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QUEEN ISABELLA AND THE SPANISH INQUISITION

1478-1505

by

LORI NYKANEN

A thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in History
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Thesis Chair: Peter L. Larson

ABSTRACT

Queen Isabella (1451-1505) daughter of King John II of Castile and Queen Isabella of Portugal has been accredited for some of the most famous accomplishments of medieval Spain. Through her succession to the Castilian throne in 1479 Isabella created a secular government, which enabled her to restore the monarch's power and wealth, and gave her a wide reaching authority over her kingdom. The Queen, being a pious Catholic, reestablished Catholicism as the official religion of Castile and brought forward a tribunal to help her reinforce her desires for sincere Christian piety and to bring retribution to those who were heretical and insincere in their new conversions to the Catholic faith. This Spanish tribunal was established in 1478, blessed by Pope Sixtus IV, and would eventually become infamously known as the Black Legend or the Spanish Inquisition. Through the disguise of a religious tribunal the Queen's Inquisition performed a dual purpose; acting as a secret police with long reaching tentacles that created as much fear and terror to the kingdom as its tribunal Auto de Fe's.

The social-religious context of Castilian life changed drastically underneath Isabella's Inquisition, whose direct influence caused the Jewish population to falter and be ultimately expelled in 1492. Queen Isabella's ambitions, both secular and religious, brought the abrupt ending of seven hundred years of religious blending known as the Convivencia throughout her kingdom and created a large newly converted Catholic community named the Conversos that would ultimately challenge the old Christian communities and the Spanish Inquisition for the next three centuries to maintain their rightful place in Castilian society.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful daughter, Lauren who has graciously supported me through this journey.

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INTRODUCTION

On December 12, 1474, Queen Isabella took an unprecedented and bold step by declaring her rightful accession to the Castilian throne in Segovia, Castile. Her ascension not only united Castile and Aragon through the marriage to King Ferdinand II on October 19, 1469, but also established a dynamic and powerful Catholic Monarchy, ensuring a future of stringent Christian rule in Castile. The newly united Catholic Kings, a title bestowed upon them by Pope Alexander VI in 1494, began their reign with an absolute and authoritarian approach, working diligently to regain control of cities and rural areas that had chosen to become their adversaries through the long years of civil war, forced religious conversions, and Old Christian rebellions.

Isabella's claim to the throne in 1474 began her life long Catholic calling to disarm and reign over an inherited violent political and heretical religious province. For a decade prior to her rule, violence had reverberated through out Castile as zealots Archdeacon Vincent Ferren Martinez and Fray Vincent Ferrer fueled religious tensions by preaching Christianity and demonizing the Jewish faith to such a fevered pitch that many Old Christians believed that the Jewish communities were followers of the antichrist and performed demonic rituals on Christian children. By 1391, this form of anti-Semitic preaching fueled mob related violence in Juderias in Seville, Cordova, Burgos, and Toledo to such an extreme that historian Cecil Roth has claimed in many of his writings that Archdeacon Martinez singlehandedly "broke the spirit of the Jewish followers"¹ and stirred such violence against their communities, that out of fear for their lives,

¹ Roth, Cecil. The Spanish Inquisition. New York, N. Y. : W.W. Norton and Company. Press, 1964. P. 40

Jews began to convert to Christianity by the hundreds of thousands leaving behind a mere shadow of a Jewish community that had once existed.

The Jewish families who converted to Christianity in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were often led to the baptismal font by the respective rabbis of their communities. Through conversion, the new Christians, also known as Conversos, prospered as they acclimated into their new life style, which was, broadened with opportunities that had been previously restricted because of their Jewish faith. The attributions that many of these educated and wealthy Conversos brought to the Christian community were appreciated by the royal courts and old noble households, but were held in disdain by Old Christian communities who saw their families' political futures being taken away. Through the disgruntlement of the Old Christian community the Purity of Blood statute became enforced and tensions continued to rise as the Old Christian claims of Judazing spread throughout Castile. Fraternities of Christians began to form under the name of the Brotherhood of Charity² and they accused all Conversos as being Judaziers who openly used and disparaged the sanity of the Church. The fraternity would parade down city streets holding a crucifix and were often so enraged that violence would inevitable break out toward the Converso communities leaving their members murdered or raped, homes looted and often burnt to the ground.

The Brotherhood of Charity's frenzied claims were not always falsely made, as there were many who enjoyed their new status in Catholic Spain and wholeheartedly converted to the

² Edwards, J.H. 'Religious Belief and Social Conformity: The 'Converso' Problem in Late-Medieval Cordaba' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol.31 (1981), pp. 115-128.

pure faith. There, however, were equally as many whom remained in close proximity with their Jewish friends and non-converted family members, honoring their old Jewish traditions. Most new Christian communities remained tight knit and secretive, preferring to marry within their own community, and were often accused of holding private rituals with other Conversos and Jews. A Catholic knight reported witnessing one of these secret gatherings on March 18 1478, during Holy Week in Seville. This young Christian knight claimed he had quietly gone into the Juderia to visit his Converso girlfriend, and after sneaking into the home he observed one of these ritualistic gatherings. By his account he witnessed “ Jews and new Christians engaged in a mysterious celebration.”³ Upon hearing this outrage and disrespect to the faith, Dominican prior Alonso de Hojeda reported it directly to Queen Isabella and warned her about the ongoing ugliness of heresy which many larger cities and towns were experiencing because of crypto-Judaizers in new Christian communities. He described a dismal picture of heretical behavior from recently converted Christians and Jewish dissidence and blasphemy towards the Catholic faith causing violent uprisings between the Conversos and Old Christian communities. As much as Queen Isabella protected and employed Conversos and Jews in her courts, her adamant commitment to Christianized Spain was her highest priority and she would not allow heretical, deviant behavior against the Church or monarchy.

Upon listening to her officials’ reports about the “Converso danger “⁴ Queen Isabella took it upon herself to tour the Andalusia region, where the majority of political and religious

³ Roth, Cecil. The Spanish Inquisition. New York, N. Y. : W.W. Norton and Company. Press, 1964. p. 42

⁴ Kamen, Henry. The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision. New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1997. p. 39.

uprising occurred “with the intention of establishing firm control over its main cities and countryside.”⁵ As she traveled the Queen witnessed a very different society than what she had experienced in her courts. These outer lying Converso communities were large and secretive with members blatantly reverting back to old Jewish traditions. The cryptic-Jewish communities were an obvious threat to the young Catholic king’s religious and political stability particularly in a region that lay so close to enemies’ borders. In Seville, fall of 1478, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand conceded that an Inquisition was needed not only to investigate the truth behind the allegations and punish those who had abused the new Christian baptismal offerings by secretly Judaizing, but also to patrol and police the politics of the Andalusia nobles, fraternities, and brotherhoods to ensure and stabilize their tight authoritarian stance in the region. The Catholic Kings wrote for and received a Papal Bull November 1, 1478 from Pope Sixtus IV to appoint two priests as Inquisitors for the new Inquisition of Spain. This new Inquisition, known infamously as the Spanish Inquisition, was requisitioned with a duality to their nature; one the role of being a secret police to the to the Crown, and two bringing forward a traditional inquisition investigation for religious purposes against dissidence and heresy. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella appointed the Spanish Inquisition in order to secure both their rule and religious preference and through these actions effectively sent terror throughout the regions of their new Christian communities.

Beginning its secretive investigations, between 1478 and 1483, the Inquisition recognized that the Jewish communities readily communicated with the Conversos trying to entice them

⁵ Edwards, John. The Spanish Inquisition. Charleston, SC: Tempus Publishing Ltd. Press, 1999. p. 68.

back to their Jewish roots, encouraging them to secretly follow the Jewish rituals and the book of Moses. These actions put the Conversos at great risk to be charged with heresy or dissidence against the Catholic faith by the Inquisition. The Inquisition tribunal's interests lay in the deviance of the Judazier, and not the Jew, making the underground cryptic-Jewish communities their prime target and concern. The Inquisitors relied heavily on the testaments of witnesses and prisoners to become educated in the Jewish teachings and rituals, which were still being secretly preformed. The Spanish Monarchs left the Inquisition to maintain the Catholic laws and perform their duties to the Holy Office through outreaching tribunals and Auto de Fes.

By researching the Spanish Inquisition's Auto de Fe's court documents and prisoners' confessions I was able to expose the unorthodox methods in which the Inquisition convicted their prisoners of heresy and/or deviancy towards the Church. Through this research I exposed the Holy Office and its tribunals' deficiencies and contradictions by underscoring the fact that many of the heretical charges came from biased members of the Old Christian community, or disgruntled neighboring Conversos, who either sought retribution against a past grudge or harbored a selfish desire for the prisoner's political status, wealth or land. Such as the Trial of Maria Gonzalez of Pedro de Villarreal, who out of spite and hatred, maligned innocent neighbors' reputations by accusing them of joining her in heretical behavior and turned both herself and her neighbors over to the tribunal. "Maria came forward to disclose her Judaizing rituals, as well her acquaintances that she claimed shared in these Jewish practices, only to have her confession not accepted by the Reverend Lord Inquisitor. Maria was then subjected to more torture to ensure the truth of her confession and ensure the Inquisitors that there were not hidden motives to her confession. Throughout her torture she did indeed admit that she had falsified her

confession simply out of hatred for her neighbors. After five days of documented torture and pleading for her life “their reverences ordered her returned to the prison, and said that in conformity with the consultadore vote, Maria Gonzalez must be relaxed to justice and the secular arm for having falsely confessed and being impenitent...”⁶ Maria was burned at the stake in Toledo, and in the large crowd that had gathered to watch her demise was her falsely accused neighbors. Unfortunately, Maria’s case was not unique and exemplified the dangers that many Conversos faced as they pleaded their innocence in front of the Inquisition’s courtroom.

My thesis will begin with the youth and marriage of Queen Isabella, which will be based from a wide range of secondary sources and research, as many of the primary documents for Isabella are extremely difficult to locate. The importance for this beginning is to establish the political strength behind Queen Isabella and her dominance over Castile. This will bring forward the Catholic Monarchy of Castile, the Converso brutality, which was inflicted on both Jewish and new Christians alike, and the reasoning behind the Spanish Inquisition becoming the secular and secret police for the monarchy alone. By examining the Spanish Inquisition in this light, it will become apparent how Isabella’s united Spain and its Inquisition was unique, and brought forward heavy consequences for many of the prospering multiethnic communities in Castile and Aragon. In my thesis I have demystified the Black Legend, or the infamous Spanish Inquisition, and brought forward my argument, backed by research, to demonstrate how the Inquisition was used as a cruel tool by the Catholic Monarchy to succeed in control, exploration, and bring forth

⁶ Homza, Lu Ann. trans., The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006. p. 50.

the extermination of religious minorities that before Queen Isabella's reign had thrived, even if severely diminished, for hundreds of years.

CHAPTER ONE

Queen Isabella- Infanta of Castile

Queen Isabella's brazen self-acclaimed coronation in Segovia, on December 13 1474, was paraded in front of a cheering crowd who chanted " Castile, Castile, for the very high and powerful lady, The Queen Doan Isabel,"⁷ and was led by the wealthiest Segovian nobleman, Gutierre de Cardenas, who held the symbolic "naked sword to symbolize the power of the throne, and, after the Spanish fashion, warn all evildoers of the Queen's power to punish."⁸ This bold move, on both the part of Isabella and Cardenas, was a political risk that Isabella had chosen to take in order to publically claim her succession to the crown and rightful place as heiress of Castile. This statement was made significantly more powerful due to the fact that it was only a day after her half brother's death, King Henry IV the Impotent, in his favorite city, Segovia. The most politically influential aspect of Isabella's self-coronation was the public support offered from the Segovia nobility and wealthy families of Castile, in particular, the ceremony in which "the keepers of the fortresses presented their keys. (The most important of these was the key to Alcazar which contained Henry IV's treasure.)"⁹ As Isabella waved to her new subjects, she was acutely aware of the fact that she stood a great deal to lose if she could not win over the opposing wealthy Castilian families and political adversaries who doubted her

⁷ Sabatini, Rafael. Torquemada And The Spanish Inquisition. Cambridge, Ma: Stanley Paul & Co. Press, 1924.p. 44.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁹ Lunenfeld, M. 'Isabelle I of Castile and the Company of Women in Power.' *Historical Reflections/ Relexions Historiques*, Vol.4, No.2, Winter/l'hiver 1977. pp.57-79.

ability to be the sovereign of Castile. Yet, Isabella had already demonstrated charisma and strength in portraying herself as a politically astute and confident ruler, who could overcome the obvious impurities of being a member of the weaker and more corruptible sex, and was most deserving of the naked sword's medieval symbol of strength and power that was deemed necessary to reign.

Queen Isabella was born in Madrigal de los Altos Tortes on April 22, 1451. She was the daughter of King John II and Queen Isabella of Portugal and was not the celebrated choice for next heir to the throne of Castile. Her half-brother King Henry IV the Impotent who was 25 years her senior, had claim to the throne. Isabella was viewed only as an important political marriage alliance for Castile. When King John II died in 1454, Isabella was forced not only to endure the coronation and reign of King Henry IV but was also systematically denied the inheritance left to her by her deceased father. At age seventeen, Isabella wrote to King Henry “accusing him of having treated her badly; she came to present herself as a semi-orphan raised in obscurity and kept in want of him.”¹⁰ Even with her most bitter complaining of “extreme lack of unnecessary things”¹¹ Isabella lived graciously and was fortunate to be well educated, often praised for being studious, pious and above all politically strong-minded.

Isabella's fortune began to take a more positive turn when King Henry IV obliged Isabella and her younger brother Alfonso II to reside in his court, not out of guilt for his previous actions, but to protect his authority and rule over the kingdom. The king being wary of his now precarious position caused by the loss of support from powerful and wealthy nobles felt the

¹⁰ Liss, Peggy. Isabel the Queen Life and Times. New York: Oxford Printing. Press, 1992 p. 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.13

urgency to keep watch over his half siblings, in particularly Alfonso. Wealthy Castilians, known as the League of Nobles, however, had already put their political support behind Prince Alfonso II, and crowned him the true King of Castile in a “ceremonial dethronement of Henry IV in Avila in September 1464”¹² For three years after Avila there was civil unrest until the two sides met at the Battle of Olmedo. Neither side could claim victory from the battle but the League of Nobles now created deep divisions within the Castilian courts. Through this opportune period of unrest Isabella exposed her strong political aspirations and began to exploit the incompetence of her half-brother. Which the courts and nobles witnessed by her coming forward with accusations towards Henry’s rumored homosexuality and his impotence, as she openly challenged the authenticity of his daughter Juana la Beltraneja and put forth the claim that it was she who was second in line to the throne after Alfonso, and not her niece.

Isabella’s political astuteness throughout this time, her ability to listen to court advisors and the fact that she publically supported her younger brother justified her claim to be considered heiress to the throne when Alfonso died suddenly, and suspiciously, on July 5, 1468. Upon Alfonso’s death Isabella wrote “a letter implying that Alfonso was a sacrificial lamb for his people, that is, a mirror image of Christ. She attributed his death to the ‘sins of the Kingdom.’ And declared herself heir to his political claim and righteous cause.”¹³ After Alfonso’s suspicious death, the League of Nobles turned their loyalty to Isabella and the heiress began to form alliances throughout the kingdom that had supported her brother’s campaign for the crown

¹² Reston, James Jr. Dogs of God. New York, N.Y. : DoubleDay Press, 2005. p. 22.

¹³ Boruchoff, David A. Isabel La Catolica, Queen of Castile: Critical Essays. New York, N.Y. MacMillan Press, 2003. p. 61.

and transferred the support to her. King Henry IV conceded to Isabella's pressure and felt he had no other political choice but to grant Isabella heiress to throne of Castile at the signing of the Pact of the Bulls of Guisando in 1468. Leaving his daughter, Isabella's niece, Juana la Beltraneja, without opportunity to be the one succeeding to the throne. Henry's only stipulation was that he must consent to Isabella's marital choice.

Queen Isabella, once again, displayed an unusually strong and obstinate behavior uncommon for a woman of that time period. Not only did she boldly reject Henry's choices for her marital alliances, she chose and secretly wed King Ferdinand of Aragon on October 19, 1469 during a simply ceremony held in Valladolid. This was a strategic moment for Isabella; as she was aware of Ferdinand's father's, King John II of Aragon, dire circumstances and his urgent need to be united with Castile and used this to her advantage. King John II would have had little choice but to agree and sign Isabella's pre-marital agreement, which was rather like a fifteenth century prenuptial contract, called the "marriage capitulaciones."¹⁴ In this agreement Isabella demanded that she would have full control over Castilian governmental offices, its royal treasury, and complete sovereignty over the populace. Also included in the capituciones was a gift of 100,000 gold florins that Isabella would receive after four months of marriage. Ferdinand, quite simply was to be her consort and husband without any controlling powers over her or Castile. King Ferdinand, because of Aragon's dire situation, had no choice but to proceed with the "marriage capitulaciones" that were drawn up on "4 January 1469."¹⁵

¹⁴Lunenfeld, M. "Isabelle I of Castile and the Company of Women in Power." *Historical Reflections/ Relexions Historiques*, Vol.4, No.2, Winter/l'hiver 1977.

¹⁵ Lunenfeld, M. "Isabelle I of Castile and the Company of Women in Power." *Historical Reflections/ Relexions Historiques*, Vol.4, No.2, Winter/l'hiver 1977.

Unfortunately, the marriage contract that gave Isabella unusual control over her husband, and King John II of Aragon, put her in a very unpopular and compromising situation with the Castilian nobility and, in particular, her half brother King Henry IV. Henry, furious over Isabella's secret marriage to Ferdinand denounced her succession to the throne and replaced her with his daughter, Juana. Many of Isabella's once supporting nobles now abandoned her and returned their support to King Henry IV. For the first time Isabella proved to be frightened and alone realizing the dangerous position she had placed herself in. Isabella worked diligently to rekindle the relationship with the King and finally bridged the gap during the Christmas celebration in 1473. She could not, however, regain the blessing for her accession to the throne.

True to her nature, Isabella started to politically reconnect with the Castilian nobility and its wealthy families as she waited for the opportune moment to claim her rightful succession to the throne, which came with her public self-coronation on December 13, 1474. This spectacle was viewed as a political scandal which nobles and politicians alike denounced; Ferdinand's secretary called it "an insolent action"¹⁶ which only underlined the fury of the King when he heard of the Queen's self coronation, seven days later in a benign correspondence. The Queen, however, countered these retributions by claiming her self-coronation was a successful political move backed by Segovia's judges and wealthy city officials.

To many Castilian and Aragon nobility, however, Queen Isabella's actions seemed to be more of those of an insolent, self- acclaimed queen trying to upstage the recently deceased

¹⁶ Lunenfeld, M. "Isabelle I of Castile and the Company of Women in Power." *Historical Reflections/ Relexions Historiques*, Vol.4, No.2, Winter/l'hiver 1977.

King and defy the protocol of the succession of male heirs to the throne. Luis Gonzalez sums up the general political feelings and reactions towards the new Queen's boldness "if there is in antiquity a precedent for a queen to be proceeded by this symbol...everyone knows that these are conceded to kings: but never was known a queen who had usurped this masculine tribute."¹⁷ Queen Isabella's two court chroniclers Fernando de Pulgar and Alfonso de Palencia proposed a political propaganda campaign that would smooth over the actions of a self-acclaimed Queen, who was seen as trying to defy the protocol of succession and tolerance granted her during the signing at Guisanda. Pulgar and Palencia strove to regenerate the attributes of the Queen to opposing wealthy Castilian noble families, by proclaiming her steadfast belief that all power must come from God, and with his blessing, the divine and absolute rule of the Catholic Monarchs who sought to protect their newly united Catholic kingdom. Queen Isabella was resilient with her vows to rule her homeland and protect its people from the anarchy that engulfed Castile for over a century because of the untrustworthy and impotent rulers that had preceded her. Realizing the political unrest that a female monarch stirred in a masculine dominated period, Isabella displayed political savvy and astuteness by acknowledging the fact that "any Queen who failed to exploit the advantages of a pious appearance or who did not fit into the role of Virgin, wife or mother in a socially approved manner could expect difficulties."¹⁸ To help provide such an image of piousness, Pulgar and Palencia brought forward a comparison

¹⁷ Lunenfeld, M. "Isabelle I of Castile and the Company of Women in Power." *Historical Reflections/ Relexions Historiques*, Vol.4, No.2, Winter/l'hiver 1977.

¹⁸ Lunenfeld, M. "Isabelle I of Castile and the Company of Women in Power." *Historical Reflections/ Relexions Historiques*, Vol.4, No.2, Winter/l'hiver 1977.

between Isabella and the Virgin Mary, alleging that both portrayed purity, sanctity, and divine strength, giving Isabelle the appearance of being rewarded with divine rule.

The strategic propaganda campaign, however, did not dissuade Isabella's adversaries in pursuing the "War of Succession" between herself and her goddaughter and niece, Juana la Beltraneja. Juana, being 13 years of age when her father died, did not display the political strength that her Aunt possessed. Her campaign for succession proved to be no match for Isabella's strong propaganda until a glimmer of light shone for the princess as she became betrothed to King Alfonso V of Portugal, who agreed to the marriage so he could unite Portugal and Castile under his authority. Each rival claimed to be the rightful heiress to the Crown of Castile and the War of Succession broke out as Portuguese troops invaded, throwing Castile into another bloody warzone from 1475 through 1479.

The political chaos that followed left Castile scared and politically unstable as nobility took sides by making strategic alliances either for Juana or Isabella and Ferdinand. As the war loomed, Isabella's strong willed independent stance weakened and as fear gripped her, she turned to her husband for support, grateful for Ferdinand's experience and talent in military campaigning. Queen Isabella gave authority for King Ferdinand to have rule over all the Castilian armies, towns, and fortresses as King Alfonso V's armies began to invade Spain's borders. Isabella realized that Ferdinand's participation in the war was crucial and the pivotal point of her succession lay in the balance. King Ferdinand did not disappoint his new Queen and at the battle of Toro on March 1479, his military tactics embarrassed both the King of Portugal and his military with a crushing defeat. King Alfonso V and Princess Juana lost their entitlement

to the Castilian throne, with the King returning to Portugal humiliated and the young princess sent to a nunnery in Portugal, never again challenging the Catholic Kings for rightful succession.

Queen Isabella, now officially recognized as the Queen of Castile, became the beacon for resolution and peace in Castile. The people looked to her and Ferdinand to restructure the newly unified state. Contemporary chronicler Diego de Valera wrote about the hopes of the Castilian population who were besieged by the greed and power of the Castilian nobles and aristocracy throughout the war. He stated with optimism “Ferdinand and Isabella had come to restore these kingdoms and rescue them from tyrannical government to which they had so long been subjected.”¹⁹ The Catholic Kings were very much aware of the chaos and greed that the nobility and the aristocracy caused and manipulated during the war allowing them to be far too powerful and independent. This would create the first and most important agenda for Isabella and Ferdinand to reclaim their territories and reign with authority over the nobles and wealthy aristocracy. Isabella would juxtapose John Evangelist’s book of revelation to her political agenda and stance to enforce her leadership and command over her subjects.

¹⁹ Elliott, J.H. Imperial Spain 1469-1716. New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, Press, 2002. p. 71

CHAPTER TWO

Conversos

The Catholic Monarch's

Conversion of the Jewish Community

The Catholic monarchs, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, in 1479, were able to walk forward and claim their newly united kingdom, which would eventually become known as modern Spain. Even with their recent display of resolve and perseverance, the young monarchs could not have possibly begun to imagine the amount of disunity that plagued their kingdom. The people were tired and worn from “generations of misrule in Castile, culminating in the lax reigns of John II and Henry IV had permitted the spread of lawlessness so utter that its like was not to be found in any other state at that time. Anarchy was a paramount mistress of the land.”²⁰ With decades of anarchy reigning throughout Castile, high expectations were now put on the shoulders of the young King and Queen to undo centuries of civil wars, religious persecutions and lawlessness that ran rampant throughout the Castilian towns and countryside. With their newfound authority the King and Queen implemented court legislations that would change the hierarchy of the municipal governments, put the policing of the lands under Crown control to the severity that it sent waves of terror throughout the kingdom, and emplace a

²⁰ Sabatini, Rafael. Torquemada And The Spanish Inquisition. Cambridge, Ma: Stanley Paul & Co. Press, 1924.p. 53.

monotheistic Catholic religion to dominate the multicultural backdrop of Spain that had survived for hundreds of years. Through this new legislation, the Catholic monarchs offered a controlled, unified and centralized government for their country and a solution for the independent and extremely powerful nobility that had plotted and rose up against the Queen during the War of Succession.

Ironically, as Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand brought forward their unified stance, the ethnic and religious violence in Castile rose to an alarming pitch. Violence was not unusual for Castile, as their religious cultural clashes could be traced as far back as the third century when Jewish communities settled along the Andalusia region and immigrated into the southern areas of Castile making Spain their permanent home. The Spanish Jews had never been more than a small minority to the region but they offered great talent and resources to the communities that surrounded them. The Jews of the Spanish townships lived in segregated “Jewish ghettos” that were in close proximity to each other. Their rituals were sacred to them and included marital rites, inheritance laws, dietary strictness, community loyalty and security. Rabbis were chosen to lead them in their religious faith and were empowered with the authority to enforce Jewish laws and perform governmental duties. Yet, even during this early period of Spain’s existence, the Jews experienced religious persecution. Visigoth King Reccared of Toledo, in 589 AD, declared his Spanish kingdom to be converted to the Christian faith, included in this declaration was the desire for the “Spanish Jews be brought into the Christian fold.”²¹ The Jewish population rejected these demands and quickly felt the stringent reprisals through the Council of Toledo’s

²¹ Shaw, Dykes.R. “The Fall of the Visigothic Power in Spain” *The English Historical Review*, Vol.21, No.82(Apr. 1906), pp 209-228

decree in 589, the small community had three choices; convert to Christianity, stay and live under great repression, or flee to another land whose government would be more tolerant of their Jewish beliefs and permit greater freedom.

Jewish society dwindled during the Visigoth reign in medieval Spain, until the 8th century when the Visigoths fell to the Umayyad Caliph forces of North Africa. Under Muslim rule the Jews began to prosper and flourish into a thriving community of intellectuals, international traders and high society court officials. Medieval Historian Maria Rosa Menocal quotes this period as “the ornament of the world”²² where the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities strove in studies of antiquity, architecture and the arts, ushering in the period known by historians as the Convivencia. However, during the reign of the Muslim Caliphs, distention rose between the Muslim rulers making them vulnerable to the wars known as the ReConquista. The Muslims slowly lost their territories in the Andalusia region to the Christian kingdoms who had come from the north to reclaim territories and successfully return the peninsula back to the Christian rule.

When the peninsula first returned to Christian rule, both the Jews and the Moors prospered under Christian kings like St. Ferdinand of Castile or King Alfonso X (1252-84). Alfonso X, the Learned One, appreciated the educational and cultural contributions of the Convivencia, and continued with the Arabic and Latin translations of religious texts such as the Koran and the Talmud. He “promoted valuable translations from Arabic astronomy that came to be known as Alfonsine Tables”²³ and was motivated to bring the northern parts of Castile up to

²² Menocal, Maria Rosa. *Ornament of the World How Muslims , Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Warner Brother books. 2009.

²³ Sabatini, Rafael. *Torquemada And The Spanish Inquisition*. Cambridge, Ma: Stanley Paul & Co. Press,1924.p. 44.

the same artistic and architectural level as the southern Convivencia peninsula. Historians have claimed that King Alfonso's kingdom "represented the high point of the cross-fertilization"²⁴ in Castile. However, this cultural mosaic, or blending, was coming to a disturbing end in late medieval Europe as anti-Semitism began to rise.

Medieval Europe had become more monotheistic and intolerant toward the Jewish communities within their regions. Overzealous and derogatory teachings by Dominican priests, and others, claimed that Jewish rituals were demonic and blasphemous. Their rigorous propaganda brought about a strong backlash of anti-Semitic and superstitious feelings in the Christian communities, creating a volatile environment for the Jews. They were the blame for the great plague in 1342 that ravaged Europe, and were also subject to the accusations of performing demonic rituals of human sacrifice on Christian boys during their holy days. By the early fourteenth century, the Andalusia multiethnic and religious tolerance began to deteriorate. Jews were resented for their lucrative positions within Castilian society, their holding of prestigious positions, as well as their intensely unpopular usury practices. They became the subject of jealousy, hatred and anti-Semitism which escalated to the point that they were once again ostracized by their neighboring communities, forced to reside in outer lying ghettos so they would not contaminate Christian towns and cities. These actions, however, were only foreshadowing the beginning of the extreme violence that their communities would be subject to by their Christian neighbors.

²⁴ Reston, James.Jr. *Dogs of God*. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.p. 5.

Cecil Roth has claimed that March 15, 1431, Ash Wednesday, was the beginning of the “dispirited”²⁵ Jewish movement to conversion in Spain, a time when many of the Jewish followers gave up their passionate stance against widespread anti-Semitism. It was this day when the Dominican Archdeacon Martinez gave an emotional and charismatic sermon on the teachings of Christ and the sinful acts of the Jews. His audience, enraged by Martinez’s words, formed gangs and began a rampage of raping, killing and looting throughout the entire Jewish quarter. Their fervor reached such a height that even the municipal authorities were unable to control the crowds and “the infection spread from one city to another”²⁶ with waves of violence being extended from Seville to Toledo where Jews were murdered by the hundreds, and the riots and violence continued throughout the summer until it had reached and demolished many of Castile’s largest Juderias. Roth accused the preaching of Martinez as being solely responsible for the “extermination of entire communities,”²⁷ through the summer riots of 1391. “For the first time in the whole course of their long history, the moral of the Jewish people—or of a considerable portion of it—broke.”²⁸ The news spread throughout Castile of the Jewish massacres and Papal authorities condemned Martinez’s radical and inflammatory sermons towards the Jews. Martinez dismissed not only the Church’s reprimand, but even the King’s warning to stop his propaganda campaigning and bring about peace in the Castilian cities. Martinez continued his sermons and the anti-Semitic violence until many Rabbis led their entire communities to the font leaving behind their vast heritage and ancestry. The Jews, which chose repression to conversion watched

²⁵ Roth, Cecil. The Spanish Inquisition. New York, N. Y. : W.W. Norton and Company. Press, 1964.p. 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*,p. 20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*,p. 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*,p.23.

helplessly as their Juderias dwindled to a mere shadow of its once lucrative and accomplished existence.

The rampage and violence surrounding the 1391 pogroms resulted in mass conversions to the Christian faith, with its large numbers unique only to Spain. Priests continued with their vigorous efforts for converts, once again ignoring the cautionary warnings from the Papacy and Monarch to leave the Jewish community in peace. Dominicans, such as Fray Vincent Ferrer, who in the year 1415 claimed to have singularly converted 35, 000 Jews as “he appeared in the synagogue bearing a Scroll of the Law in one arm and a crucifix in another, with an unruly mob at his heels to add force to his arguments,”²⁹ celebrated their successful persuasion for new converts to the faith. They did not consider, however, the social-religious implications that this new community would bring once it became successfully integrated into medieval Spanish society. Old Spanish Christians viewed these newly converted Christians with antagonism and jealousy, labeling their growing community as Conversos (recently baptized). The Converso slur, however, implied an insincere Christian not a newly baptized one.

Historians have debated why this social-religious phenomenon created such disdain and hatred within the Old Christian community toward their newly converted neighbors. Accusations rose up from Old Christians that their neighboring Conversos were simply wolves in disguise making a mockery of Christianity and yet receiving all the civil privileges that was part of Christian society. Jerome Friedman voices the confusion and irony that many historians focused on as they debated the accusations made against the Conversos in Christian Spain during the

²⁹ Roth, Cecil. The Spanish Inquisition. New York, N. Y. : W.W. Norton and Company. Press, 1964.p. 25.

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. “One would think that so Christian a society as fifteenth and sixteenth-century Spain could determine who was Christian and who was not... Who these converts were, what role they played in Spanish life, and their relationship to both Christianity and Judaism?”³⁰ The interesting dilemma that Friedman brought forward was why did the social religious tensions of fifteenth century Spain’s old Christian community change so drastically from the Jewish minorities and is transferred aggressively to their companions in Christianity, the Conversos?

Freidman argued the social-religious tensions, which developed throughout fifteenth and sixteenth century Castile and Aragon, were not based solely on Judaizing, but also on the social and economical impact the Conversos brought to the Old Christian communities. Once the Conversos grasped their newly found freedom under Christian laws, without repression or restrictions, they advanced so quickly as a community that by the third generation many Conversos in Castile had achieved wealth and status to the point that their children were wed into wealthy noble families. The Conversos were so successful in integrating into wealthy medieval Spain, that even Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand had Jewish ancestors. Spanish courts and wealthy noble families employed Conversos as financial administrators, transcribers of Hebrew literature into Latin, and medical doctors to name only a few of their occupations as the community spread throughout the kingdom. One of the more important posts that King John II, Queen Isabella’s father, offered the Conversos “was to be the King’s official tax collectors”³¹ and when they did they would “become the backbone of the professional and commercial

³⁰ Friedman, Jerome. ‘Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure blood Laws and reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and religious Anti-Semitism’ *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol.18, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp.3-30.

³¹ Reston, James.Jr. *Dogs of God*. New York, N.Y.: Random House,Inc. 2005.p. 18.

gentry... As such resentment, jealousy and even hatred toward them was rife.”³² These achievements only added to the already tense atmosphere that surrounded their ever-growing community.

What had become obvious to the old Spanish Christian community, by the early fifteenth century, was that the Conversos were not only supposedly mocking Christianity, but also were encroaching on their city politics and consuming prestigious municipal offices, as well as taking opportune marital contracts away from their own families. As the Old Christian community spoke out against the Converso practices, new Christians denied any wrong doing and complained of insults being directed toward their community. The Castilian monarchs established new legislation that would curtail Old Christian racial insults, in hopes that these laws would put a stop to the rising tensions between the two religious communities. Even after decades within this living arrangement, this hope never materialized, and the social-religious disparity throughout Castilian cities grew at an alarming rate. To the onlooker, this disparity seemed like a social anomaly, as one might come to the conclusion that after three generations of the Conversos living freely as Christians in Castile, the new Christians would be fully amalgamated into the Old Christian society. However, Miriam Bodian raised an important social aspect, which belonged solely to Castile and their Converso community. She stated, “that the status of Converso became, curiously, an inherited status—a fateful development noting that even 3rd or 4th generations of new Christians, who had no Jewish upbringing or introduction, still could not escape the labeling of new Christian or Converso.”³³ This in itself is a strong

³² Ibin.,p. 18.

³³ Bodian, Miriam. “Men of the Nation” The shaping of Conversos Identity in Early Modern Europe’ *Past and Present*, No.143 (May, 1994), pp. 48-76.

statement regarding medieval Spain's Old Christian attitudes and rising resentment against the Conversos.

One must also give credibility to the Old Christians' accusations that many of the Conversos were indeed Judaziers, who continued to practice their faith secretly in the privacy of their own homes. There were instances where the accusations had a great deal of truth behind them. It was acknowledged that many Conversos chose to remain in close contact with their Jewish family and friends and would only intermarry in their tight knit community. A passerby could observe Jewish rituals, such as not eating pork, the receiving of oils as gifts, the practice of turning to a wall when they heard the news of a death, bathing rituals, or the cooking with garlic and onions. These rituals often were simply the residues of their heritage, however, they were also construed to be part of the Jewish traditions that were being taught secretly from generation to generation. The most trivial of circumstances such as bathing or changing of linens on a Friday could be made into examples of Judazing. Often it was the servants of these families that led to their exposure and arrest, such as the case of Maria de Mendoca of Purchena whose maidservant was shocked to witness a cleansing ritual, often done by a Jewish person on a Friday to welcome the Sabbath. The maidservant testified, "she saw her mistress, Maria de Mendoca of Purchena take a pitcher of water to a remote portion of her home near the chimney. Maria was 'stark naked, as when her mother gave birth to her, barefoot without shoes...and in a squatting position and washing her hair.'" ³⁴ The importance of this testimony, as pointed out by

³⁴ Melammed, Renee Levine. 'Judeo-conversas and Moriscas in sixteenth-century Spain: a study of parallels.' *Jewish History*, Vol 24, No 2. (2010), pp. 155-168

Hansenfeld³⁵, was the fact that the act of cleansing with water was considered to be more of a religious ritual than a need for cleanliness and great care had to be taken so these actions were not misconstrued.

The controversy was heightened by the accusations of Rabbis who preached within these communities in hope to bring back the Animus (forced converts) to Judaism. This was an extremely risky undertaking for both the Judaizer and the Rabbi, for if either of these individuals were caught it would bring about disastrous consequences, as it was a capital offense for a Jew to try and convert a Christian. As stated by Jerome Friedman, “ Spain was in a mess...In the minds of many Spaniards, many if not all, Marranos (another word for Conversos) were cryptic Jews performing Jewish ceremonies at home while outwardly conforming to Christian demeanor...worst of all, this confusing situation had been created by the Christian populace itself.”³⁶ The Church and the Crown must also be included in this statement and take partial responsibility for the Converso crisis that engulfed Castile. Both were guilty of swaying between protecting the Conversos and praising their choices, and then in the next instance bowing to Old Christian pressures and reinstating laws that took away the Converso’s civil rights to public office and owning property. Unfortunately, because of this lack of consistency and proper enforcement, the Converso community became more ostracized and repressed in Christian Spain. An example of this incompetent governing could be witnessed in 1468 when Queen Isabella’s

³⁵ Melammed, Renee Levine. ‘Judeo-conversas and Moriscas in sixteenth-century Spain: a study of parallels.’ *Jewish History*, Vol 24, No 2. (2010), pp. 155-168

³⁶ Friedman, Jerome. ‘Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure blood Laws and reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and religious Anti-Semitism’ *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol.18, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp.3-30.

half-brother, King Henry IV the Impotent, gave into the political pressure of Castilian wealthy nobles and “decreed that henceforth no Converso could hold office in Toledo and the Ciudad Real.”³⁷ Yet, in his courts, King Henry utilized the talents of both Conversos and Jews alike, and had ironically been accused of giving privileges to the Converso community. Perhaps, due to the inconsistency of the weak monarchs and the aggressive Converso ambition it should not be surprising that the Old Christian community became suspicious towards them, causing their religious social aggression to be transferred from the Jewish minority in medieval Spain to that of their Christian brethren, the Conversos.

Isabella was acutely aware of the social-religious conflicts that plagued her kingdom and the reasons behind them. The Converso community had been established long before her reign, but unlike her predecessors, she was not about to be manipulated by the unruly Old Christian elite community, or have any heretical Judaziers blaspheme against the Holy Catholic Church. Unlike her predecessors, in 1477 Isabelle took it upon herself to tour the Andalusia regions, where the cities of Seville and Toledo had once again experienced waves of violent rioting, and the cities municipal officials independently approved repressive legislation against the Conversos. When the Queen entered Seville she “made it clear she had come to Seville and to Adularias to quell lawlessness and to stamp out tyranny in the region”³⁸ Isabella set up a royal court where she herself presided over the courts and held “public audiences.”³⁹ With great pomp she preceded with court hearings and listened to complaints against different nobility and the acts

³⁷Friedman, Jerome. ‘Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure blood Laws and reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and religious Anti-Semitism’ *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol.18, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp.3-30.

³⁸ Reston, James.Jr. *Dogs of God*. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.p. 57.

³⁹ *Ibin.*, p. 57.

of heresy in the Converso community, she personally dealt with each complaint as she saw fit. When the rumors and accusations of heresy were brought forward by her confessor Tomas de Torquemada and Alfonso de Ojeda, head of the Dominion monastery of St. Pablo, Isabella listened to their criticism with some hesitation. Queen Isabella was not anti-Semitic, and she had loyal Conversos in her own courts in which she depended heavily on. The religious men, however, continued their quest and spoke with authority that there was a need for a stronger and more persuasive form of authority to keep Castilian nobles and Conversos loyal to God and the Crown. “A strong civil guard, answerable only to the crown, they again whispered, with a vigorous Inquisition, for the strongest supporters of local hegemony were Conversos in high places and these influential men were all secret Jews. In the city with the largest Jewish populations in Spain, heresy was rampant, especially in high places ...and it needed to be rooted out.”⁴⁰ Alfonso de Ojeda seemed particularly rigorous with his rhetoric as he badgered Queen Isabella, but the Queen guarded her decision and choose to consult her husband, King Ferdinand, before she would agree to an Inquisition for Castile.

Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand both desired a strong unified kingdom and were in unison that an Inquisition in Castile could be of great service to the Catholic monarchy. Isabella’s and Ferdinand’s reasoning behind the request for the new Inquisition was not only to weed out heretical behavior, but more so, both were eager to receive the wealth that lay behind the confiscations of the prominent Conversos. Ferdinand also brought forth the argument, to the Queen, that the Inquisition could be used as a powerful policing force that would control the vast

⁴⁰ Reston, James.Jr. *Dogs of God*. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.p. 58.

regions of Castile and Aragon, sending a powerful message to the wealthy, independent nobility, which Isabella still held a deep animosity towards. Under the Catholic monarchy this new Inquisition would bring forth a duality to its cause; to spread fear throughout the kingdom with the Crown's backing to expose Judaizers who blasphemed against the Church, and the other, to become a secret police loyal only to the Crown, that would offer the royal treasury a well needed deposit by giving a large portion of the confiscated property directly to the Crown. Isabella, lending her support to the arguments brought forward by her confessor, Tomas de Torquemada, and her husband King Ferdinand motioned that "the strands of future Spanish history were coming together in the years 1478 and 1479. The hermandad would soon be joined with an Inquisition and, together, employed as an instrument of terror and obedience. The ever-strengthening persecution of the Jews was a harbinger of a final solution."⁴¹ In November of 1478 Isabella and Ferdinand wrote to Pope Sixtus IV requesting permission to bring forth the infamous Spanish Inquisition. By this request being granted, not only would the Converso community be subject to horrific repression and social stigma but the expulsion of their religious ancestry, the once small but well-established and respected Jewish minority, would also be witnessed under the reign of Isabella.

⁴¹ Reston, James.Jr. Dogs of God. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.p. 61.

Chapter Three

Tomas de Toroquemada

The Spanish Inquisition

The request for the Spanish Inquisition by Isabella and Ferdinand was granted on November 1, 1478 by Pope Sixtus IV with the Papal bull “Exigit sincere devotionis.”⁴² This bull permitted Isabella the authority to proceed with the appointing of two priests, both being educated with either a bachelor’s or master’s degree in theology and over the age of forty to begin the investigations of acts of heresy and deviancy against the Catholic faith within Castile. This allowance by Sixtus was seen as a political victory for the Catholic monarchs for the simple reason that “by vesting the power of the appointment in the hands of the Spanish royalty rather than the Vatican, it was assured from the onset, the Spanish Inquisition was in control of royal secular authority, not foreign entity, even if that foreign entity was the Vicar of Christ.”⁴³ Isabella for an unknown reason, did not act immediately upon her newfound authority and appointed the two Inquisitors, Juan de San Martin and Miguel de Morillio, two years later in 1480.

There have been countless speculations and debates by historians to the reasoning behind Isabella’s delayed actions, such as John Edwards who argued that the two-year lapse was Isabella’s desire to give the clergy throughout Castile opportunity to educate the Conversos in

⁴² Edwards, John. The Spanish Inquisition. Charleston, SC: Tempus Publishing Ltd. Press, 1999. p. 53

⁴³ Reston, James. Jr. Dogs of God. New York, N. Y.: Random House, Inc. Press, 2005. p. 60.

the ways of Christianity, hoping this new education would halt the anti-Jewish rituals within their communities. Rafael Sabatini, however, argued that even though the Queen did show a humanitarian aspect to her waiting it was more the fact that “greed and statecraft were the mainsprings of her conduct in the matter.”⁴⁴ Regardless of the reasoning behind the two-year waiting period, whether it was because of statecraft, greed or education, the Spanish Inquisition tribunal was established in September 1480, with royal proclamations being sent throughout Castile stating, “in our Kingdom there are some bad Christians, both men and women, who are apostates and heretics... Although they have been baptized in the true faith they bear only the name and appearance of Christians, for they daily return to the superstitions and perfidious sect of the Jews...”⁴⁵ It was at this time the Inquisitors, Juan de San Martin and Miguel de Morillio, began their first investigation in Seville a city recognized for having not only one of the largest and wealthiest Converso communities, but was also coincidentally recognized to have had one of the largest communities of Judaizers.

The news of the Spanish Inquisition brought waves of fear from Conversos throughout the kingdom. The fact that an Inquisition tribunal, backed by royal authority, was on route to Seville sent hundreds of Conversos fleeing leaving behind their material possessions. Those who chose to stay showed defiance to this new or modern Inquisition, resenting the presence and power it held over their city. As such, they chose to join together and protect what they had worked so hard to achieve. An example of this bravery was the case of Diego de Susan, a very

⁴⁴ Sabatini, Rafael. Torquemada And The Spanish Inquisition. Cambridge, Ma: Stanley Paul & Co, 1924.p. p.110.

⁴⁵ Reston, James.Jr. Dogs of God. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.p. 70.

wealthy and established Converso in Seville who resented the intrusion of the Spanish tribunal. de Susan held a secret meeting and called together important members of the city including government officials, religious members of the Church, and other wealthy men to formulate a plan to protect their rights under the Crown of Castile. “ How can they come against us? He cried ‘We are the principal persons of the city, and well liked by the people. Let us assemble our men. If they come to take us, we will set the city in tumult-we, and our followers, and our associates’”⁴⁶ Diego de Susan and his co-conspirers were betrayed to the Inquisition before they could take their stand by de Susan’s daughter, who had overheard one of their meetings and thoughtlessly recounted the conversation to her boyfriend who was a Christian Castilian. This young man went immediately to the Inquisition and turned in de Susan and his comrades to the tribunal.

An important aspect to be noted about the case brought against Diego de Susan and his comrades was that they were not charged with treason against the Crown, but instead heresy, which was not the act they in which they were caught, but it was the only charge that the Inquisitors, Juan de San Martin and Miguel de Morillio, had jurisdiction over. So it was under the laws of this tribunal legislature that de Susan received his death sentence for heresy and died during one of the first Auto de Fe’s, an unfortunate event that would continue with its religious and political terror bringing fear for the next three centuries to Christian Spain.

They were condemned to be the chief actors in the First Auto de Fe that was held in Seville. This took place on February 6th... Susan and his followers were led forth barefoot, in the ignominious yellow penitential sack, a candle in the hand of each. Hemmed about by halberdiers, they were paraded through the

⁴⁶ Roth, Norman. *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*. Madison, Wi. University of Wisconsin Press. Press,1995.p. 45.

streets of a city in which they had won the goodwill of the people whose eyes must have been filled with horror and dismay. To head the procession went a black-robed Dominican holding aloft the green cross of the Inquisition, now veiled in a sway of crape... Thence they were conducted—once more processionally – out of the city to the meadows of Tablada. There they were attached to the stakes that had been erected, fire was set to the faggots, and thus they perished miserable, to the greater honor and the glory of the Catholic Church.⁴⁷

It was noted by Sabatini that there was little true evidence against de Susan and that the hypocrisy of the case could be seen in the fact that one of the main witnesses in de Susan's case had been dead for over twelve years. The hypocritical and expedient trial of Diego de Susan and his unfortunate comrades did not stop the Spanish Inquisition from becoming extremely powerful in the short time span of under a year in Seville.

As the Inquisition became established they brought forward two Edicts that would lead to the capture and exposure of Judaizers; the first was an Edict that demanded the return of those who fled from Seville upon the arrival of the Inquisition, and any person of nobility who were harboring these individuals must cast them out immediately. The second Edict, which came quickly after the first, was much more ominous and to many considered to be a true blasphemy against the Church, was known as the Edict of Grace. The Edict of Grace, which “exhorted all who were guilty of apostasy to come forward voluntarily within a term appointed, to confess their sins and be reconciled with the church.”⁴⁸ This edict allowed repented sinners to come forward for forty days and confess their sins to God under the oath of the Tribunal and it “assured them that if they did this, with real contrition and a firm purpose of amendment, they should receive absolution and suffer no confiscation of property.”⁴⁹ Yet, what these repentant

⁴⁷ Sabatini, Rafael. Torquemada And The Spanish Inquisition. Cambridge, Ma: Stanley Paul & Co, 1924.p. 118.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.118.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.119.

sinner could not have known as they came forward, was that they were not only confessing their sins, they were confessing the sins of their family and friends. As they confessed to the tribunal they were trapped into giving all their associates names and whereabouts or they, themselves, would be brought up on heresy and be burnt at the stake. Put under these unfortunate circumstances the penitent sinner often disclosed the names of his/her closest friend or family member. The Inquisition had now trapped hundreds of Conversos who either had to disclose their family and friends or die at the stake. It has been argued, that Queen Isabella quietly backed the Edict of Grace for the sole purpose of continuing necessary confiscations of property that were funding her treasury as well as the Granada wars. This edict, was considered blasphemous and was met with such anger simply because it was considered a cherished right for a sinner to assume privacy between himself and his confessor and what ever was spoken between them be held in the highest confidentiality.

The tribunal became overcrowded with prisoners, and was forced to relocate from the Monastery of San Pablo in Seville, to the Castle of Triana, which was located just out of the city's borders. Through this time period the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition reverberated throughout Seville as many Conversos felt the icy grip of the Inquisition. Its secret police would wait until nightfall then pound on the doors of unsuspecting Conversos waking the surrounding neighborhoods intentionally. The police would then forcibly enter into a person's home and take away a family member with no explanation as to the reason of the arrest or where they were going. Fear set in throughout the neighborhoods as families did not know if the secret police would return for them, confiscate their property or allow their loved one to come home. These arrests brought forward a mistrust and often deep-rooted anger as accusations rose amongst the

Converso communities, each now holding a suspicious eye toward their neighbor. David Gitlitz drew attention to the social repercussions of the Spanish Inquisition and how it affected the “Spanish physic” during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. “My point is that the likelihood of being called to account –at least for intellectuals and Conversos –tended to fragment one’s concept of self by requiring one to be consistently aware of how one appeared to others and had to be prepared at any moment to recount the edited version of one life to an adversarial higher power.”⁵⁰ This scrutiny put tremendous pressures on the Converso family to follow the strict protocol of the Church and pitted friend against friend and neighbor against neighbor. The Converso communities now lived in perpetual fear of not only the Inquisition but also their very own community.

There were the brave Conversos who escaped the grasp of the Inquisition and fled to Rome where they brought forward grievances regarding the abuses of Juan de San Martin and Miguel de Morillio to Pope Sixtus IV. The Pope, to his credit, listened to the many complaints against Isabella’s Inquisition and brought forward two documents known as briefs, which outlined the abuses and complaints, heard by the Pope. The first was a “brief of admonition”⁵¹ which stated the Pope’s displeasure toward the complaints and would have restrained the two Inquisitors immediately had it not been for their Queen. In his brief to Isabella he insisted that Martin and Morillio’s violent actions come to halt and that they follow the proper protocol of the Church in their inquiries. Pope Sixtus, brought forward retribution as he receded the privilege that he give to the Catholic Monarch for instating Inquisitors. Unfortunately, “the papal brief

⁵⁰ Gitlitz, David.trans. The Best Boy in Spain El Mejor Mozo De Espana. Tempe, Az: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue Press, 1999.

⁵¹ Reston, James.Jr. Dogs of God. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.pp.129.

whilst it cancelled the royal prerogative of appointing inquisitors, did not attempt to divert the course of this stream of confiscate property”⁵² allowing it to be ignored by not only Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand but the Inquisitors as well. However, the second brief written on February 11, 1482 was far more intruding as the Pope ironically pointed out the need for more Inquisitors under his Papacy in Spain. This now caught the Catholic Monarch’s attention, as Isabella did not want the intrusion of the Papacy in her secular Inquisition or his infringement on her monetary gains through confiscation.

Isabella, using her gifts of persuasion and diplomacy, corresponded with the Pope advising him that her kingdom had been guilty of not ensuring that the appointed Inquisitors offered leniency and were not following proper Church procedures in regards to their courts and Auto de Fes. Sabatini stated that through these correspondences Isabella requested that a council to be formed in Spain, and not Rome, to watch over and regulate the procedures of the ever-flourishing Spanish Inquisition. The Pope hesitantly agreed as he realized the vast regions in which the Spanish Inquisition was quickly beginning to spread and appointed Frey Tomas de Torquemada, the Monarch’s choice, to the Grand Inquisitor position. Torquemada’s responsibility was to regulate and oversee the Spanish Inquisition and its procedures. This appointment was to the dismay of many Castilian Conversos, Frey Tomas de Torquemada had now become the most feared man in all of Castile.

Torquemada, as noted in the last chapter, was already the confessor to the Queen and he remained so but “with his election to that important position – a position whose importance were to increase until his power in the land should almost rival that of the Sovereigns themselves-the

⁵² Reston, James.Jr. Dogs of God. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.p.131.

Spanish Inquisition enters now upon a new phase. Under the jurisdiction and control of the that stern-soled, mild eyed ascetic, the entire character of the Holy Office is transformed.”⁵³ The change of the practices of the Inquisition were detailed out under “Modes of procedure” in which Torquemada went to great lengths to give a handbook for the Inquisitors to follow. This was a grisly book that would give most people nightmares just reading. The reading and interpreting of some of the articles were so detailed that it encouraged the Inquisitors to outwit and to think of the prisoners as crafty liars instead of innocent Conversos or penitent sinners. It was established in the procedures of Torquemada’s handbook that it was the responsibility of the Inquisitor, and the tribunal, to investigate each prisoner thoroughly enough to know if he/she is telling only half-truths or concealing valuable information. Torquemada also took the liberty to include bigamy and sodomy to the offences against the Church in his handbook. Under Torquemada’s Inquisition the procedures for the accused became a regulatory hell that was held in secrecy and torture, for the healing of the accusers soul and the wealth of the Monarchs.

The prisoners whose souls were to be reconciled with the Church often found themselves in a terrifying situation, left in cold dark dungeon cells not knowing their crime or who accused them. They would be forced to enter into a courtroom, which held the Tribunal and would be questioned by the Inquisitors at length. Did they eat unleavened bread? Bath on Fridays? Did they refuse to eat pork or have meat on the Christian Holy days? Who was their butcher and was he a Rabbi? Why did they not light a fire on Saturday? The questions would go on and on until the Inquisitors either found the prisoner innocent, which rarely happened, or sentenced him/her

⁵³ Sabatini, Rafael. Torquemada And The Spanish Inquisition. Cambridge, Ma: Stanley Paul & Co. Press.1924. p.136.

to the Five Questions of torture. These questions were not written by Torquemada but used as procedures in his Inquisition. The author responsible for the torture chamber was Frey Eymeric and his Five Questions were meant to be as much of a mental torment as a physical one. Once the prisoner was convicted of heresy he would be sentenced to torture following the procedure of the Five Questions;

Question One- The threat of torture; this would be when the Inquisitor would decide if the prisoner was only revealing half-truths and suggest torture while he/she stood in front of the Tribunal. After suggesting torture the Inquisitor would ask the prisoner if he/she had anything to confess.

Question Two- If the prisoner did not confess after question one, then the prisoner would be conducted down to the torture chamber and be shown the implements and their functions. Again the prisoner would be asked if he/she had anything to confess, if the answer was no then the prisoner was sentenced to question three.

Question Three- The prisoner would be stripped and be prepared for the ordeal by torture and again asked he/ she had anything to confess if they did not confess then they would precede to the fourth question

Question Four- The prisoner would be forced to lay and be binded upon the engine. Again the Inquisitor would ask if the prisoner had anything to confess, if the answer was no then they would go forward to the Fifth Question.

Question Five- The actual torture ⁵⁴

The tortures of the Inquisition were physically gruesome and meant to inflict great pain without drawing blood, which was forbidden by the protocol of the Catholic Church. The chambers where the tortures took place were separated from the courtroom, but an Inquisitor and scribe were always present during the torture to document the procedure, literally writing down each gasp from the victim, and to be present if the prisoner wanted to confess. The three most common tortures used in the dungeons of the Inquisition were; “the Rack or potro, on which the prisoner was bound with cords that could be tightened, the Water Torture or Toca wherein large quantities of water were poured down the defendant’s nose and mouth to simulate drowning, and

⁵⁴ Reston, James.Jr. Dogs of God. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005.p.130

the Garrucha, in which the prisoner was hung by his wrists tied from behind.”⁵⁵ The ultimate torture was being relaxed to the secular courts for those beyond salvation and condemned to be publically burnt at the stake.

Through Torquemada’s regulations the Spanish Inquisition became a well-oiled machine of terror. There were watchdogs for the Inquisition throughout Castile, Friars who climbed up on monastery roofs to watch the chimneys’ of Converso homes to see if they were lit on a Saturday morning, if there wasn’t any smoke the families could be accused of paying respect to the Sabbath. Informers that acted like spies in the Conversos communities and surprisingly, even Rabbis or important Jewish men, were called to testify against their converted brothers, as the Jews were not the aim of the Inquisition. Many Conversos were now trapped with in a religious- social warfare that was shrouded in secrecy, bigotry and revenge as they faced the Inquisition’s courts.

To establish and bring forward the relentless determination of the Inquisition I will discuss two cases, both women, who were brought in front of the Inquisitional tribunal and tortured only to receive the same judgment at the end of their trials. I chose these two cases to project the bigotry of the Inquisition and also show how some members in the Converso community used the Inquisition as a tool for revenge and hatred toward their neighbors.

The Inquisitional case of Marina Gonzalez, began on January 15 1484, when Marina confessed on her sickbed to an Inquisitor. “I present myself before your Lordships to declare my

⁵⁵ Homza, Lu Ann. trans., The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. Press, 2006. p. xxv.

faults and the sins I have committed, in offense against our Redeemer and Master Jesus Christ and against our holy Catholic Faith... to declare my faults and sins that I have committed...

First Reverend Fathers, I state that I have sinned by observing the Sabbath and certain Passovers that I can remember. I put on clean clothes out of ceremony, cooked on Friday for the Sabbath, ate food on the Sabbath, and lit an oil lamp on Friday night out of ceremony.”⁵⁶ Maria continued with her confession and at its conclusion believed she has been reconciled with the Church. On January 1494, a year after her confession, Maria was arraigned and brought forward to the tribunal charged with being a relapsed heretic. As her crime was read allowed “Maria responded by saying that she had done none of the things contained in the accusation...⁵⁷” On April 29, 1494 Maria was tortured as a relapsed heretic so she would disclose her associates and fellow Judaizers. “ She was stripped of her old skirts and put on the rack, and her arms and legs were tied tightly with cords. She also had a cord tied tightly around her head. They put a hood in front of her face, and with a jar that held three pints of water ...they started to pour the water down her nose and throat. When the Inquisitor asked for Maria to speak the truth she said nothing...⁵⁸ On May 15 1494 during the Inquisitional hearing they pronounced that as to date the chief prosecutor, who is the accuser, had yet to proved his case and that witnesses must be brought forward for both the defense and the prosecution called the canonical compurgation, Maria refused to defend her repentance as she had endured far to much torture. Marina stopped eating and resigned herself to the fact that she would die in prison. The only claim the chief prosecutor

⁵⁶ Homza, Lu Ann. trans., The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. Press, 2006.p.29.

⁵⁷Ibin., p 30.

⁵⁸ Homza, Lu Ann. trans., The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. Press, 2006. p 31.

could bring against Marina Gonzalez was that Marina stopped eating because she was repentant of her sins. On June 30, 1494 Marina was burned at the stake charged as a relapsed heretic. Through the reading of Marina's case it becomes obvious that the chief prosecutor did not have binding proof in regards to his claims of Marina's heresy yet they tortured her on the assumptions of her claiming half-truths. Through this case you can observe how the Inquisition failed Marina.

The case I am presenting next, in comparison, brings forward the effects that the Spanish Inquisition had on the Castilian population as a whole. The Inquisition deliberately aroused some of the worst aspects plaguing Spanish society at that time, by encouraging people to betray their neighbors under the blanket of secrecy in God's name. This secrecy led to as much corruption outside the Inquisition as there was inside the tribunal courts. People took advantage of the opportunity now presented to them to bring forward false allegation against their enemies or anyone whom they either owed a large debt or held a grudge such as the case of Maria Gonzalez.

Maria confessed to heresy in front of the Inquisitional tribunal and was one of the fortunate prisoners who had legal representation who reaffirmed the truth behind her confession. On December 30, 1511 Maria was brought forward again to face the tribunal and when "Maria was present, their reverence said that it was already known that she had confessed the heretical crimes of which the prosecutor accused her and that she had been required and admonished many times to confess the truth about the other people who had committed the crimes with or without her; and she had always refused to do so"⁵⁹ Through Maria's silence it was suspected that she, like Marina, was speaking only half truths and sentenced to torture. "On March 30,

⁵⁹ Sabatini, Rafael. Torquemada And The Spanish Inquisition. Cambridge, Ma: Stanley Paul & Co, 1924.p. 52.

1512 the lord Inquisitors were in the place of torture with Maria and ordered her to undress. Then Maria Gonzalez said she wanted to declare the truth about everything she knew, about herself as well as others...⁶⁰ Maria did a full confession charging her neighbors, her aunt and brother-in-law with acts of heresy and cryptic- Judazing. “On July 15, 1513 the Lord inquisitors ordered Maria Gonzalez who was in perpetual prison to be brought before them. When she was present in court, their reverences told her that it was well known that she had spoken against many people in her confessions and depositions since being imprisoned, whether spontaneously or under torture. Their reverences doubt whether her comments about certain people, whom she named as accomplices, are true.”⁶¹ July 19, 1513, Maria Gonzalez was taken to the torture room and told to profess the truth under God’s name and Mara continued to state her confessions were truthful. “Their reverences ordered her to undress and admonished her again. She said she had spoken the truth, and even if they tore her into a thousand pieces in the torture and in the cart (on the way to the stake) she would say nothing else but the truth she has already told.”⁶² Maria was ordered to be put on the rack and began to be tortured when she continued to talk and said, “She commended herself to God”⁶³ Through the torture Maria reveled that she had lied out of spite as people ruined her marriage and she sought revenge on them. After her confession “Their reverences ordered a jar of water poured into her nose and mouth. ...as the jar was emptied she said leave me alone, I will speak the truth. She said she could not stand Lorenzo Franco’s wife ; she wanted to see her ground into dust. Asked if what she had said against her is true, she said

⁶⁰Homza, Lu Ann. trans., The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. Press, 2006.p.54.

⁶¹ Ibin., p.56.

⁶² Ibin., p.58.

⁶³ Ibin., p 58.

she spoke against her because of the great hatred she has for her.”⁶⁴ On September 17, 1513 Maria Gonzalez was tied to the stake, and all the people and many others witnessed her relaxation for falsely confessing and being impenitent.”⁶⁵

The two cases that have been described in this chapter are only a representation of the thousands of Conversos who stood in front of the Inquisition tribunals, having to either plead their guilt or convince the court of their innocence from secretive witnesses and obscure charges. The description of the court cases that were brought forward were done so to display the inadequacies of the court tribunal, in particular with Marina who obviously had done nothing to bring about her sentencing and inhumane treatment, but chose to commit suicide by means of starvation rather than being continuously tortured under the suspicions of half-truths. In contrast, Maria Gonzalez’s case was important to demonstrate how the Inquisition could be used a tool to perpetrate the negative aspects of society; in which a neighbor who had a grudge or a grievance towards a Converso could quickly ruin a persons social standing in the community and take away the material needs of their family for generations to come.

⁶⁴ Homza, Lu Ann. trans., The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. Press, 2006.p.60.

CONCLUSION

Through the continued repression of the Inquisition, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand were able to “destroy privilege, weaken all classes, and strengthen the crown.”⁶⁶ The royal policing and the secrecy behind the proceedings of the Inquisition aided Isabella not only in controlling the independent nobility that at one time challenged her authority, but also enabled her to dominate over the social-religious aspects of all her citizens, in the disguise of rooting out heretical behavior and being devoted to the Catholic Church. Through the solitary actions of Isabella’s tribunals, many established wealthy Converso families were financially and socially ruined for generations as their guilt and embarrassment hung on the Church walls, for all to witness, in a brightly colored clothes known as sanbenito.

The vast accumulation of wealth that Isabella accrued under the Spanish Inquisition was confiscated from accused Conversos, wealthy Jews before their expulsion and a small sector of the Old Christian community. Material and monetary confiscations occurred not only to those who had been arrested for heresy, but also to those who fled the Inquisition’s tribunal for fear of imprisonment. It is important to note, however, that a Converso who did flee was able to reclaim their property when “they petitioned the king and queen for its return and the petition was granted.” If their petition was granted, however, the Converso would then be forced to pay “1,200,000 mrs”⁶⁷ in order to regain their property. Needless to say, many Conversos were unable to pay this vast some of money and were forced to live an impoverished lifestyle after

⁶⁶ Mariejol, Jean, Hippolyte. Trans. Benjamin Keen. *The Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella*. Rutgers University Press. New Jersey. 1961 pp337

⁶⁷ Mariejol, Jean, Hippolyte. Trans. Benjamin Keen. *The Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella*. Rutgers University Press. New Jersey. 1961 pp337

their return, while the Catholic Monarchy continued to confiscate the wealth of its citizens under the Spanish Inquisition's cross. Isabella's new treasury was used to back the expensive war against the Moors during the War of Granada, the Inquisition and its Inquisitors, many political favors and the construction of the new city Santa Fe. Her power and influence had now become well established as she also financed the exploration ambitions of Christopher Columbus which would make her monarchy famous throughout history for discovering the New World and confiscating its vast amounts of wealth.

The Pope, receiving numerous complaints from the Conversos, opposed Queen Isabella's actions regarding the Inquisition by claiming "the Inquisition in Aragon-Catalonia was engaged less in investigating heresy and the salvation of souls than in greed for profit."⁶⁸ Pope Sixtus IV continually lost momentum in Spain until what he controlled was only a minute part of their kingdom and realized far too late the far-reaching consequences of bowing down to the power and strength of Isabella through her persuasion and diplomacy. Yet, he still acknowledged the abuse, the pain and suffering of the Converso communities under her reign. The wealthy Conversos who approached his papacy sponsored bulls, such as the bull issued on August 2, 1483, which ordered the Catholic monarchy to have greater leniency within the Converso community. But as previously noted, the Pope had so little power that the bull was withdrawn eleven days later at the request of the Catholic monarchy to no avail to the repressed community. By Isabella's success in persuading the Papacy to keep the Inquisition and Inquisitors in Spain, she was able to continue collecting the monetary gains of the confiscations for the crown as well

⁶⁸ Roth, Norman. *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.p. 256.

as enabling the Inquisition's feared Grand Inquisitor to gain as much power and control over Castilian citizens as the Catholic monarchy "for he had become the third most powerful man in Spain and virtually independent from his titular leader in Rome...As he let his mind rest on his national reach, he must have been flattered not only at the millions who feared him but also those legions who hated him."⁶⁹ The Spanish Inquisition, under Torquemada, had now become a secular police, court and religious tribunal that had no accountability to the Papacy in Rome and the Spanish citizen under its jurisdictions had no religious or legal recourse, either in Rome or Spain. Torquemada had become the most feared and hated man throughout late medieval Spain.

Chief Inquisitor Torquemada's ruthless rampage against heresy in the Converso community capitalized on a set of incredulous laws that made all Conversos guilty of Judazing. The Purity of Blood laws brought forward the premise that all Converso were contaminated by the blood of their Jewish ancestors and therefore could never be true Christians. Freidman explained the laws by saying that "The new exclusionary legal conventions were called the 'Pure Blood Laws' because it maintained that a Converso could not claim to be Christian as they at one point in their heritage had the Jewish blood flow through their ancestors veins making them impure."⁷⁰ This thought was exemplified with the comparison that a child with mix raced parents would always have the dark skin of their parent; so it was said that the Jewish blood was also darker in contrast to the lighter more pure Christian blood. This must have been uncomfortable for Torquemada, as he was third generation Converso, when the Purity of Blood laws came into

⁶⁹ Reston, James.Jr. *Dogs of God*. New York, N. Y.: Random House,Inc. Press, 2005. p.205.

⁷⁰ Friedman, Jerome. 'Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure blood Laws and reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and religious Anti-Semitism' *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol.18, No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp.3-30.

effect. It was now understood, and implemented, that all Conversos had Jewish blood in their veins making even the most devout Converso impure. This law justified anti-Semitism and gave Torquemada the right to charge the accused based off of their heritage and not their heretical nature and actions against the Catholic Church. Under Torquemada's appointment, which lasted 15 years, "fifteen thousand relapsed heretics were reconciled with the Church; two thousand obstinate heretics were burned."⁷¹ The first sixteen burned, on the first day, were all affluent members of society with great amounts of wealth and social standing. This was a calculated decision, as it would send fear to those with lesser status, sending the message that everyone was subject to the new laws of the Crown. One of the most noteworthy adversaries to the Purity of Blood laws was Hernando del Pulgar, a Converso, and the court chronicler for Queen Isabella. Pulgar condemned Tomas de Torquemada's actions and laid claim that Torquemada had Converso blood in his own lineage. He brought the severity of these laws to the attention of Queen Isabella and implored her to put a halt to some of the cruel Auto de Fes' that were now running rampant throughout Castile. Isabella, however, did nothing to resend the Purity of Blood laws, but accepted Torquemada's advice and implemented the most drastic religious cleansing of her reign, the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.

Queen Isabella ruled over Castile with the aid and guidance of her Spanish Grand Inquisitor until her death in 1505, yet her Inquisition continued its terror for the next three centuries. Isabella left a legacy not only of exploration and piousness but also one of persecution and repression. Unfortunately, because of Isabella's secular ambitions, the great grandchildren of

⁷¹ Mariejol, Jean, Hippolyte, trans. Benjamin Keen. The Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1961. p. 47.

the Conversos would be forced to feel the retribution of her decisions long after her death and the glory of Spain had ended. The multicultural and religious communities whom had existed throughout the Andalusia region for hundreds of years had come to a sad and abrupt end under her expulsion order of the Jewish community in March 1492. Yet, because of Queen Isabella's pious stance, the Catholic Church sought the right to canonize her for her sovereign actions towards the Christianizing of Spain.

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