

ENFORCING ORTHODOXY: THE SPANISH INQUISITION VERSUS MUSLIMS AND PROTESTANTS

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Ironically, Europe's most effective institution for enforcing confessional orthodoxy was already in existence before Martin Luther was born in 1483.¹ Of course, it is anachronistic to speak of 'confessionalism' in the age of the "Catholic kings"; nevertheless, in many respects Torquemada's famous *Santo Oficio* was engaged in enforcing doctrinal uniformity. The problem that led to its creation was a kind of 'double confessionalism' practiced by many Spaniards who descended from converted Jews. They had learned Christian rituals and prayers without abandoning several religious practices connected with upholding Mosaic laws. (It is worth recalling at this point that the Spanish Inquisition punished neither Jews nor Muslims who had never been baptized; it was concerned exclusively with converts and their descendants, whom it called *nuevos cristianos*). The primary duty of Torquemada's Holy Office was to enforce purity of doctrine among Jewish converts.

Its methods, we know, were extremely rigorous. More converted Jews were probably executed for heresy in Spain than were radical Protestants in Luther's German Empire. But we should not forget that, by and large, the Spanish Inquisi-

tion succeeded in its original purpose. By the time the Council of Trent assembled in 1545, Spain's *nuevos cristianos* of Jewish origin were either dead, living abroad, or assimilated. We know that at least two thousand of them had been executed and many thousands more had fled Spain. But those who remained in Spain now behaved like *cristianos viejos*. They were never circumcised; they worked on Saturdays; they ate pork; and they no longer learned the 513 commandments of Mosaic law.

The Spanish Inquisition endured for centuries after it had fundamentally eliminated the problem of Jewish atavisms. In the mid-sixteenth century -- the classical age of confessionality in central Europe -- it underwent an identity crisis: it had become a well-entrenched bureaucracy with little to do. Such problems have rarely bothered officials; but the Spanish Inquisition, like many other judicial bodies of this era, collected much of its income through confiscations and fines from those it condemned. No "Judaizers," no income. Fortunately, early in Philip II's reign it encountered two fresh sources of potential heretics.

The smaller group was both new and dangerous. The Protestant Reformation reached Spain very late and very suddenly. In 1558, its Inquisitors learned about two crypto-Protestant groups, one in Spain's largest city, Seville, and the other in its capital, Valladolid. The news terrified the old Emperor Charles V in his retirement at Yuste, and the Holy Office sprang into action. In an unusually eloquent and effective letter to Pope Paul IV, Inquisitor-General Juan de Valdés noted that Luther's heresy, after spreading into many parts of Christendom, had even reached here: *la provincia que por la gracia de dos mas libre a estado desta macula a sido los rriñones de españa, por el gran cuidado y vixilancia de los ministros del santo oficio de la Inquisicon*. Valdés then described in three detailed paragraphs the discovery of both Protestant groups and the

seizure of many heretical books, *que an sido la principal causa deste daño*. Near the end, Valdés complained about the economic difficulties facing the Holy Office. Paul IV -- who detested Protestants even more than Spaniards -- gave the Inquisitor-General everything he requested. First, he broke with canon law by allowing the Inquisition to execute even repentant first offenders, thereby enabling them to uproot both nascent groups of *luteranos* with exemplary severity. And he resolved their financial problems by reserving the income from one canonry in every Spanish diocese for the Holy Office, without the duty of residence.

How the Inquisition destroyed Spain's indigenous Protestant movement is a very old story, recounted more than a century ago in three richly-documented volumes by a German scholar, Ernst Schäfer.² The great American scholar Henry Charles Lea soon used Schäfer's work to argue that "Spanish Protestantism was a mere episode, of no practical moment save as its repression fortified the Inquisition and led to the segregation of Spain."³ It is certainly correct that native Protestantism (always described by the Holy Office as *luteranismo*) was destroyed more quickly and thoroughly in Castile than in any other part of Christendom. The death of Don Gaspar de Centelles, a former courtier of Charles V, at Valencia in 1564 marked the end of a campaign that had lasted barely six years. The triumph of the Spanish Inquisition over Spain's *Luteranos* was a complete success, unrivaled anywhere else in an Europe of rival territorially-dominant Christian confessions.

Let us now return to the important letter sent by Valdés in 1558. At its very end, he briefly discussed the situation of a second type of Spanish *nuevos cristianos*: converted Muslims and their descendants, called Moriscos. Many of them, he admitted, had fled to North Africa in order to practice their religion freely, but *los mas de los que quedavan no dexavan de guardar las ceremonias de la dicha secta*. In this case, *la mejor*

*orden que a sido posible para mas asegurarlos de que han de ser tractados con clemencia, como parecia que convenia por su quietud.*⁴ It was the exact reverse of their attitudes towards Jewish *nuevos cristianos*, some of whom had now become *Luteranos*.

When Valdés wrote this, most Spanish Moriscos were already second- or even third-generation Christians. In 1502, the *Reyes católicos* had required Muslims to accept baptism throughout the kingdom of Castile, with a secret clause sparing Granada's Muslims from persecution by the Inquisition for forty years. In 1526, Charles V (then in Granada) required all Muslims in the crown of Aragon to accept baptism. But by and large, Valdés was telling the truth: as late as 1558, the Inquisition had punished relatively few Moriscos, including a handful of death sentences.⁵ He was also truthful in admitting to Rome that their Christianity was extremely superficial.

The Inquisition's campaign against Moriscos began as that against *Luteranos* accelerated. Let us consider two significant episodes from 1559. In July, the Aragonese tribunal in Saragossa ordered the arrest of a suspected Muslim teacher, an *al-faqui* whose Christian name was Juan Zamberel. But the three armed familiars and the priest who were sent to his village to arrest him never came back. Three days later, searchers found their dismembered bodies, cut into small pieces and thrown into a well; one man, we are told, still had a lance piercing his heart. Zamberel's parish priest had been blindfolded and his throat cut. A vast but futile manhunt ensued. Two years later, Saragossa's inquisitors finally found Zamberel. He was tortured to death in prison, while nine of his followers were punished at an *auto da fé*.⁶

While Aragonese inquisitors were searching for Zamberel, their Castilian colleagues at Valladolid had already celebrated their first major *auto da fe* featuring local *Luteranos* and were

preparing a second, which their recently-returned king, Philip II, would attend in person. The first *auto*, on May 21, was a spectacular event, announced fourteen days in advance and with a hundred armed guards to control the spectators. It enjoyed exceptional publicity; Ernst Schäfer published three eyewitness accounts and mentioned five others.⁷ The most important heresiarch punished at this *auto* was Doctor Augustin Cazalla, once a favorite preacher of Charles V, who had brought him to Germany in 1542. Under the extreme pressure of an unexpected death sentence – the Doctor knew nothing about Paul IV’s new rules, which had reached Spain a few months earlier – his behavior was truly exceptional. Doctor Cazalla read out a full and circumstantial confession and showed himself truly repentant, renouncing his errors and asking absolution. Being refused pardon, he spent his final hours praising God for sending him this trial of faith; he even blessed the Holy Office, saying it had been created not by men but by the hand of God, and accepted its conclusions as correct and deserved. Next morning, when his confessor brought him his *sanbenito* to wear in the procession, Dr. Cazalla kissed it. He railed so vigorously against Lutheranism that the Inquisitors had to restrain him when he began preaching to his fellow prisoners.⁸ No ‘repentant’ victim of a 20th-century Stalinist purge went this far.

Both Dr. Cazalla and the *faqui* we know as ‘Juan Zamberel’ were extreme cases, but extremes can offer useful comparisons. These examples illustrate to the point of parody both the shallowness of Spanish Protestantism – a completely disorganized movement – and the depth of Morisco hatred for the Holy Office. It is equally impossible to imagine either a Spanish Morisco kissing his *sanbenito* or a group of Spanish *luteranos* hacking inquisitorial assistants into small pieces. The Aragonese massacre of 1559 clarifies why the Spanish Inquisition had proceeded only sporadically and carefully against

baptized Muslims. Afterwards, fortified by their quick and total victory over indigenous *Luteranos* and inspired by the successful conclusion of the Council of Trent, the Spanish Inquisition began investigating Moriscos with far more determination – but with catastrophic consequences.

After the Tridentine decrees were proclaimed in Spain, a provincial synod in Granada in 1565 made a complete break with previous practices. They began a serious attempt at evangelization of Granadan Moriscos while simultaneously trying to uproot many deep-rooted expressions of Islamic culture: language, clothing, ritual washing and bathing, dances, etc. Anyone born in Africa was expelled; obstreperous native Moriscos were sent to the galleys; children of Morisco notables were raised in Castile at their parents' expense, "in order to forget their old customs and learn Christianity."⁹ This program of total assimilation, supported by a legal campaign against Morisco land titles and sharper punishments by the Inquisition, quickly provoked a gigantic rebellion lasting two years (1568-70). Afterwards, over 70,000 families of Granadan Moriscos were forcibly resettled across hundreds of "Old-Catholic" Castilian villages.

But as we shall see, dispersal and relocation did not turn Granadan Moriscos into Tridentine Catholics. Moriscos living in the crown of Aragon, about half as numerous as those in Granada, were unaffected by the 1568 rebellion. Here, where most Moriscos lived in relative isolation from Old Christians, the clergy attempted no thoroughgoing program of acculturation to transform them into ordinary Catholics, and for the same reason, the Holy Office could do little to enforce normative Catholicism, especially when several of its Morisco informants were murdered. Under Philip II, it was still possible (although admittedly rare) for Aragonese Moriscos to practice polygamy or even make a pilgrimage to Mecca without being punished by the Inquisition. Other practices were more

widespread. Inquisitorial officials discovered that almost all the males in a small Valencian Morisco village were still circumcised in 1574; many of the women could not remember the Christian names their children received at baptism, and only one in four knew her husband's Christian name.¹⁰ Even inside inquisitorial prisons, Moriscos turned towards Mecca to say their daily prayers. Ramadan was still being observed in dozens of Morisco villages as late as 1600.

Under these circumstances, Aragonese clerics handed the Morisco problem to the Inquisition. As Valencia's archbishop noted in 1561, "there is under heaven no better solution for them [Moriscos] than to become Christians and live as such, at least outwardly."¹¹ The Inquisition's repressive campaign increased sharply in the crown of Aragon. Over 200 Moriscos were executed for heresy between 1560 and 1610 and more than a thousand were sent to the galleys. In the half-century after 1560, the Holy Office executed more Moriscos than Protestants and Judaizers combined. Moriscos reciprocated with a deep and enduring hatred of an institution which they called simply *la cosa*. In 1605, a Castilian Morisco described a vision of Isabel *la católica* (whom he believed had invented it) being eternally crushed between two gigantic millstones in the deepest circle of Hell.

Despite the Inquisition's efforts, the inhabitants of predominantly Morisco villages did not behave as Christians. Armed guards were often necessary in order to make them hear Mass on Sunday. Behind this obstinacy lay the problem of religious upbringing. To put it simply, in the confessional age it was almost as easy to "Koranize" a Morisco as for Christian authorities to "Evangelize" him – even though every form of Islamic instruction was totally forbidden and theoretically punished with death. Even if they possessed no printing presses, Spain's Moriscos were a "people of the Book," and they produced an astonishing number of doctrinal manuscripts.

Even their bitterest enemies acknowledged this. “The books of this sect, their rituals and superstitions,” complained an apologist for the Morisco expulsion in 1612, “are a bottomless sea. Every house has some of them in every corner, down to little cards and alphabets for children with rhyming versions of Mohammed’s commandments .. some of which I have seen myself.”¹²

The complaints of Spanish clerics about the religious education of Moriscos seem all the more noteworthy, because after 1560 they were deeply engaged in catechizing Spanish Catholics. The destruction of Protestantism coincided with the beginning of effective ‘confessionalization’ in peninsular Spain. Using information from prisoners interrogated by the inquisitorial tribunal of Cuenca about how frequently they attended Mass, when they last made a confession, and how well they knew their basic prayers (Ave Maria, Paternoster, the Credo), Sara Nalle has demonstrated a sharp increase after 1570 in religious education and practice over previous levels. Almost everyone, including people who had been arrested for religious offenses (*causas de fe*), now behaved as well-trained and practicing Christians -- except Cuenca’s Moriscos, many of them resettled from Granada, who showed dramatically lower levels of church participation and knowledge of prayers.¹³ (One wonders if analogous results could be obtained today in European public schools among children of Muslim immigrants taking standardized tests in history or literature).

Let us return once again to the Inquisition’s dramatically different effects on Spanish *Luteranos* and Spanish Moriscos – the enormous gulf separating Dr. Cazalla from ‘Juan Zambarel.’ Today, we can understand the hapless Cazalla and his associates as belated Erasmians, relics of a pre- confessional era. In Spain they had no alternative church or rival catechism, and no cultural differences separated them from the

inquisitors. They understood the system that captured and prosecuted them, and many of them fully accepted its legitimacy (if less enthusiastically than Cazalla); those who did not fled abroad and published treatises denouncing the Holy Office. But the propaganda efforts of these exiled *Luteranos* (in reality, almost all of them followed Calvin's version of Reformed Protestantism) had absolutely no effect in their native land. After 1565, one can count Protestant emigrés from Spain on the fingers of one hand. In the seventeenth century, when Protestant services were celebrated in the chapels of Spain's foreign ambassadors, apparently only foreigners attended them. The elimination of Spanish Protestantism by the Inquisition offers one of our best historical examples that repression – if it is sufficiently strong and rapid – can be completely successful.

However, the Inquisition's attempts to force Moriscos to behave like Catholics, "at least in public" (as the Archbishop of Valencia desired), failed completely. The vast majority rejected Catholic attempts to 'confessionalize' them with unbreakable decisiveness. They built an alternative network of religious identity that began at birth; circumcision often preceded baptism, and the child received a Muslim name before a Christian one. Without benefit of a printing press, they created a large amount of instructional material to teach their children the elements of the true faith. When they were caught by the Inquisition, many of them practiced *taqqiyah*, a practice in some ways analogous to Nicodemism among Christians. When the situation required it, they died proudly, often with specifically Muslim gestures; when in 1581 the son of a Morisco leader in Saragossa heard his death sentence, he threw his crucifix on the ground and raised his index finger to Allah. An inquisitor with much experience with Moriscos remarked in 1595 that he "had never encountered a *nuevo convertido de moro* whom he could say was truly Christian."

Tridentine Catholicism stopped here. When evangelization advanced at a snail's pace and every attempt at intimidation failed, Spanish clergy began to imagine more radical solutions. The Bishop of Segorbe, a former inquisitor, suggested to Philip II in 1587 that all male Moriscos, "great and small," be castrated; another adviser supported the idea, adding that this had been practiced with slaves in the West Indies.¹⁴ However, a more moderate approach prevailed, and the official 'final solution' to the Morisco problem – deportation – was finally implemented about twenty years later.

What conclusions can we draw from the remarkable discrepancy between the fate of Spain's Protestants and its Muslims? On one hand we see the rapid and total annihilation of a pre-confessional Christian religious movement; on the other we see the extraordinary power of resistance of a well-organized religion whose difference from the prevailing orthodoxy was reinforced by numerous cultural markers, especially language: the Koran must be read and understood in Arabic. Praying, eating and bathing habits, clothing, circumcision: all these things were secondary phenomena, which could be reduced if not eliminated by governmental repression. Moriscos quickly learned Castilian, but without forgetting Arabic. They had the Koran, and knowledge of its teachings was what made one a Muslim. Their special hatred of the Holy Office sprang from their recognition that it alone, among all the agencies of a hostile Spanish state, attacked the religious essence of Moriscos. But thirteen tribunals, each with about two dozen paid officials, were in no position to eradicate knowledge of the Koran among 80,000 families.

In the light of Spain's experiences centuries ago with its Moriscos, it seems unsurprising that today's secular European states encounter enormous difficulties as they attempt to transform native-born Muslim minorities into reliable and productive citizens. Today, France has replaced Philip II's

Spain as Europe's most ambitious assimilationist government. Obviously, there are some major differences. Religious coercion is not what it used to be. Mass burnings – even of writings -- are a relic of bygone times, and in the post- Nazi era, no officials dare talk about mandatory castration. It is not even possible to imitate the Valencian archbishop's more modest goal that Moriscos behave like Christians, "at least in public." Modern goals, like French attempts to prohibit women's veils in public, seem more limited but equally unsuccessful.



1. This paper was originally delivered in German at the first (and only) joint meeting of Germany's Protestant and Catholic historical organizations in 1993 and subsequently published in W. Reinhard and H. Schilling, eds., *Die Katholische Konfessionalisierung* (Gutersloh, 1995), 135-43. The translation is mine, and the final paragraph has changed.
2. Ernst Schäfer, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des spanischen Protestantismus und der Inquisition im 16. Jahrhundert*, 3 vols. (Gutersloh, 1902).
3. H. C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 4 vols. (New York, 1906-08), III, 448.
4. Lea, III, 572.
5. The best introduction is L. Cardillac, J.P. Dedieu and B. Vincent (eds.), *Les Morisques et l'Inquisition* (Paris, 1990).
6. William Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy* (Cambridge, 1990), 85, 90f.
7. Schäfer, *Beiträge*, I, 442; III, 1, 15. Sara Nalle found another unpublished account in Cuenca's diocesan

- archives; see her book *God in La Mancha* (Baltimore, 1992), 33f.
8. Schäfer, *Beiträge*, I, 325-27; III, 78.
 9. A. Dominguez Ortiz and B. Vincent, *Historia de los Moriscos* (Madrid, 1978), 32f.
 10. B. Vincent, *Minorias y marginados en la España del siglo XVI* (Granada, 1987), 89, 41-43, 55-57.
 11. Monter, *Frontiers*, 125.
 12. *Ibid.*, 213.
 13. Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, 129-33.
 14. Ricardo Garcia Cárcel, *Herejía y sociedad en el siglo XVI. La Inquisición en Valencia 1530-1609* (Barcelona, 1980), 107, 226. In the 1590s, an English Protestant similarly proposed castration for Irish Catholics: Ciaran Brady, "Spencer's Irish Crisis," in *Past & Present*, III (1986), 23.