



# The Spanish Inquisition: A History

*Joseph Pérez*

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## **The Spanish Inquisition: A History** Joseph Pérez

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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