a slower pace than under Torquemada, nevertheless the Inquisition continued on the same road, under Cisneros.

The Inquisition came to haunt the lives of many of Spain’s greatest intellectuals and poets of the succeeding century. Yet their works lived among their countrymen—and live today—far above the Inquisition’s poor powers to defame or diminish. The case of Juan Luis Vives is exemplary. One of Spain’s greatest men of letters in the first half of the 16th Century, especially renowned for his writings on education, Vives spent his entire career outside of Spain. Born of Converso parents in Valencia, who continued to practice Judaism in secret, he was sent abroad by his father to study in Paris in 1509. His activities thereafter were based in the Low Countries. After Nebrija’s death in 1522, his fame was such as to win him an invitation to take Nebrija’s professorship at Alcalá. The reasons for Vives’ refusal are not hard to discover: in 1520, the Inquisition arrested his father as a Judaizer, and in 1524, burned him alive. Four years later, his long-dead mother was condemned posthumously, her bones disinterred and burned.

In the second half of the century, illustrious intellectuals of Converso—or just suspected freethinking—backgrounds, were targetted directly. These included Juan de Vergara, Fray Luis de León, and St. Teresa of Ávila. But each emerged with his work unblemished—even ennobled—from his ordeals. Ultimately, it was the deeper currents going back to the more promising features of Isabel and Fernando’s rule and the earlier period of Convivencia, which produced the exceptional Spanish diplomat Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, who led the Spanish side of the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Westphalia. This was the 1648 treaty which finally brought to a close, the 150 years of religious wars, which had opened with Spain’s induced apostasy from the image of man projected by Cusa and the Council of Florence.

It was Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, the inspired creator of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, and possibly a very distant descendent of Conversos himself, who delivered the “true Spain’s” most enduring ironical rebuff to the heritage of Torquemada and the Inquisition. In his *entremés* (one-act “interlude” play), “The Pageant of Marvels,” Cervantes sets the theme of what later became the Grimm brothers’ story, “The Emperor With No Clothes,” in a small Castilian village of peasants and small town local officials. A travelling duo of con artists tell the townspeople that they can produce a most astounding series of marvels, but warn that “those of impure blood, of the blood of Jews” will not be able to see these miraculous events. Naturally, and hilariously, all the townspeople make asses of themselves, trying to outdo each other in exaggerated reactions to prove that they can see the nonexistent “marvels.”

The *Quijote* itself is the outlet for Cervantes’ other slap in the face of the Inquisition which had destroyed the Spain of Convivencia. The “mirror” effect of Cervantes placing references to himself inside his own novel, and having Part Two of the novel comment on the public’s response to the publication of Part One, is all subsumed in the greatest “role reversal”



*Queen Isabella and King Fernando are buried in Granada, Spain.*

of all: the entire novel, Cervantes tells us, was written by one Cide Hamete Benengeli—in Arabic!

### Afterword

The history of the changing historical and cultural treatment of the Inquisition in later times, is a vast subject of its own. Fast forward, however, to a snapshot of the “history of the history” in the first half of the 19th Century. There is a wonderful lesson here, of how an assortment of writers and historians in the newly formed American republic, directly took on Torquemada’s heirs, and rehabilitated the positive currents of Spain which had been swallowed in a propagandistic Black Legend of Spain.

Joseph de Maistre, the man whom all subsequent Synarchist theorists revered as the seminal influence in their doctrines, led the reaction to the publication, in 1817-18, of the first detailed treatment of the Inquisition based on its own internal documents, Juan Antonio Llorente’s *Historia Crítica de la Inquisición*. Llorente’s vast work was translated into Italian in 1820, into Dutch a year later, into German and Spanish in 1823, and into English, in both British and U.S. editions, in 1826. De Maistre’s energetic defense of the Inquisition and the role of Torquemada, took the form of his *Lettres sur l’Inquisition*, published posthumously in 1822 and soon translated into a number of other languages.

The history of a fascinating publishing war is recounted by historian Edward Peters. Various records of the Barcelona Inquisition had found their way to Boston, Massachusetts, “where they were translated and printed by Samuel Goodrich in 1828 as the *Records of the Spanish Inquisition*. The United States had inherited the traditional Protestant views of the

Spanish (and generally Roman) Inquisition; . . . in 1825 the *American Quarterly Review* published a long and sophisticated anonymous review of the Madrid Spanish edition of Llorente’s *Historia Crítica*. Probably stung to retort by these publications, a Boston priest, T.J. O’Flaherty, published the first English translation of de Maistre’s *Letters on the Spanish Inquisition* in 1830. . . .”

This battle took place against the backdrop of an extraordinary florescence of U.S. scholarship on Hispanic topics, initiated a generation before by the earliest of notable U.S. Hispanicists—Benjamin Franklin!—and closely linked to the direction of thinking of John Quincy Adams’ Monroe Doctrine of the early 1820s. Unlike Teddy Roosevelt’s perverted “Gunboat Diplomacy” Corollary of almost a century later, Adams’ original conception sought to foster a “Community of Principle” among the then-emerging independent states of formerly Hispanic America, as a redoubt of republicanism against the reassertion of oligarchic principles from Old Europe.

In 1826, in the midst of John Quincy Adams’ presidency, William H. Prescott, inspired by his Harvard teacher George Ticknor, a leading scholar of Spain and notable conduit of the Göttingen education system of Germany into the U.S., began his deep exploration of Spanish history. From his pen poured a series of historical masterpieces, starting with his *Ferdinand and Isabella* in 1837 and concluding with the third volume of his history of Philip II just before his death in 1859. Excellent and highly readable history to this day, these works also showed a highly sophisticated understanding of Venice’s duplicitous role, in the tradition of Schiller’s *The Ghost-Seer* and James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Bravo*. Prescott wrote in

*Ferdinand and Isabella*, “Venice may be considered as the most formidable of the great powers. . . . No government in that age attracted such general admiration, both from natives and foreigners, who seem to have looked upon it as affording the very best model of political wisdom. Yet there was no country where the citizen enjoyed less positive freedom, none whose foreign relations were conducted with more absolute selfishness, and with a more narrow, bargaining spirit, savouring rather of a company of traders than of a great and powerful state. But all this was compensated, in the eyes of her contemporaries, by the stability of her institutions.”

In the same generation we should note Washington Irving, who served as U.S. ambassador to Spain and wrote the evocative *Tales of the Alhambra* to celebrate the Spain of Convivencia.

The greatest of U.S. historians of the Inquisition itself—a man whose work has been the basis of every serious study since—is Henry Charles Lea (1825-1909). He was born into one of the Philadelphia publishing families which was at the center of the republican cause in the period from Franklin to Lincoln, that of his grandfather, Mathew Carey. His uncle was the most outstanding American System economist and polemicist of the Lincoln era, Henry C. Carey. Lea, a self-educated man who started out as a scientist, had a breakdown as a young man caused by overwork, and took to historical research almost as a pastime. Although he didn’t retire from managing the family’s publishing house until 1880, he had already assembled most of his ground-breaking first major work, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, published in three large volumes in 1887. His crowning work was *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, published in four large volumes in 1906-07. The last sentence of this monumental study brings us back to the lessons of Convivencia Spain, as so beautifully distilled in Lessing’s Parable of the Ring: “We must recognize . . . that competition in good works is the most beneficent sphere of human activity.”

### Suggested Reading:

On Spain’s joint Islamic-Jewish-Christian heritage (Convivencia): The two books, María Rosa Menocal’s *The Ornament of the World*, and Jane S. Gerber’s *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*, are unequalled and essential reading. Excellent shorter studies are *Andalusia, Gateway to the Golden Renaissance* by Muriel Mirak Weissbach in Vol. X, No. 3 (Fall 2001) of the quarterly of the Schiller Institute, *Fidelio*; and *Al-Andalus: the Melting-Pot Culture that Created a Renaissance* by Bonnie James (*Fidelio*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, Fall 2004).

On Nicholas of Cusa and the Council of Florence, see *Toward a New Council of Florence: ‘On the Peace of Faith’ and Other Works by Nicholas of Cusa*, translated and with an introduction by William F. Wertz, Jr. Also the special Cusa commemorative issue of *Fidelio*, Vol. X, No. 2, Summer 2001.

On Isabel and Fernando, William H. Prescott’s multi-volume *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic* of 1837 is the best starting place, discerning and well-written. If it is difficult to find, the 1962 abridgement by C. Harvey Gardiner is adequate. Of modern biographies of Isabel, I prefer Peggy Liss’s *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times* to Vera Rubin’s *Isabella of Castile: The First Renaissance Queen*, but both 1992 volumes are superior history.

On the Inquisition itself: Edward Peters’ *Inquisition* combines a useful, if somewhat bloodless, overview of the sweep from the early medieval Inquisition to the end of the several branches of the Inquisition in the first half of the 19th Century, with outstanding and original research into the evolution of views of the Inquisition in later works of literature and history.

On the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews, Lea’s great work of the beginning of the 20th Century, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain* is well worth consulting but too lengthy and difficult to obtain for the average reader. Fortunately, two very recent single-volume studies are first-rate, and far eclipse the standard histories of the preceding 80 years. These are *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* by Henry Kamen (the 1997 edition—don’t get his earlier work, which is superseded by this), and the contentious but superbly researched *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* by Norman Roth (the 2002 paperback edition has an extensive new Afterword which makes it superior to the 1995 original hardback version). *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman and Philosopher* by Benzion Netanyahu, Jabotinskyite “revisionist” historian father of recent Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is a useful study of one of the most fascinating and distinguished Jewish leaders of the period, who rose to the highest offices, in succession, of Portugal, Spain, and Naples, only to end his days in Venice, extolling the Serenissima Repubblica. Netanyahu’s later magnum opus, the 1,385-page *The Origins of the Inquisition* is unreadable, but worth consulting on specific issues and incidents. *The Expulsion 1492 Chronicles*, selected and edited by David Raphael, contains moving testimonies from the Jewish chroniclers of the Second Exodus, as well as useful excerpts from the principle contemporary Christian chroniclers of both Spain and Portugal.

No good biographies of Torquemada exist in English, but Thomas Hope’s 1939 *Torquemada, Scourge of the Jews* is not hopeless.

For the projection of the shadow of Torquemada into the modern world, the indispensable work is *Children of Satan*, by Lyndon LaRouche and collaborators, (issued by LaRouche PAC, 2004).

I wish to express deep appreciation of the research (unpublished ms. on the Trastámara Dynasty) and spirit of truth-seeking of Carlos Cota Meza, a friend whose much-lamented death in 2002 deprived me of a companion I would have wished with me on the journey of this work.