Intellectual Life under the Spanish Inquisition: A Continuing Historical Controversy

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Abstract
The effects of the Spanish Inquisition on Spain's intellectual life have long been a topic of heated historical controversy. This article surveys the arguments dating from the late eighteenth century to the present. It illustrates the extreme views held by opposing sides, views often sustained more by passion and prejudice than by sound historical research. The results of recent research over the last three decades, explicitly conducted with the intention of eliminating prejudice, show not only surprising conclusions but also the complexity and intractability of some of the questions posed relating to the influence of the Inquisition on Spain.

'Spain is perhaps the most ignorant nation in Europe. What else can be expected of a people who wait for a monk to give them freedom to read and to think.'[1] This infamous outburst, resounding with contempt for Spanish intellectual life, was widely disseminated in print in 1783 through the most ambitious publishing venture of the French Enlightenment, the *Encyclopédie méthodique*, a mammoth universal encyclopaedia that reached to 196 volumes in quarto (and even then was unfinished). The caustic words came from Nicolas Masson de Morvilliers, lawyer and geographer, in his extended article on Spain for the subsection of volumes of the *Encyclopédie méthodique* entitled 'Géographie moderne'.

Masson's contribution consisted of descriptions of Spain's rivers, mountains and climatic zones, dispassionate descriptions, interspersed with volleys of stinging condemnation of Spanish society. Why did Spain have such an astonishingly low population density? The causes identified by Masson were emigration to the New World, smallpox and a prodigious crowd of celibate clergy, whom he designated the useless sector of society. Above all, Masson blamed the influence of the Spanish Inquisition: 'Wherever this odious tribunal is established, it restrains liberty of action

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[1] Nicolas Masson de Morvilliers, 'Espagne', *Encyclopédie méthodique*, section *Géographie Moderne*, i (Paris, 1783), pp. 554–68, at p. 565.

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and thought, stifles all great and useful vision, forms a population of slaves and hypocrites, damages the progress of industry and the arts, and consequently destroys the population.'[2] Along with the terrifying torments perpetrated on the bodies of its victims, the Spanish Inquisition had assaulted the mind of the nation, extinguishing all intellectual creativity. Masson acknowledged that there was no shortage of educational institutions in Spain: there were as many as nineteen universities, most of them, he said, better endowed than those of France or England. But what was the use? 'How can learned men be produced in a country where one has to ask for permission to think? Where are Spain's mathematicians, physicists, historians and philosophers?'[3] Indeed, he continued, 'what do we owe to Spain? What has it done for Europe in the last two centuries, in the last four, in the last ten?'[4] Yet Masson's portrayal was not entirely negative. He detected what he described as the belated arrival in Spain of the first glimmers of modern philosophy. Already they had 'destroyed a host of prejudices', brought some progress in agriculture and manufactures, and generated one or two distinguished physicists and naturalists. Spaniards still retained their valour, noble sentiments, and love of country. 'With more effort, who knows to what heights this superb nation may rise?'[5] But meanwhile Spaniards remained in chains: religious ceremonies, priests, monks and the Inquisition 'have made of this colossal nation a population of pygmies'.[6]

Masson's article sparked an acute political response in Spain. After reading it, Charles III, the Bourbon king of Spain, became incensed. He demanded an immediate apology from the government of his Bourbon cousin, Louis XVI of France, and action against the publisher; both were duly secured. And in Madrid, the Inquisition seized around 1,700 volumes of the offending *Encyclopédie méthodique*, consigning them to rot in the recesses of the Holy Tribunal.[7]

Masson's attack on the Spanish Inquisition was the latest version of a 'black legend' about Spain that had originated in the mid-sixteenth century in the twin European context of religious schism – the Reformation – and Spain's military hegemony both in western Europe and in the wider world. Fleeing from Mary Tudor's persecutions to the safety of Protestant cities on the continent, the English martyrologist, John Foxe, notably produced powerful propaganda against the alleged tyranny of Catholicism. His *Acts and Monuments of Matters Happening in the Church*, published in 1563, dwelt on the diabolical cruelties of the Spanish Inquisition, in a text considerably enlivened by exaggeration and unchecked imagination. Similar black depictions had come from the active printing

[2] Ibid., p. 559.
[3] Ibid., p. 566.
[4] Ibid., p. 565.
[5] Ibid., p. 567.
[6] Ibid., p. 556.
[7] For the aftermath, see Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton, NJ, 1958), pp. 220ff.

presses of the Netherlands, used by the leaders of the Dutch rebellion against their overlord, Philip II of Spain. And from the other side of the religious divide, from Catholic Italy, from Philip II of Spain's kingdom of Naples, there emanated similar black images of Spanish power and cruelty amidst foreboding that the dreaded Spanish Inquisition was about to be brought to Naples.[8] These associations of the Spanish Inquisition with torture and cruelty were still current in the late eighteenth century, but there was now a difference in emphasis in Masson's criticism: in his tract, progress and modern enlightenment had become the main victims of the Inquisition.

As Masson recognized, there were some intellectuals in eighteenth-century Spain who looked to the French Enlightenment for inspiration to reform and modernize their country. Contact with France became much more direct in 1808 when Napoleon invaded Spain and placed the crown of the Spanish Bourbons on the head of his brother Joseph Bonaparte. Napoleon's motivation had been to occupy the whole of the Iberian peninsula in order to tighten the continental blockade against Britain, above all by closing Lisbon to trade with Britain. A bitter division then ensued between Spaniards who favoured political reform through collaboration with the occupying French regime and those who sought to repel the invaders. In 1810 an emergency national assembly was convoked, without sanction, in Andalusia, the region least under the control of Bonaparte's rule from Madrid. This was the famous Cortes of Cadiz, convened with the aim of directing the restoration of the Spanish monarchy. A minority of the deputies were conservative, dedicated to bringing back absolute monarchy and to defending traditional Catholicism in all its manifestations. But most of the deputies were reforming liberals intent on establishing instead a new constitutional monarchy and a much less powerful Church, including the abolition of the Inquisition – only its suppression had so far been ordered by Joseph Bonaparte.

These events marked the origin of Spanish liberalism. Anyone today unacquainted with nineteenth-century Spanish history may well be astonished by the attribution of 'liberal' to Spain. But the liberal current in early nineteenth-century Spain was strong. Indeed, the very word 'liberal', in its new political sense of being politically free, that spread through much of nineteenth-century Europe, derived from the Spanish word '*liberal*'. As in other states in nineteenth-century Europe, Spain's politics came to be polarized between liberals and conservatives.

In the deliberations of the early 1810s at the Cortes in Cadiz the question of the continued existence of the Inquisition came to the fore.[9] Here

[8] *The Apologie of Prince William of Orange Against the Proclamation of the King of Spain* [Delft, 1581], ed. H. Wansink (Leiden, 1969), pp. 62, 70 and 99. For the apprehension felt in Naples and Milan see Henry Charles Lea, *The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependencies* (New York, 1908), pp. 70–3, 86, 125–7, and Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (New York, 1988), pp. 146–54.

[9] Stephen Haliczer, 'Inquisition Myth and Inquisition History: The Abolition of the Holy Office and the Development of Spanish Political Ideology', in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. A. Alcalá (Boulder, Colo., 1987) [hereafter Alcalá, *Spanish Inquisition*], pp. 524–7.

the debates were strongly influenced by a book purposely published in Cadiz to coincide with the assembly sessions, *La Inquisición sin máscara* ['The Inquisition Unmasked'], carrying the subtitle 'Dissertation with proof, based on evidence, of the vices of this tribunal and the need to abolish it'. Its author, Antonio Puigblanch, former seminarian and later professor of Hebrew at the University of Alcalá de Henares, thundered against the secrecy of the Inquisition's judicial procedure, its terrifying dungeons, indiscriminate use of torture applied more severely than in any other tribunal, and the fanaticism and ignorance of inquisitors and censors that had caused the Inquisition's Indexes of prohibited books to be 'saturated with works of erudition'. Puigblanch asserted that every branch of learning had been the target of the tribunal's fury. He accused inquisitorial censorship of ruining Spain's intellectual development. The Inquisition was incompatible with the liberal constitution that was being formulated in the Cortes and Puigblanch called on the deputies to 'exterminate' what he called the 'monstrous' institution. He was opposed in the Cortes by conservative clergy, who saw the Inquisition as the fortress that protected Spain's Catholicism from heretics and free-thinkers. In their view, the prohibited books of foreigners were superficial compared to Spain's treasury of wisdom. On the other side, Ruiz Padrón, a liberal priest from Galicia, insisted that the Inquisition had damaged the Church by its fanaticism and cruelty and was responsible for Spain's stagnation by the 'total' suppression of intellectual life. That view was supported by the count of Toreno, the product of a modern education in exact sciences and modern languages. His speech condemned the Inquisition as the perpetual enemy of liberty and enlightenment. In the end these liberal views prevailed and in February 1813 the Cortes declared the Inquisition abolished.

But abolition was not yet permanent. Fifteen months later the Cortes was dissolved, many of its liberal deputies arrested and the Inquisition brought back. These were the consequences of the restoration of the monarchy under the reactionary Ferdinand VII, brought back once the French had been driven out of Spain and Napoleon had abdicated. For the mass of Spain's population, after suffering six years of war and anarchy, the imposed absolute monarchy and Catholic orthodoxy promised a return to stability. But instead of stability, Ferdinand's reign experienced the fluctuating fortunes of liberal reforms and conservative reaction. In 1820 the strength of liberal opposition forced the king to agree to terminate the Inquisition, but the decree that formally put an end to its existence in 1834 did not come until after the end of his reign, finally destroying an institution that had functioned for more than 350 years since its creation by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1478.

Powerful criticism of the Inquisition also came from Spanish exiles in France. When Joseph Bonaparte and French troops were forced back to the other side of the Pyrenees, they were accompanied by an estimated 13,000 Spanish collaborators, fleeing from the revenge of their compatriots. One of the refugees was Juan Antonio Llorente. His earlier career gives

no hint of the need to flee from the powers of traditional Spain. A graduate in canon law, he had risen through the ranks of the Inquisition. From commissioner attached to the regional tribunal of Navarre, a frontier province preoccupied with controlling the entry of books from France, he was promoted in 1789 to the important post of secretary-general of the Inquisition at its headquarters in Madrid. But he had come under the influence of Enlightenment thought and when Napoleon invaded and put his brother on the throne, Llorente sympathized with the reforming administration, accepting Joseph's offer of a ministerial post. He was given custody of the Inquisition's archive and, in his subsequent escape to France, took with him a number of these documents which served as the basis for a monumental history of the Inquisition, published in French in 1817, a book that for generations would perpetuate black images of the Holy Tribunal.[10] To later conservative defenders of the beneficial legacy of the Inquisition, Llorente's action amounted to treason: abuse of his official position to denigrate the sacred institution from within.

Among the many evils Llorente blamed on the Inquisition was rejection of modernity. In Spain, he said, the Inquisition had prevented the progress of the sciences, literature and the arts. Llorente insisted that this was undeniable even though 'apologists of the Holy Office have never wanted to acknowledge it'. How could it be otherwise? 'Where the talented are forced to follow opinions, established by the ignorance or barbarity of the time, opinions maintained by particular interests, the enlightened can make no progress'. Defenders of the Holy Office may assert that their controls 'only impede heresy, allowing everything unconnected with dogma to proceed freely'. But this was untrue. In reality, 'books of philosophy, politics and law have been affected. These branches of human knowledge were fully shackled'. And other important subjects of study were impeded: 'Mathematics, astronomy and physics'. Why these sciences? Because, Llorente explained, 'truths established over the past few centuries were seen to be conducive to materialism and sometimes to atheism'.[11] As an outstanding example, Llorente referred to the persecution of José Clavijo y Fajardo, director of the royal cabinet of natural history in Madrid. Describing him as 'one of the most learned Spaniards of the reigns of Charles III and Charles IV', Llorente deplored his trial by the Inquisition 'on suspicion of accepting the errors of modern anti-Christian philosophy'. Commenting on his sentence – house arrest and a specified penance – Llorente thought the evidence very weak in alleging 'naturalism, deism and materialism' along with the circumstantial evidence of his long residence in Paris where he had become a close friend of that arch-enemy of the Inquisition, Voltaire.[12] Llorente might have added that Clavijo had in the 1760s been editor of an outspoken new

[10] Juan Antonio Llorente, *Historia crítica de la Inquisición en España* (4 vols., Madrid, 1981).
[11] Ibid., ii. 307–8.
[12] Ibid., p. 321.

critical journal, *El pensador* ('The Thinker'), in which he castigated Spain's ignorant clergy and condemned a prevalent ignorance that rejected all new ideas on the grounds that they were associated with heretics and atheists. Clavijo was also the translator into Spanish of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*, a work that the theology faculty of the University of Paris had required to carry a preface acknowledging the author's belief in the Bible, despite the book's support of the theory of the evolution of the earth. Clavijo's comments in the prologue to his translation praised Buffon's account irrespective of its conflict with scripture.

Llorente presented his conclusions in the starkest terms: 'Since the existence of the Inquisition, there has scarcely been one outstanding writer who has not been put on trial. That is the bitter truth of Spain's history'. He queried whether there could ever be modern discoveries in the exact sciences within Spain comparable to those emanating from France and England. In his opinion, there was only one way for Spain to achieve this: do away with the prohibitory laws of the Inquisition.[13]

Few subjects in history have generated as much passion as the Spanish Inquisition. For generations after its abolition, a raging controversy continued within Spain and far beyond. In the 1870s, for example, there were Spaniards who believed their country was suffering from the long-term after-effects of the Inquisition's past activity. The 1870s were, for Spain, a time of political turbulence that saw, in quick succession, Spain's short-lived First Republic, a *coup d'état* and the restoration of the monarchy. Spanish intellectuals began to ask searching questions about Spain's cultural isolation in Europe, and their attempts to rectify it by importing neo-Kantian philosophy provoked strong reactions from traditionalists. At the heart of these tensions were very different assessments of the Spanish Inquisition. That was apparent in the reactions to the fiery inaugural address delivered in May 1876 by Gaspar Núñez de Arce, lyric poet and dramatist, on the occasion of his formal entry to the Real Academia Española, Spain's Royal Academy of Literature. His inaugural speech began with scathing criticism of the state of Spanish culture. Every other country, he observed, showed the normal pattern of cultural production: some types of culture rose, others decayed. In Spain alone there had been a total stifling of all cultural manifestations. Already at the end of the seventeenth century 'not one branch of human knowledge had been saved from the general shipwreck – all had perished: the physical sciences along with art'.[14] Even today, he continued, Spain has not recovered from this cultural destruction, so that present efforts to revive resembled the first struggling steps of a baby or prostrate convalescent. How great was the contrast with British cultural achievement! In that country an 'immense pleiad of outstanding men' had continued to sparkle: Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Newton, Spencer,

[13] Ibid., p. 308.

[14] 'Discurso del Excmo. Sr. D. Gaspar Núñez de Arce', *Memorias de la Real Academia Española*, vi (1889), 5–39, at p. 13.

Darwin, Macaulay, Dickens, Mill, Gladstone, Disraeli. What, he asked, was the cause of this glaring disparity in achievement between the two countries? Dismissing any explanation assuming inherent racial or intellectual qualities as untenable, Núñez identified another cause: the Inquisition, with 'fanaticism as ferocious as a hyena', had destroyed Spain's intellectual life.[15]

After the inaugural lecture, as was customary in Spain's Royal Academy of Literature, another member responded. The reply this time came from Juan Valera, novelist and diplomat. 'Was it really the Inquisition's atrocious cruelty that stopped our minds working? No, it seems not so'. Spain's Inquisition was 'almost philanthropic compared to regimes elsewhere'. The burning of heretics in Spain, it was claimed, bore no numerical comparison to the mass burning of witches in seventeenth-century Germany. And in France, during the St Bartholomew's Day massacre, the toll of victims of religious fanaticism had in one night exceeded the ravages of the Spanish Inquisition in all the years of its existence.[16] Was the Inquisitors' ignorance the cause of the decay of Spanish science and literature? That was implausible because Spanish clergy were then more knowledgeable than laymen, and 'the Inquisitors were the most enlightened of Spanish clergy'. But accepting that Spain's culture had decayed, Valera looked beyond the Inquisition for an explanation. He put the blame at the door of Spanish society as a whole: 'a sapping disease had devoured it'. This was the pervasive arrogance and antisemitism that had developed during the medieval centuries of the Christian reconquest of Spain.[17] And yet, Valera, concluding on an optimistic note, reassured the audience that the origin of modern science and modern philosophy was traceable to Spain. Neither Francis Bacon (who was ignorant of mathematics) nor Descartes (whom Newton had rejected) was the source of modernity. Instead the honour went to Sebastián Elcano, the Spanish Basque who in 1522 completed the first circumnavigation of the earth. For was not a complete image of the earth a necessary precondition for the advances of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton? Spain may not have had great mathematicians, physicists, chemists and philosophers, but, he concluded, 'it is enough for our glory to have given the original impulse for all that followed'.[18]

A year later, a more aggressive traditionalist response to Núñez and his like came from Juan Ortí y Lara, professor of metaphysics at the University of Madrid, neo-Thomist and arch-rejector of modern philosophy. He was convinced that materialism was to blame for the moral decadence that he perceived in the world around him. His book on the Inquisition, published in 1877, praised the beneficial results of the Tribunal. The Inquisition had inculcated fear of punishment and fear of God. The

[15] Ibid., 18 and 23.
[16] 'Contestación del Excmo. Sr. D. Juan Valera al Discurso del Sr. Núñez de Arce', *Memorias de la Real Academia Española*, vi (1889), 40–70, at p. 60.
[17] Ibid., pp. 61–2.
[18] Ibid., p. 65.

Inquisition had nurtured Catholic unity and purity in Spain. The Inquisition had generated an abundance of saints: 'Not even in the days of the primitive Church was there anything to match the Christian morality and faith that motivated individual, family and state' in Spain so long as there was an Inquisition. 'Happy times. When will you return?'[19] For liberalism and the French Enlightenment had destroyed the precious Inquisition and encouraged a harmful emancipation of thought. Men like Núñez had befriended the novelties of science and philosophy, falling in with the pernicious rationalism of Locke, Condillac, Rousseau and Kant, thereby destroying Spain's honour.

Very similar reactionary sentiments were still being voiced in mid-twentieth-century Spain, when a strident defence of the Inquisition and censorship was published that was entirely in keeping with the authoritarian spirit of General Franco's dictatorship, a regime that silenced all criticism of Catholicism and the Inquisition. Antonio Sierra Corella, announcing that the purpose of his book of 1947 was to praise God and the vigilance of the Church, proceeded to justify the past activity of the Inquisition. In its censorship of books, the Inquisition had provided an indispensable paternal protection, saving Spaniards from the 'venom of pernicious literature', thereby preserving 'the inter-connected religious, moral and political order'. The Inquisition's Indexes of prohibited and expurgated books were 'luminous and magnificent bibliographic guides'.[20] 'Authors who refused to submit their opinions to spiritual and temporal power were guilty of arrogance and rebellion. Learned and ignorant alike have to accept what others present to them as true, good and just'.[21] The Inquisition's censorship had been a necessary check to 'the natural inclination of men to think, wish and feel evil'. But in exerting that control, the Inquisition had 'never closed Spain's frontiers to true science and European culture'.[22]

With the end of Franco's rule in 1975, the intellectual climate in Spain was dramatically transformed. Critical historical research now became possible. Spain's rich archives were made accessible and catalogues soon appeared detailing the mountain of manuscripts that related to the Inquisition.[23] A new generation of historians, both Spanish and foreign, flocked to the archives, with the result that, over the last twenty-five years, research on the Inquisition has boomed. These researchers alleged that they were motivated by a common determination to eliminate the bias that had driven and vitiated almost all the previous discussion of the Spanish Inquisition. Consequently, the pro-Catholic, anti-Catholic,

[19] Juan Ortí y Lara, *La Inquisición* (Madrid, 1877), p. 251.
[20] A. Sierra Corella, *La Censura de Libros y Papeles en España y los Indices y Catálogos españoles de los prohibidos y expurgados* (Madrid, 1947), p. 212.
[21] Ibid., pp. 10–11.
[22] Ibid., p. 212.
[23] For example, Dimas Pérez Ramírez, *Catálogo del Archivo de la Inquisición de Cuenca* (Madrid, 1982). Some documentary research had already been undertaken in the early twentieth century in the pioneering study by the American historian Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain* (4 vols., New York, 1906–8).

anti-religious or nationalistic prejudices had to be suppressed for the sake of historical method, rigorous, empirical, analytical and comparative.

To some scholars, counting data seemed the best way to achieve a more objective history. Safety in numbers, safety from religious and anti-religious prejudices, safety from prejudice through quantitative history – that, at least, was the intention. Accordingly, tens of thousands of trial records of the Spanish Inquisition were put on index-cards and the information, organized under specified categories such as type of offence and penalty imposed, subjected to statistical analysis. One astonishing result was that the number of executions, resulting from inquisitional trials, was many times smaller than had generally been supposed. For example, Llorente had concluded that, of the 84,400 prisoners of the Spanish Inquisition in the period from 1547 to 1699, as many as 12,536 or 14.9 per cent were burned. But the results of the comprehensive statistical analysis by Contreras and Henningsen that began to be reported in the late 1970s showed that, out of 44,674 accused in these trials, no more than 826 or 1.8 per cent were executed.[24]

Another favourite way of investigating the Inquisition on more secure methodological foundations was to concentrate on the activity of one of the Inquisition's fifteen regional tribunals and limit this to a restricted time-span. The underlying assumption here, increasingly acknowledged, was that it was unwarranted to assume that the Spanish Inquisition was a monolithic institution that operated in exactly the same way in every region of Spain during the 350 years of its existence. By focusing on long-neglected manuscripts relating to the tribunal of Valencia in its first fifty years, Ricardo García Cárcel (a history lecturer at Barcelona's Universidad Autónoma) was able to establish some important and surprising new findings. The Valencian Inquisition up to 1530 had not been a harsh censor of literature; it had permitted the unorthodox medieval philosophy of Ramón Llull which had been condemned by a pope, permitted the works of Erasmus which had been censored by theologians of the University of Paris, and even permitted erotic literature. The library of Jaume Torres, a sixteenth-century physician, showed 'full contact with the most advanced sciences in Europe'. From such evidence García concluded that it was unwarranted to suppose that the Inquisition was even partly responsible for the decay of Catalan culture.[25]

But a very different picture of the Inquisition was then conveyed by another history lecturer at Madrid's Universidad Autónoma. Virgilio Pinto Crespo's research focused on the late sixteenth century, years that saw the first of a succession of the Spanish Inquisition's Indexes of prohibited books. Pinto was led to see the Holy Office as 'a formidable

[24] Jaime Contreras and Gustav Henningsen, 'Forty Thousand Cases of the Spanish Inquisition (1540–1700): Analysis of a Historical Data Bank', in *The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe: Studies on Sources and Methods*, ed. G. Henningsen and J. Tedeschi (Dekalb, Ill., 1986), pp. 100–29, at pp. 113–14.

[25] R. García Cárcel, *Orígenes de la Inquisición española: el Tribunal de Valencia, 1478–1530* (Barcelona, 1976), pp. 22, 223–5.

instrument of social control',[26] even of what he called 'thought control'.[27] Throughout Spain, the Inquisition had imposed surveillance on printing presses, on the movement of books through ports and across borders, and pounced on bookshops and libraries, aiming to block every 'crack through which prohibited books might crawl'.[28] Pinto concedes that the evidence 'does not permit even an approximate measure of the efficiency of these controls',[29] because the process of diffusion of ideas is full of complexity. The failure of an author's influence might be due to causes other than the listing of his book on an Inquisitorial Index. Nevertheless Pinto would not be deterred. Abandoning the current drive for a more objective history of the Spanish Inquisition and guided instead by what he called 'intuition',[30] he arrived at a firm conclusion: 'Censorship definitely caused fossilised academic culture in Spain'.[31] And if prohibited books abounded in the libraries of eighteenth-century Spain, he was convinced that the reason was more to do with 'inquisitorial prodigality in conceding licenses for reading prohibited books than to inefficiency of control'.[32]

The crucial question of Inquisitorial controls, with a focus on Spanish science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was intensively studied in the 1980s by José Pardo Tomás, a researcher then attached to the department of the history of medicine at the University of Valencia. He undertook a rigorous investigation of the number of scientific works censored by the Inquisition in this period, well aware of the limitations of quantitative history – it could not measure the fear felt in reading or owning a prohibited book. Nor could quantitative precision be achieved in assessing the degree of Inquisitorial control, for a different reason than that adduced by Pinto: precision, for Pardo, was prevented by the incompleteness or elusiveness of the manuscript record.[33] However, the archival evidence did lead Pardo to the conclusion that 'a first approximation' on the efficiency of censorship was possible. Finding that at least 200 different scientific works were seized between 1583 and 1683, he concluded that a robust system of vigilance and control was in force, reaching a peak in 1584–1612.[34] Medicine was the area most affected, owing to the prohibition of German medical authors solely on the grounds of their Protestantism. Next came astrology and alchemy, censored for their delving into the occult or for opposition to orthodox Aristotelianism.

[26] V. Pinto Crespo, 'Institucionalización inquisitorial y censura de libros', in *La Inquisición española: nueva visión, nuevos horizontes*, ed. J. Pérez Villanueva (Madrid, 1980), pp. 513–36, at p. 516.
[27] Pinto Crespo, 'Thought Control in Spain', in *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe*, ed. S. Haliczer (Totowa, NJ, 1987) [hereafter Haliczer, *Inquisition and Society*], pp. 171–88.
[28] Pinto Crespo, 'Censorship: A System of Control and an Instrument of Action', in Alcalá, *Spanish Inquisition*, pp. 303–20, at p. 309.
[29] Pinto Crespo, *Inquisición y Control ideológico en la España del Siglo XVI* (Madrid, 1983), p. 299.
[30] Ibid., p. 311.
[31] Pinto Crespo, in Haliczer, *Inquisition and Society*, p. 185.
[32] Pinto Crespo, in Alcalá, *Spanish Inquisition*, p. 311.
[33] J. Pardo Tomás, *Ciencia y Censura: La Inquisición española y los libros científicos en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid, 1991), p. 142.
[34] Ibid., pp. 268ff.

On Copernicanism, Pardo reached important new conclusions. Copernicus, the sixteenth-century originator of modern sun-centred astronomy, had postulated a stationary sun and orbiting earth, contrary to the surface text of the Bible. Galileo, the self-appointed champion of Copernican theory, had set out to demonstrate that the earth really was a planet no matter what holy scripture appeared to say or that the Catholic Church insisted on a stationary earth at the centre of the universe. For flouting Catholic orthodoxy in this way, Galileo was, in 1633, arrested by the Roman Inquisition, put on trial and punished. But in Spain the Spanish Inquisition's Indexes of prohibited books never listed either Copernicus or Galileo. This had previously been attributed to the leniency of Spanish inquisitors. But Pardo now established that it was nothing of the kind: the omission of Copernicus was a clerical error, that of Galileo the result of a political accident. The papal nuncio to Spain had ignored the Castilian law that required prior royal approval for any public initiative. He had, without crown authorization, sent Spanish bishops the Roman decree that banned Galileo's Copernican treatises. That decree was duly fixed to the doors of the cathedral of Cuenca in eastern Spain. Seen as an intolerable affront to the king of Spain's sovereignty, the Roman decree was rejected, and so Galileo was never put on the Spanish Index.[35]

A good example of the incompleteness of evidence relating to the alleged strength of the Spanish Inquisition's control comes from one of the archival documents studied by Pardo. This source was generated by the central Council of the Inquisition in Madrid in 1634, at the height of its powers. This manuscript was an instruction sent to all of the Spanish Inquisition's regional tribunals, calling for reports on every book seized. The replies were potentially a very promising source for discerning the degree of implementation of the recent Index of 1632. And the replies from some regional tribunals indeed show seizure of the condemned works of Paracelsus, Agricola, della Porta and other scientific authors. Even books not listed at all on the Index had been seized by over-zealous local inquisitors. From this Pardo concludes that efficient censorship was being implemented. Yet other tribunals' replies lacked detail, and others still failed to reply at all – or at least, if their replies were sent, those documents are not to be found in the archives.[36] Similar difficulties are raised by the implementation of expurgation – the process of purifying a book by tearing out or crossing out offending pages so that they were completely illegible, or sticking verses from the Bible over them. Pardo's sample of 100 censored early modern scientific works in Spain's university and national libraries shows that 71 had been expurgated 'relatively rapidly', while 29 escaped. So out of this large sample of 100 condemned books, 71 per cent had been expurgated. Pardo justifiably regards that as 'effective expurgation for the time'. But, as he recognizes, this judgement takes no account of early modern Spain's numerous private libraries.[37]

[35] Ibid., pp. 185–7.
[36] Ibid., pp. 317–34.
[37] Ibid., pp. 334–9.

Pardo's general conclusion is that tenacious censorship of the Inquisition cut Spain's contacts with Europe in the period of gestation of the European scientific revolution, so preventing the new science from flourishing in Spain.[38]

Efficient inquisitorial control, Spain's consequent scientific isolation, and Spain's fossilized culture are all firmly denied in Henry Kamen's *Spanish Inquisition*, published in 1997. This updated version of the British scholar's original work of 1965 has proved to be a bestseller and therefore a good indication of continuing strong public interest in the topic. He presents persuasive arguments for his interpretation. The Pyrenees may be a formidable mountain barrier but the historical evidence shows they were never an iron curtain: documents testify to the free movement of people and books across the mountains in the mid-sixteenth century.[39] Spanish authors were published in France and Italy and had no difficulty importing their books into Spain. In Barcelona booksellers refused to be guided on what to stock, complaining that the Inquisition's Indexes of prohibited books were too expensive for them to buy. There is hardly any record of the Inquisition raiding Barcelona's bookshops. Moreover, in Madrid the sale in 1651 of a noble's private library of some 2,500 books revealed that 250 of them were on the Index; possession of any one of these was a crime that could have incurred the death penalty.[40] As for those interested in the new science, the works of the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe and the German Johannes Kepler circulated freely after minor expurgation.

Less convincing is Kamen's warning that researchers attracted to the wealth of the Inquisition's archive could be misled by the assumption that this was a reliable source. Pardo is criticized for using manuscripts written by inquisitors that allege efficiency of control. 'Of course they would say that!' is Kamen's comment.[41] Yet he himself draws on another manuscript from the archive of the Inquisition that admits inefficiency of control.[42] Kamen urges researchers not to undertake a blinkered study of the Inquisition but to consider the whole society of which the Holy Tribunal was a product. That is sound advice. But it leads Kamen into an intellectual cul-de-sac. The real question for him then becomes: why did early modern Spaniards become intolerant and narrow-minded? However, he fears that is too complex a question ever to be fully answered.[43] What is certain is that the long historical controversy on the Spanish Inquisition is not over. Moreover, documents have been lost as a result of unorganized filing, fire and even destruction by invading armies. This fragmentation of the archival record, a characteristic of all history, will alone guarantee that no definitive explanation can be expected, only interpretations of greater plausibility.

[38] Ibid., pp. 109 and 347.
[39] H. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: An Historical Revision* (1997), pp. 101–6.
[40] Ibid., pp. 117–19, 315.
[41] Ibid., p. 318 and p. 336, n. 132.
[42] Ibid., p. 119 with nn. 71, 75 and 76.
[43] Ibid., p. 320.