



The Spanish Inquisition: A History

By Joseph Pérez

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This is the story of 350 years of terror. Established by papal bull in 1478, the first task of the Spanish Inquisition was to question Jewish converts to Christianity and to expose and execute those found guilty of reversion. Authorities then turned on Spanish Jews in general, sending 300,000 into exile. Next in line were humanists and Lutherans. No rank was exempt. Children informed on their parents, merchants on their rivals, and priests upon their bishops. Those denounced were guilty unless they could prove their innocence. Nearly 32,000 people were publicly burned at the stake; the “fortunate” ones were flogged, fined, or imprisoned.

Joseph Pérez tells the history of the Spanish Inquisition from its medieval beginnings to its nineteenth-century ending. He discovers its origins in fear and jealousy and its longevity in usefulness to the state. He explores the inner workings of its councils, and shows how its officers, inquisitors, and leaders lived and worked. He describes its techniques of interrogation and torture, and shows how it refined displays of punishment as instruments of social control. The author ends his fascinating account by assessing the impact of the Inquisition over three and a half centuries on Spain’s culture, economy, and intellectual life.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A scholarly and vivid recasting of a painful era... a salutary reminder of the potential savagery occasioned by religion." -- *John Cornwell, Sunday Times (London)*

About the Author

Joseph Pérez is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Bordeaux and Honorary Director of the Velazquez Museum in Madrid. His previous books include a history of Spain under Philip II and biographies of Ferdinand and Isabella and Emperor Charles V. **Janet Lloyd** has translated more than fifty books and was twice awarded the Scott Moncrieff prize for best translation of a full-length French work of literary merit and general interest.

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