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Helen Rawlings. *The Spanish Inquisition.* Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2006. xv + 174 pp. $35.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-631-20600-2; $86.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-631-20599-9.

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Introducing the Inquisition: A New Synthesis of New Scholarship

The death of General Francisco Franco in 1975 inaugurated an unprecedented boom in studies on the Spanish Inquisition. Succeeding waves of researchers, working in multiple languages with a wide array of agendas and approaches, have created a new scholarly literature, unwieldy in its quantity, that has thoroughly revised understandings of this notorious court. Helen Rawling's *The Spanish Inquisition* distills the enormous secondary literature on the Holy Office into a condensed and manageable introductory volume designed for the student or general reader. In this clearly written and logically organized textbook, Rawlings examines both traditional interpretations and recent re-evaluations of the Inquisition's organization, areas of activity, and relationships with and effects upon Spanish culture and society. The resulting view is that of a complex institution, firmly grounded in its historical circumstances and thus subject to changes over time and to changes in interpretation.

The first chapter, a useful essay on the historiography of the Inquisition, sets the tone for the rest of the volume. Rawlings is careful to situate scholarship on the Inquisition within its historical context. Her survey of perceptions of the Holy Office from the sixteenth century through the present introduces both time-honored interpretations–the rapacious and repressive torture chamber, the justifiable instrument of the modern state–and recent revisionist scholarship as the product of the varying social, political, and religious struggles of the day. Similarly, just as scholarship (and propaganda) are historically contingent, so is the Inquisition itself. Following the groundbreaking work of Gustav Henningsen, Jaime Contreras, and Jean-Pierre Dedieu, Rawlings divides the Inquisition's activities, from its earliest operations in 1480 to its abolition in 1834, into four epochs (1480-1525, 1525-1630, 1630-1725, and 1725-1834), each shaped by varying political, social, and religious circumstances.

This awareness of historical context and change carries through into the five succeeding topical chapters. Chapter 2 considers the institutional apparatus procedures of the Inquisition. Rawlings is careful to take account of changes and developments over time–the varying fortunes of the Inquisitor General, for example–and the regional variation that characterized the Inquisition's reception and activities. Her discussion of the trial focuses upon the interior logic and structure of inquisitorial judicial processes, including defense strategies, torture, the injunction to secrecy, and the didactic spectacle of the famous public penitential events known as *autos de fe*. The chapter closes with a consideration of the Inquisition's finances. Rawlings finds that the Holy Office, dependent upon canonries and confiscations, was far from wealthy and was not a contributing cause of Spain's economic difficulties in the seventeenth century. She does not, however, tackle the hoary old question of the Inquisition's role in Spanish decline more generally.

The second and third chapters examine the Holy Office's actions against *conversos* and *moriscos*, the descendents of Jewish and Muslim converts to Catholicism. Here, as elsewhere, Rawlings emphasizes not only the Inquisition's changing attitudes and activities, but also differing interpretations and debates among historians and other scholars. These frequent discussions of older views and new research help convey a sense of the changing field. Her consideration of the *conversos*, for example, notes the divergence between historians like Benzion Netanyahu, who see the converts as genuine Catholic Christians transformed by anti-Semitic inquisitors into Judaiz-

ers, and those like Yitzhak Baer or Haim Beinart, who contend that the *conversos* were indeed secret practitioners of Judaism. She herself argues that the archival evidence suggests "potential rather than actual incidence of Judaism" (p. 62). While she avoids black-and-white definitions of *converso* religious affiliation, Rawlings tends to assume that the *moriscos* were secret Muslims. A closer consideration of some of the most recent work on the *moriscos* might have allowed a more nuanced evaluation.[1] That said, though she tends to reiterate the traditional view of the irreducible *morisco*, Rawlings's examination of early modern debates over such issues as purity of blood legislation and the expulsion of the *moriscos* in 1609 helps break down the traditional image of a monolithic and univocal Spain.

In chapter 5, Rawlings considers the Inquisition's responses to Protestantism. Deeply suspicious of religious and intellectual innovation and seeking to shore up their institution's *raison d'être* as the numbers of *converso* prosecutions declined, inquisitors enthusiastically pursued Erasmians, Illuminists, and mystics and reformers like the future saints Ignatius Loyola and Teresa of Ávila, as well as the handful of Protestants uncovered in Valladolid and Seville. More perceived than real, the danger of "Lutheranism" in Spain was a tool employed by the Crown and the Inquisition to reinforce national (religious) cohesion and ideological conformity. However, the embarrassing failure of the trial of Bartolomé de Carranza, archbishop of Toledo, and the imperfect efficacy of inquisitorial censorship reveal the limits of the Inquisition's controls, and the professional and personal competition that could fuel prosecutions for "Protestant" belief.

By the 1560s, the Spanish Inquisition's main area of activity was not the extirpation of Protestant heresy or the prosecution of Judaizing or Islamizing *conversos* and *moriscos*, but instead the correction of the religious deviations of otherwise orthodox Catholics. Chapter 6 examines the Inquisition's campaign against blasphemy, sexual immorality, solicitation, and witchcraft. Rawlings stresses the Holy Office's role in the Tridentine Church's larger project of religious instruction, highlighting both its apparent successes and its many failures. I wonder, however, about the wisdom of describing the Inquisition's educative efforts as "Christianization" (p. 116). Few among the targeted audience for this book will be familiar with scholarly debates about popular and elite religious traditions, and to describe the Inquisition's activities as "re-Christianizing Spain" (p. 114) is potentially misleading. It might also be helpful to contrast the Inquisition's attitudes with those of other courts within Spain that also regulated religious behavior.

In the final chapter, Rawlings discusses the decline of the Inquisition through the eighteenth century to its final abolition in 1834, and revisits major debates in traditional interpretations and recent reassessments. Her discussion reiterates the importance of approaching the Inquisition within its changing historical context. Her use of reproductions of Francisco de Goya's drawings of penitents and inquisitors, for example, is unusual in that, rather than simply allowing them to stand alone and unmoored from time or place, Rawlings examines them as part of Enlightenment critiques of the political and cultural status quo.

Such attentiveness to historical context and change over time is particularly important in a textbook treatment such as this; as such, it is one of the book's greatest strengths. Another great asset is the wealth of statistical information and excellent primary source documents included in every chapter. Short and illustrative of larger points within the text, these primary materials, many of which appear in English for the first time, are part of a larger collection of appendices and supplements (chronology, map, glossary, bibliography, and index).[2] These tools, together with her rigorously historical approach and her thorough synthesis of recent research, make *The Spanish Inquisition* a valuable resource. At times her balanced and careful approach seems a little bloodless, but perhaps this is another virtue. There is no shortage of bad, sensationalistic books on the Spanish Inquisition, but well-researched and readable overviews for the student or general reader are few indeed. Helen Rawlings's *The Spanish Inquisition* is an excellent introduction to this complex and controversial topic.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Amalia García Pedraza, *Actitudes ante la muerte en la Granada del Siglo XVI. Los moriscos que quisieron salvarse* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2001).

[2]. Students and instructors seeking complete documents in English relating to the Inquisition should consult Lu Ann Homza's excellent new reader, *The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources*, ed. and trans. Lu Ann Homza (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006).

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