University of Alberta

The Practice of Purity: Christian Identity in Early Modern Spain

by

Carolyn Salomons 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

Department of History and Classics

Fall, 2007

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-33153-8
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-33153-8

Abstract

Purity of blood statutes, taken together with the Spanish Inquisition and the enthusiastic participation of the Spanish monarchy and church in the Counter-Reformation, have long been held as evidence of early modern Christian Spain's racist attitudes and adherence to Catholic orthodoxy. However, a close examination of the social milieu in which purity of blood statutes were generated, as well as the method of their implementation, uncovers a religious scene less fraught with racism and more with heterodoxy than has previously been acknowledged. The social unrest created by the reconquest and the breakdown of religious categories of identity caused by the forced conversions of Jews *circa* the turn of the fourteenth century created a society in search of stability. As religious distinctions were discarded, purity of blood statutes were one of several methods employed to facilitate social stability by creating new categories for the construction of identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

It reads like something out of a popular thriller: a website luridly claims that Josemaría Escrivá, founder of the Catholic prelature Opus Dei, is an "unholy" *marrano*, a judaizer who has wormed his way into the upper echelons of the Catholic church for the sole purpose of luring "unthinking and/or unweary [*sic*] Catholics into his anti-Christ ***Marrano Money Cult.***"[1] Those unfamiliar with Spanish history might be stymied by the term "*marrano.*" It literally means "pig" in the Spanish language – the word has its origins in the Arabic language, from محرّم *muharram*, which means "ritually forbidden" – and is a reference to the Jewish and Arabic prohibition against pork meat. The term was used to denote those Jews (and later, and to a much lesser extent, Muslims in a similar situation) who converted, primarily by force, to Christianity in late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Spain.[2] A derogatory word, it was used with impunity for several hundred years, while the Spanish Inquisition sought to root out "crypto-Jews" and "crypto-Muslims" – those who claimed to have converted but secretly held to their original faith. We might forgive such intolerance due to the distance history provides us from that period, and yet, some five hundred years later, the term crops up on a (admittedly unreliable) website. Obviously there is still some weight, some resonance of meaning to the word – and not just in and for

---

[1] http://www.opusdeialert.com/opus-deis-rabbis.htm accessed March 31, 2007. The website [TodaysCatholicWorld.com] is rife with conspiracy theories, including allegations that the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, were the work of Freemasons and Jews, who instigated them with the support and approval of the Bush White House.

[2] Spain as it is known today did not exist at this time. For the purposes of this study, which deals primarily with the Kingdom of Castile-Léon, but also takes note of events elsewhere on the Iberian peninsula, the term Spain will be used for convenience.

Spain.[3] How has a word with such a local and historically focused meaning trickled into usage today? It is no coincidence that this website, which bandies the word about so freely, is staunchly conservative Catholic in theme and content, and frames the history of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain within a paradigm of Catholic protectionism. The Inquisition thus becomes an admirable institution, rooting out traitors to the faith, whom the website casts as traitors to Spain itself.[4]

This view complements the traditional historiographical tale of early modern Spain, and the Inquisition, a historical narrative of increasing racial intolerance, to the point of expelling Jews and Muslims, and later, even those of Muslim ancestry; a place overlooked by the learning, ideas and practice of enlightened thinking occurring elsewhere in Europe. A story of a people mired in conservative thought, parochial, rigidly adhering to dogma; a land where "the triumph of the Counter Reformation . . . marked the triumph of Castilian conservatism over the new, liberal, and dynamic attitudes of Renaissance and Reformation Europe", insuring the "decline of Spain."[5] While such a view has been largely discredited by subsequent historians of Spain, the country remains somehow different from the rest of Europe, almost marginal. This is in large part due to its history: unlike any other western European land, Spain was, for

---

[3] The word does still carry weight and significance within Spain's collective historical memory – rumours and whispers of General Franco's *marrano* heritage have circulated since the Spanish civil war. See Jerome Friedman, "Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 1 (1987): 30.

[4] I do not suggest that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spain are the equivalent of a modern nation state. However, it is clear that an increasing identification with Catholicism as part and parcel of "Spanishness" is apparent at this time.

[5] Helen Nader, *The Mendoza Family in the Spanish Renaissance, 1350-1550* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 5. See also J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1964)., especially chapters 8-10.

eight centuries, a land of three religions. Christianity and Islam struggled for dominance during the course of what is now known as the reconquest, and although Christianity "won", when Fernando and Isabel defeated the final Muslim polity of Granada in 1492, the Muslim presence was an indelible part of Spanish culture. Then, too, the Jewish population in the peninsula was (prior to the expulsion of the Jews, also in 1492) larger than any other European country. Religion, and by extension, culture, was therefore of a very different flavour than elsewhere in Europe.

In these days of inter-religious conflict, of heightened aggression and tension between these same three religions (or geopolitically speaking, between the western world and the eastern) medieval Spain has been cast in a nostalgic, golden glow of an idyllic "used-to-be" in which these three religions co-existed in a splendour of enlightened tolerance.[6] The attraction is obvious: it would be reassuring, in the midst of seemingly endless chaos and bloodshed in the Middle East which is spilling over into Europe and North America, to know that toleration and coexistence were once a reality. If it was once, it may be again. Ever since Américo Castro put forth his theory of *convivencia* (literally, living together) as the defining factor in Spanish identity by positing that the shared living experience of Jews, Muslims and Christians in medieval Spain did more to create modern Spain than the violence and wars of the reconquest, historians have disputed just what *convivencia* means, and to what extent it existed. The question, to my mind, misleads. It is not whether or not *convivencia*

---

[6] For examples of such works, see María Rosa Mendocal, *The Ornament of the Word: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2002) and Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Medieval Spain's Golden Age of Enlightenment* (New York: Free Press, 2005). A quote from the LA Times which printed on

existed, or even to what extent; copious volumes have been written dealing with just such questions, and, to differing degrees in different places and times, the case for *convivencia* is strong. What is far more interesting here is instead the question of why Castro made such an impact. Why has his theory been the one with which twentieth-century Spanish historiography is preoccupied? Why, too, was his theory at first so controversial and why did it provoke a storm of reaction? His most vicious respondent was Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, whose bitter feud with Castro has flavoured Spanish historiography to such an extent that one can scarcely open any monograph on late medieval and/or early modern Spain without finding a summation of their differences somewhere in the opening pages. (I prove no exception to this rule.) Sánchez Albornoz was insistent that the modern Spanish character harked back to an essential Gothic Christianity, which endured subjugation under Muslim rule for eight centuries, only to re-emerge, unscathed and untouched, after the success of the reconquest. Sánchez Albornoz not only vehemently disagreed with Castro, he saw Castro's thesis as harmful:

> The conjecture of Castro's credit . . . is causing great damage to Spain. His affirmations, gratuitous for the most part, are reaching the point of distorting Spaniards' historical consciousness, by offering to them . . . an erroneous, blurred, gloomy and extremely pessimistic image of our creative historical potentiality and of our potentiality for the future.[7]

Sánchez Albornoz believed that Castro was in fact propagating the so-called Black Legend, the historiographical tradition which maintained that Spain was inward looking, conservative, parochial and mired in racist ideology, while the rest of Europe

---

the front of Menocal's book speaks to this nostalgia: "By showing us what was lost, Menocal reminds us of what might be."

flourished intellectually. Castro asserts nothing of the sort, but places a far greater emphasis on Jewish and Muslim contributions to the creation of the modern Spanish character, and it is here that Sánchez Albornoz's outrage is centred: Castro is "poisoning" the national consciousness by

> denying the Hispano-Roman . . . writers temperamental Spanishness; by presenting all the literary works of our Middle Ages reflecting Orientalism; by attributing to *conversos* many of the great spiritual creations of the Spain of our glorious age. . . There existed in him [Castro] an incoercible tendency to vilify what is Hispanic.[8]

This "temperamental Spanishness" of which Sánchez Albornoz writes is an identity rooted in Christian Spain, untouched by Jewish or Muslim influences. For Castro to suggest that the modern Spaniard was created by a symbiosis of these three religious cultures is reprehensible to Sánchez Albornoz. He saw Spanish Christians engaged in a "life or death" struggle with Islam, and the Jews as the financial exploiters of the Christians, who manoeuvred their way into positions of power, after "requesting" baptism into the church.[9] The salient point of Sánchez Albornoz's polemic is that Castro is *vilifying* Spanish identity by suggesting it might have been shaped in part by Jews or Muslims. Such a view seems to bear the strains of the *limpieza de sangre* (cleanliness of blood) statutes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

These statutes were enacted in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and, simply put, barred those with Jewish ancestry from positions of power or prestige in a variety of institutions. (They later also applied to those with Muslim ancestry as well as those

---

[7] Claudio Sanchez-Albórnoz, *The Drama of the Formation of Spain and the Spaniards: (another new polemic venture)* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1979), 8.
[8] Ibid., 101.

whose ancestors were condemned by the Inquisition.) Traditional historiography has read these statutes as evidence of Spanish Christian racism and intolerance, and in some cases as spilling over Spain's borders as both a precursor of Nazi ideology, and the forerunner of American slavery and segregation.[10] Recent scholarship, however, has questioned whether the statutes can be read as confirmation of a widespread mania or obsession with lineage or as evidence of increased racism in Spain itself, let alone in other countries. Indeed, there is some dispute as to whether the statutes were, in fact, "universally adopted" in early modern Spanish society.[11] Nevertheless, they remain a touchstone for heated scholarly debate today, as ideological positions in a post-Holocaust world necessarily inform different approaches to the historical issue. Yet it is problematic when scholars impose modern notions – whether sociological, cultural, intellectual, economic, or any other – on the past. Thus an attempt to

---

[9] Ibid., 45, 43. This "request" came at a knife point: Spanish Jews were forcibly converted in the decades bracketing the turn of the fifteenth century. These events are explored in detail in Chapter One.

[10] The classic history of the statutes (though some of his conclusions have been disputed) is still Albert A. Sicroff, *Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre: controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII*, trans. Mauro Armiño (Madrid: Taurus, 1985). For connections drawn between *limpieza* statutes and Nazism see Freidman, "Jewish conversion", 3-4; for connections between the statutes and American racism, see James H. Sweet "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 143-166. I want to be very clear that this project deals the statues solely in their Spanish (or Iberian) context. Similar statutes were enacted in the Americas, and I believe that those statutes *were* primarily concerned with dealing with racial categories. Works on this subject bolster my position. See Claudio Esteva-Fabregat *Mestizaje in Ibero-America* trans. John Wheat (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1987); María Elena Martínez "The Black Blood of New Spain: *Limpieza de Sangre*, Racial Violence, and Gendered Power in Early Colonial Mexico *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61: 3, (July, 2004): 479-520.

[11] Examples of such recent scholarship includes Linda Martz, "Pure Blood Statutes in Sixteenth Century Toledo: Implementation as Opposed to Adoption," *Sefarad* 54, no. 1 (1994), Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition : A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), chapter 11. The premise that the statutes were universally adopted is mentioned in Ellis Rivkin, "Les controverses des Statuts de "Pureté de Sang" en Espagne du

maintain the argument that *limpieza de sangre* statutes are the equivalent of or the precursor to American slavery and/or Nazism and the Holocaust is troubling at best. Rather, we need to historically contextualize the statutes and perhaps illuminate what these statutes meant in the time and place in which they are located.

What this entails is a not just a careful examination of the statutes themselves, although that is part of the project. We also must attempt to discover what ideological effect the statutes had on Spanish society in general, and on Spanish Christianity in particular. The fifteenth century marks the ascendancy of Christianity in Spain – Jews and Muslims who would not convert were forcibly expelled from the peninsula in 1492 and 1502 respectively, and Christianity became the only religion practiced in the region. The Inquisition was instituted in the latter decades of the fifteenth century in order to rout out heresy, and other "unChristian" practices. We must keep in mind that we are dealing not only with religious practices, or belief systems, but also with culture. In late medieval and early modern Europe, there was no way to publicly be an atheist, no matter what one's personal beliefs were. Religion was integral to culture, and to daily life.[12] In fact, there was no way to separate religion from any aspect of life; it conditioned the way in which people related to their world. As Henry Kamen explains: "Christianity . . . was more than the corpus of creed and conduct laid down by the Church; it also consisted of inherited attitudes and practices relating both to the invisible and the visible world that were as deeply ingrained as the official

---

XVe au XVIIe Siècle, by Albert A. Sicroff (Book Review)," *Commentary* 33, no. 6 (1962): 546.

[12] John Edwards "Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria, *circa* 1450-1500" *Past and Present,* 120 (August, 1988): 3-25.

culture."[13] I would extend this assertion to include the Jewish and Muslim religions, and this, then, helps explain much of what happened in early modern Spain. Despite converting to Christianity, some Jews and Muslims continued to access parts of their culture, which continued to mark them as different from "old Christians" and created much anxiety about religious identity.

Historiographically speaking, issues of identity in Spain have tended to be concerned with *converso* and *morisco* identity.[14] A natural enough tendency, for these groups were the ones straddling two religions – moving from one to the other, with varying degrees of completeness. Religious fusion and syncretism became a common phenomenon, and it is problematic indeed to attempt to ascertain what significance religious practices held for *conversos* and *moriscos*. For example, it was quite possible that *conversos* might continue to keep the Sabbath, to some extent, such as the lighting of the candles; there is also evidence that some *converso* men were circumcised.[15]

It seems to me that it is a mistake to attempt to definitively categorize religious beliefs in this time and space, not only for *conversos* and *moriscos*, but for the "old Christians" as well.[16] Latin Christianity as a whole underwent momentous

---

[13] Henry Kamen, *The Phoenix and the Flame: Catalonia and the Counter Reformation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 82.

[14] The newly converted Jews became known by several names: *conversos, confesos, cristianos nuevos* and, as already noted, *marranos*. For the purposes of this project, I will use the word *converso* when discussing this group. The *moriscos*, although at times also called *marranos*, were for the most part only referred to as *moriscos*.

[15] Reneé Levine Melammed, *A Question of Identity: Iberian Conversos in Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38-39.

[16] The term "old Christian" is used in contrast to the *conversos*, who were at times referred to as *nuevos cristianos* – "new Christians." For the purposes of this project, I will use "old Christian" to refer to those who were not descended from Jewish or Muslim ancestors. This

changes during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – increasing access to texts formerly available only in Latin, the Reformation, the counter-Reformation – all of this impacted on Spanish Christianity as well. In effect, Catholicism was undergoing its own transformation. The Spanish Inquisition, when first instituted, was primarily concerned solely with issues of Judaizing (the belief that some supposedly converted Jews were not only maintaining their Jewish rituals and beliefs but also actively proselytizing to sincere converts); however, over the course of the sixteenth century the focus shifted more and more towards the consolidation of Catholic customs, beliefs and doctrines. The Inquisitors found that there were as many "old Christians" who were ignorant of doctrine as there were *conversos* ignorant of the same. The institution was no longer dealing only with *conversos*, and thus we can speak with some certainty of the nebulousness of the practice of Spanish Catholicism.

Nonetheless, *converso* and *morisco* identity, while obvious sites of uncertainty, are always contrasted with the implacableness of Spanish Catholicism, which is therefore deemed undeserving of any further consideration. But this is far too simplistic a view of this particular religious milieu. Religion at this time equalled culture, as has already been asserted. What happens, then, to a culture which receives an influx of newcomers? It cannot absorb them without being affected by those whom it absorbs. Just as the *converso* and *morisco* populations sought to negotiate who they were and what they believed, so too did the "old Christians." John Edwards reminds us that "the problems of minorities are primarily problems for the majority. . . . The Jews were expelled and the *conversos* were persecuted because Spanish Christians . .

---

category, however, becomes somewhat nebulous over the course of the time period under

. had failed to come to terms with their own identity."[17] Almost overwhelmed by these newcomers (who were not unfamiliar for all their 'new-ness'), it is no wonder that anxiety about religious identity manifested itself in numerous ways. Thus various strategies were developed in order to deal with that anxiety. The *limpieza* statutes were one such strategy, ostensibly used to redefine religious distinctions once again.

Yet the *limpieza* statutes were not only about religion. As will become clear, political and economic concerns often overshadowed, or even co-opted, disputations regarding *limpieza*. Lineage became a useful tool with which to establish one's *bonae fides*, a crucially important task beginning in the fourteenth century, and continuing through the fifteenth. Due primarily to the centuries of intermittent conflicts and shifting borders of the reconquest, Spain was a much more socially fluid place than any other in medieval Europe. The peasants did not become tied to the land in the same way they did elsewhere, while those who fought in battles were often rewarded with land and titles. Thus, there was no noble family who could stake their claim to nobility solely on the longevity of their position. Other strategies were needed, and lineage became an obvious and useful tool which could be employed.

Traditional historiography claims that the early modern Spanish Church saw itself as ordained by God to be the defender of the Catholic faith. The reasons behind this historiographical strategy are several: the success of the reconquest was one obvious proof of this; the discovery of the Americas another, and the pre-eminence of the Inquisition a third. The reconquest mentality shifted easily from the old world to

---

consideration.

[17] John Edwards, "Religious Belief and Social Conformity: The 'Converso' Problem in Late-Medieval Córdoba," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31 (1981): 127-28.

the new – there was much work to be done in converting the Mayan and Incan populations to Catholicism. The most significant arena for Spanish Catholicism however, was against the Lutheran heresy and its seemingly concomitant factions – the *Alumbrados* and Erasmianism. Spain's fifteenth- and sixteenth-century connections with Italy and the Netherlands had affected (infected, some might have argued) Spanish Catholicism with heterodox religious ideas. From Italy came a visionary, mystical conception of religion which flourished amongst the Franciscan order. Under the leadership of Isabel de la Cruz and Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, the *Alumbrados* (Illuminists) practiced a kind of mystical passivism, with the goal of direct communication with God. This was far closer to Lutheran ideas than was comfortable for the Inquisition. Those who supported the humanistic ideas of Erasmus were not, technically, heretics, but the "narrowly orthodox" believed that emphasis on inward aspects of religion was suspicious.[18] The experience of Charles V with Protestantism in various parts of his empire made Spain especially suspicious of anything seemingly heterodox at all. Thus, the discovery of two small circles of Protestants in Seville and Valladolid in the 1550s meant that they were summarily stamped out by the Inquisition.[19] These events have been taken to prove the ossification of Spanish Catholicism, with an emphasis on excluding those who did not subscribe to standard religious belief – hence the use of the *limpieza* statutes.

Other factors played a role forcing lineage to the foreground of Spanish identity. By this point, as briefly mentioned above, the statutes of *limpieza* excluded those whose family members had been condemned by the Inquisition, and thus were

---

[18] Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 207.

no longer limited to racial or cultural considerations. Rather, they can be conflated with notions of honour and *hidalguía* – the ideal of *hidalguía* can be compared to chivalric notions of knighthood which are found elsewhere in Europe. An *hidalgo* was, quite literally, the "son of someone" (*hijo de algo*), a concept born of the reconquest when prestige and new wealth in the form of plunder was easily accessible by those with a talent for war. Success in the reconquest was evidence of the blessings of God, and thus those soldiers were never mere mercenaries, but soldiers of God and true, "pure" Christians. By the sixteenth century, with the reconquest long completed, the military notions surrounding *hidalguía* had all but disappeared; the conception of *hidalguía* evolved. The *hidalgos* were exempt from taxes and municipal dues and they enjoyed a privileged status before the law, and consequently already in the late fifteenth century we see a concerted effort to produce genealogical tables to prove *hidalguía*.[20] Genealogy then, was a useful tool, readily accessed in a variety of situations.

Ellis Rivkin claims that *limpieza* was "uniquely the creation of the Spanish Church, and developed only because the Church was faced with a unique situation."[21] I would supplement this view by arguing that *limpieza* developed only because Spanish *society* was faced with a unique situation; it was an issue not limited to the Church. Spain's history – its experiences of living closely with Jews and Muslims, coupled with the success of the reconquest and the development of *hidalguía*, situated within the European context of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation – all

---

[19] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 94-96.
[20] Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 104.
[21] Rivkin, "Sicroff Review," 544.

worked together to influence these notions of *limpieza*. Religious discrimination is obvious, yes, but to claim an obsession with lineage and a maniacal racism simplifies the issue. The statutes are better categorized as a strategy to achieve some type of communal identity..

A careful examination of both the historical events, as told by those who experienced them, as well as the (sometimes controversial) historiography surrounding those events will make my thesis obvious. The issue of anti-Semitism is so obviously a touchstone for strong feeling, and different ideological positions often colour the historiography of Spain. The *conversos* have at times been co-opted by those who wish to bolster their own position *vis à vis* Judaism in a post-Holocaust world. While I have great sympathy for this position, I feel it is somewhat unfair to impose the contemporary world upon the early modern Spaniards. There is a crucial difference between anti-Judaism (a prejudice against a religion) and anti-Semitism (a prejudice against a people), and though many believe that *limpieza* statutes prove that Christian Spain was racist, in fact, they are perhaps better explicated as part of an attempt to solidify orthodox Catholicism in an age where Catholicism was very much beleaguered. Far from being an ossified belief system, Spanish Catholicism (and therefore Spanish society as a whole) underwent a profound change from the latter decade of the fourteenth century through to the sixteenth.

The concept of *limpieza* was conflated with the concept of *puridad* – purity of blood, purity of faith, purity of lineage. To be *limpio* was to be closer to a pure Christianity, one without any touches of Jewish or Muslim religious rituals or customs. Jewish or Muslim ancestors meant that one might be much more prone to a

syncretic type of Christianity, which, during the time of the Counter-Reformation, became increasingly unacceptable. Throughout the sixteenth-century, we see evidence of a push for unity, primarily in the realm of religious praxis, in which *limpieza* is but one aspect. Fernando and Isabel are held up as exemplars of a purity of faith; the success and promise of their reign is seen as a divine reward for that purity. The difficulties of empire and the Wars of Religion, in contrast, are the consequences of an impure faith. Religious reforms put into effect in the sixteenth-century are an attempt to "recapture" that purity of faith. *Limpieza*, then, is but one aspect of this practice of purity.

The commencement of any project undertaking an examination of early modern identity needs an explication of how identity was constructed in that period, and Chapter One opens with just this issue. Religion was a vital component of that construction, indeed, even essential to it. In addition to religion, however, are what Walter Pohl calls the "strategies of distinction", which entail identity construction in opposition to something else; marking the group as different, unique.[22] For late medieval Spaniards, religion was a necessary tool with which to display that difference. However, the era of conversions in the late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-centuries began to break down those distinctions, and thus we see a corresponding rise in concern about religious identity, and the appearance of *limpieza* statutes by the mid-fifteenth century. An overview of the watershed events of this period will contextualize the statutes, and provide crucial information regarding the religious and

---

[22] Walter Pohl, "Introduction: Strategies of Distinction," in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 8.

social changes occurring in Spain at this time. Included in this overview will be a précis of the historiography regarding *conversos* and their own strategies of identity construction, which is paramount in understanding the social situation and the responses of "old Christians" to the *conversos*.[23]

One of the responses was, of course, the *limpieza de sangre* statutes. Chapter Two will begin with an examination of the events leading up to the first appearance of the statutes, in Toledo in 1449. By explicating how and when these statutes were implemented, and to what effect, I hope to show that far from a racist mentality, the statutes are an example of the public markers used by the "old Christians" to establish their own identity. The statutes are rooted in what I call a "genealogical mentality", but rather than positioning such a mentality as an obsession with lineage, we will see this as rooted in a very typical medieval scheme with which the nobility would establish their *bonae fides*. Connected to this mentality is the notion of honour, and I will also examine how honour was also used within this paradigm of identity construction.

Finally, Chapter Three will examine the reform movement in Spain, within the Counter-Reformation. Against the notion of an ossified and rigid parochial faith, I will show that Spanish Catholicism was an environment for debate and dissent. As Inquisitors worked to investigate sites for concern such as *converso* behaviour and religious practice and suspicions of Protestantism, they came to the realization that

---

[23] Although both *converso* and *morisco* groups were present in early modern Spain, it was the *conversos* who first were of concern to Spanish society and the Church. Because of the time frame of this project, the majority of my study is primarily concerned with *conversos* and their relation to Spanish Christianity. I do not wish to conflate the two groups, but much of

many "old Christians" were also guilty of suspicious behaviour and heterodox religious beliefs and practices. Throughout the sixteenth century we see a shift from accusations of Judaizing to other types of transgressions; fornication, blasphemy and adherence to superstitions were the greatest areas for concern. Many of these problems stemmed from both a general ignorance regarding doctrine and a lack of clergy.[24] The sixteenth-century Spanish Church thus embarked on a campaign of education and reform, a campaign reinforced by the decrees of the Council of Trent. The main goal of the reformers was to educate the clergy and laity so that religious belief and ritual might be coherent and unified.

However strongly this unity was sought, it remained elusive. Despite the efforts of reformers we see evidence of continuing laments over the state of Christianity in sixteenth-century Spain. Thus it is here, in the sixteenth century that we also see a nostalgia for the reign of Isabel and Fernando, a reign noted for the triumph of Christianity. This triumph was seen by some as proof of divine blessing, a blessing which had since been withdrawn from Spain. Isabel and Fernando had been blessed because of the purity of their faith, and it is here that we begin to see the myth of *los Reyes Católicos* (the Catholic Kings) take root and begin to flourish. The Inquisition and the campaign of reform were tools which could be used to re-establish that purity of faith.

I am not attempting an apology for the Inquisition, nor to minimize the genuine suffering and the horrors which the Jewish and Muslim populations

---

Spanish Christian reactions towards the *conversos* were later transferred wholesale to the *moriscos*.

[24] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 258 ff.

experienced. Rather, I am attempting to contextualize the historical events in an effort to gain some insight into the mindset of the "old Christians" of Spain as they reacted to the specific circumstances of their historical situation. The strategies of distinction they used to define themselves may not meet with our approval, but that does not negate the necessity of a closer examination of those strategies so that we might better understand the society as a whole. Within such a project, disapproval will only hinder understanding.

Chapter 1: Identities and Conversions

Identity formation

Medieval identity is often drawn along religious lines; as Wout van Bekkum and Paul Cobb argue, religious community is the *sine qua non* of medieval identity.[1] Implicit in this argument is the traditional notion that medieval identity is communally formed, and that this medieval communalism gave way to the so-called progressive and aggressive individualism of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and then to the rise of the nation-state and the ideologies inherent to nationalist thinking. However, as van Bekkum and Cobb also indicate, such a model has been largely discredited, and scholars today are more cognizant of the complexities involved in the construction of both individual *and* communal identity in the medieval and the modern periods.[2] Nonetheless, the concept of the communal nature of medieval identity still provides, if nothing else, a place from which various historians can begin to explore those nuances and complexities.[3]

One possible tack is to explore medieval community within its localities: if we subscribe to van Bekkum and Cobb's assertion that religious community is vital to medieval identity formation, then we must ask which religious community? To imagine that all European Christians or all European Jews shared a common identity is problematic. We can instead speak of an overarching umbrella of religious identity under which all others developed, and that Jews and Catholics in Europe constructed

---

[1] Wout J. van Bekkum and Paul M. Cobb, "Introduction: Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity," in *Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Wout J. van Bekkum and Paul M. Cobb (Paris: Peeters, 2004), 3.
[2] Ibid., 8.
[3] Ibid., 2-3.

specific religious identities linked to their various locales. Accordingly, we see the development of the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim in different geographic spaces; similarly, all Christians in pre-Reformation Europe belonged to the greater Christian community of the Catholic Church, yet their experience of religion was linked to their geographic locale and the experience unique to such.

Walter Pohl has examined this process of identity formation – what he calls "strategies of distinction" within the period of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. He maintains that at this time, ethnic communities were not "immutable biological or ontological essences" but were the result of "historical processes" or were "historical processes in themselves."[4] He continues:

> Between the fourth and eighth centuries, a number of "experimental" communities had to create new forms of legitimacy and organisation to overcome a Roman world based on Empire, city and tribe. In the course of time, a new world developed that relied on Christendom, kingdom and people to pull an increased variety of local communities together. Of these three factors, the ethnic one certainly is the most elusive.[5]

Therefore there is no set pattern by which identity was constructed; the forms in which this occurred were unique to each locale. In addition, groups which fall under similar ethnic categories (especially by modern standards) still developed different communal identities. Pohl asks, "what did names, law, language, costume, burial rites, rhetoric, culture, royal representation or ideology mean, and to whom?"[6] Each of these factors were negotiated in a relational manner, through social contact and

---

[4] Pohl, "Strategies of Distinction," 8.
[5] Ibid., 9.
[6] Ibid.

thus in a public arena; difference or sameness only matters if there is someone present to "make the difference" or to recognize the sameness.[7]

While nobility and the gentry could provide connections between towns, provinces and even kingdoms, the majority of people in medieval Europe were connected solely to their local community, be it a rural village or urban district. Providing a structure to this community was the parish church; the parish was the key to the construction of values: "each parish [was] fiercely jealous of its own church, saints and traditional customs."[8] Though part of the greater Church, one's local church was the milieu in which the experience of being a Christian was publicly played out, and Christians from parish to parish, while subscribing to the same overarching belief system, expressed those beliefs in different ways. This sameness and difference has generally been ignored within examinations of each greater religious community.[9]

Due to this conception of a collective religious experience scholars such as Gerard Delanty are able to put forward a thesis of European identity formation which depends upon an "other."[10] Western European identity in particular, he argues, is constructed in opposition to an "adversarial Other" – the Muslims in the east, and the

---

[7] This is a variation on Pierre Bourdieu: "une différence, une propriété distinctive (. . .) ne devient une différence visible, perceptible, non indifférente, socialement pertinente, que si elle est perçue par quelqu'un qui est capable de faire la différence" *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris, 1994), 24, quoted in Pohl , 21

[8] Henry Kamen, *Early Modern European Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 14.

[9] We see this evinced in such scholarly works as Bernard Hamilton's *Religions in the Medieval West* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), which, although at times making reference to specific examples in certain locales, applies a universality to the Latin Church. This is not to say that such overviews are of little use to the historian, but one must be wary of the allowing them to stand for *all* religious experience in the Latin Church.

"Ibero-African" frontier and later the New World in the west.[11] A seductive theory, it transfers very well into the Spanish setting, and might offer an easy explanation for the so-called rise of intolerance within that setting. However, this necessitates a degree of unfamiliarity which simply does not ring true for the Spanish situation. Whether Jew or Muslim, these "others" had lived alongside Christians for at least eight centuries. If we step outside religious experience for a moment, and remember some of Pohl's other categories of distinction: law, language, and so forth, then Jews, Muslims and Christians necessarily belong to the same community in Spain.[12] There is a strong degree of sameness which is recognizable to those within the experience. We cannot compare this situation with either the threat of the Ottoman empire or with the discovery of the indigenous people in the Americas. If there is no "natural distinction" between groups, then distinctions must be *made* – they become "negotiated system[s] of social classification."[13] Such a system places much weight on religion as the predominant factor of differentiation in Spain.

This, then, becomes the crux. For Spain, religion *was* the *sine qua non* of identity, until the late fourteenth century, when forced conversions redrew the lines defining religious distinctions. From this point on, we see a surge in the negotiation of identity, in the creation and rejection of various markers which indicate identity.

---

[10] Gerard Delanty, "The Frontier and Identities of Exclusion in European History," *History of European Ideas* 22, no. 2 (1996).
[11] Ibid.: 96, 99.
[12] Although we see different laws, and in some cases, languages, in the various kingdoms of medieval Spain, within those kingdoms, the different religious groups shared those laws and language.
[13] Pohl, "Strategies of Distinction," 21.

What are those markers for late medieval and early modern Christian Spain? Certain established scholarship paints the following picture:

> [The Trastámaras'] ascendancy culminates in the reign of the Catholic Monarchs (1474-1516) – both Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragón were, of course, Trastámaras – and ends with their demise. The Trastámaran dynasty engineers the emergence of Spain as a modern nation-state and world empire and the construction of an orthodox, patriarchal Spanish and Catholic identity purified of its others through Reconquest, conversion, inquisition, and expulsion. The Toledan Rebellion of 1449 marks a watershed event in the transformation of Spain into a persecuting society that delineates the imperatives of racial purity and cultural and religious orthodoxy subsequently institutionalized in the statutes of *limpieza de sangre* and the Inquisition.[14]

Orthodoxy, patriarchy, purity and persecution: these are the markers Dayle Seidenspinner-Nuñez notes in her compact overview of the Trastámara dynasty. Other scholars concur: Barbara Fuchs claims Spanish Christianity at this time "ostentatiously assumed the mantle of Defender of the Faith."[15] David Graizbord asserts that it was "fear and antipathy" towards the *conversos* which shaped early modern Iberian society and that such fears were expressed in the "allied ideologies" of honour, purity of blood and purity of faith.[16] These views are augmented by those who write of a community fanatical about lineage, overtly racist, paranoid about ethnic purity, and ultimately, repressed and bowing easily to totalitarianism.[17]

---

[14] Dayle Seidenspinner-Nuñez, "Prelude to the Inquisition: The Discourse of Persecution, the Toledan Rebellion of 1449, and the Contest for Orthodoxy," in *Strategies of Medieval Community Identity: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Wout J. van Bekkum and Paul M. Cobb (Paris, Leuven, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004), 47.

[15] Barbara Fuchs, *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2003), 1.

[16] David L. Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania 2004), 2.

[17] Henry Kamen summarizes this scholarly strain in "Limpieza and the Ghost of Américo Castro: Racism as a Tool of Literary Analysis" *Hispanic Review* 64, no. 1 (1996), 19-20. He specifically refers to Albert Sicroff, Francisco Márquez Villanueva and Jaime Contreras.

Such analyses reflect a commonplace in Spanish historiography. Though historians approach the field with differing objectives, methodologies, interpretations and ideological stances (either implicit or explicit), with few exceptions it is taken as read that fifteenth-century Spain saw the breakdown of *convivencia* and the rise of (Christian) intolerance. Seidenspinner-Nuñez in particular subscribes to R.I. Moore's model proposed in *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*. Moore's argument, based on twelfth and thirteenth-century European sources, examines "persecutions" of heretics, lepers and Jews, and claims that the increase in intolerance in medieval Europe stemmed not from mass hysteria of the populace, nor from the increase in numbers of deviants, but rather from the "decisions of princes and prelates" as Europe transformed from a "segmentary to a state society"[18].

Seidenspinner-Nuñez's and Moore's theses are complementary in that they both see evidence of systemic, institutional persecution of a top-down origin. This system is offered in response to social instability – especially rapid social change and mobility – which was unquestionably the case in fifteenth-century Spain. Consequently Seidenspinner-Nuñez emphasizes the social context, a time when, she writes, the "redefinition of social values and the reaffirmation of social unity is required."[19] It is here, in these processes, that the roots of intolerance are located and therefore for Seidenspinner-Nuñez and Moore, the origins of institutions such as the Inquisition are not found in the victims but rather in the persecutors.

---

[18] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 123, 51.
[19] Seidenspinner-Nuñez, "Prelude to the Inquisition," 49.

Fifteenth-century Spain was witness to a specific type of dramatic social change: religious conversion. Previous to this century, social upheavals were far more commonplace in the peninsula than elsewhere in Europe. 711 CE marked the Muslim invasion, and the following eight centuries are commonly referred to as the *reconquista*; the (re)conquest of Christian territory from the Muslims.[20] These eight centuries were filled with sporadic warfare, the change of territory from one faction to another, the rise of men of lower birth through society by virtue of their deeds. Social instability was common enough in medieval Spain; religious instability, however, was something different. Religious affiliation was so fixed, so tied to the essence of who a person was, where he or she lived and what type of life they led, that to change one's religion was, in effect, to change one's identity entirely.

Conversions

The year 1391 is generally taken to mark the beginning of these changes. For the first time, significant numbers of people moved from one religious group to another. That summer saw anti-Judaic riots spread from Seville throughout both Castile and Aragon, culminating in the marked decrease of the Jewish population either by death or by conversion. The reasons behind these riots are myriad. Late fourteenth-century Spain was still recovering from severe bouts of the Black Death,

---

[20] The gradual overthrow of the Muslim rulers by the Christian kingdoms was always painted by their chroniclers as a re-conquering of lands previously held by Christian Goths. This "Gothic thesis" has played a formative role in Spanish historiography, to the extent that it lingers today. However, a linkage between late medieval Spanish monarchs (whether of Asturia, Castile or Aragon) with the Goths is dubious at best, and therefore the term "reconquest" is misleading, albeit historically fixed. See Simon Barton, "The Roots of the

which had begun in 1348. The "war of the two Pedros" (1356-1366) pitted Castile against Aragon for control over the newly conquered frontier areas of the Muslim kingdom of Murcia, a conflict which devolved into the Castilian civil war (1366-1369). The death of Juan I of Castile in 1390 served to increase fears about continued political instability; his son Enrique was only a child and although a council of Regents was imposed by the Cortes in 1391, power struggles between the nobility, including the Archbishops of Toledo and Santiago and the masters of the various military orders, nearly tore the kingdom apart.[21]

Added to this mix of political instability (which inevitably led to economic instability) was a charismatic and virulently anti-Judaic archdeacon of the diocese of Seville named Ferrán Martínez. The Jewish population of Castile had backed Pedro against his half brother Enrique in the civil war – a natural position, since the Jews were legally bound to the king. Enrique played upon Christian hatred of Jews to gain support for his movement amongst the nobility, but once he gained power, he reverted to policies similar to those of previous monarchs, including Pedro. Thus he entrusted his finances and tax-gathering to a Sevillian Jew, Joseph Pichon.[22] Martínez perhaps saw Enrique as one who could "deliver Castile from the Jewish blight" and

---

National Question in Spain," in *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context*, ed. Mikuláš Teich and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 113-16.

[21] J. N. Hillgarth gives a concise overview of the political events of this period. See *The Spanish Kingdoms, Vol 1, 1250-1410* esp. pp. 373-408. A much more detailed picture is presented in Netanyahu's *Origins*, pp.93-128.

[22] Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 2001), 113-14. See also Freund and Ruiz, p174. Henry Lea claims that Enrique was "obliged" to rely on Pichon, as the Jews at that time were "indispensable" to the court and its economy. Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 4 vols. (Macmillan, 1906-07), v.1, 70.

upon seeing the reversal of his anti-Jewish policies, became bitterly disappointed.[23] While such a determination is somewhat speculative, it is true that Martínez, although constrained by Enrique, his son Juan I and the Archbishop of Seville, continued to agitate against the Jews of Seville throughout the next two decades.[24] 1390 proved a fortuitous year for Martínez, and an ominous one for the Jews. Juan I and the Archbishop died within three months of each other, and in the resulting power vacuum, Martínez seized his chance. Despite opposition from both the Regency and the Cathedral Chapter of Seville, Martínez continued to preach against the Jews, stirring up local popular sentiment. Henry Lea portrays him as a man of fanatic devotion to his beliefs, describing Martínez as "contemptuously" disregarding royal mandates and papal bulls to desist his incendiary preaching.[25]

Benzion Netanyahu's description of the events of 1391 ascribes a great deal of power to Martínez; opposed by crown and church, he nevertheless almost single-handedly masterminded the destruction of the Sevillian *juderia* on June 4, 1391. Regardless of whether the attack was anticipated or not (one chronicler believes it was completely unexpected), the royal forces of Seville were unprepared to intervene, and thousands of Jews were killed.[26] Many more (some twenty thousand) consented to be baptized and were spared immediate death. While in the churches, undergoing

---

[23] Netanyahu, *Origins*, 129. Netanyahu also posits that Martínez' disappointment would have been shared by the majority of the common people.
[24] Lea claims that the reason for the King and the church to keep Martinez in check was economic; the *aljama* (Jewish quarter) of Seville was the largest, and richest, in Castile. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, v.1, 104.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Netanyahu, *Origins*, 149.

the baptismal ritual, their homes were ransacked and burnt. A Sevillian chronicler, Ortíz de Zúñiga, describes the *judería* as a wasteland.[27]

This resounding success, from Martínez' point of view, encouraged neighbouring towns in the diocese to follow suit. They, too, had been roused by Martínez' preaching, and anti-Judaic violence spread throughout Andalusia, as well as eastwards and northwards. The *juderías* of Toledo and other Castilian cities met a similar fate as the one in Seville; in Aragon, there were riots in Valencia and Barcelona. Although some towns and regions were unscathed, by the following year the largest Jewish population in Europe had been reduced by at least a third, possibly a half of its original population; the numbers are inexact.[28]

The Jews who had survived the massacres were only beginning to re-establish themselves and their positions in the various towns and cities when another form of persecution, less bloody but no less intransigent, appeared in the person of a Valencian Dominican named Vicente Ferrer. Although he denounced the violence of 1391, Fray Vicente zealously sought the conversion of all remaining Jews, and, backed by both the Avignon pope, Benedict XIII and the Aragon king, Fernando I, pressured many of the remaining Jews in Aragon into conversion. Fray Vicente also had significant influence in Castile, and in 1406 and 1412, Queen Catalina, regent of

---

[27] Quoted in Ibid.

[28] Henry Lea estimates the number of slain at fifty thousand, though he admits this may very well be an exaggeration; Henry Kamen does not give a total number, but speaks of "some hundreds" killed in each city. Albert Sicroff estimates the number of conversions in Valencia alone between seven and eleven thousand. Obviously there are huge discrepancies. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, vol 1, 109, Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 10, Sicroff, *Limpieza de sangre*, 46.

Castile, enacted several decrees isolating Jews from Christians, banning them from tax-collection, and condemning the Talmud.

In Aragon, in 1412, Benedict XIII was urged by his physician, the *converso* Jerónimo de Santa Fé (formerly Joshua ha-Lorki) to sponsor a public disputation (held at Tortosa) between Jews and Christians, a disputation the Jews could not refuse to attend. Santa Fé accurately judged the mood of the Jewish community, one of wary anxiety, unsure of what awaited them. According to Netanyahu, Santa Fé believed the Jews, because of their wariness, would hesitate to counter his arguments with any real force, perhaps realizing that conversion was the inevitable path for all of them. He opened the disputation citing Isaiah: "Come and argue, says the Lord. If you be willing and hear me, you shall eat the good of the land, but if you refuse and provoke my irascibility, you will be devoured by the sword."[29] The Jews were not in a good position.

Indeed, the Pope made it clear at the outset that what was under disputation was *not* whether Judaism had any claim to truth, but rather the focus was on the Midrashic passages which claimed the Messiah had come. As Benedict said:

> "for I know that my own faith is true whereas yours *was* true and has been abolished. You were asked to come here to present your views on Jerónimo's claim that the authors of the Talmud, who knew more than you do, admitted that the Messiah had come."[30]

Rather than a valid debate, the Disputation was a coercion campaign, and as such, it was quite successful. Essentially, it opened a door for any Jew who might have been considering conversion for economic or social reason – they could claim the

---

[29] Netanyahu, *Origins*, 203-04.
[30] Quoted in Ibid., 204.

Disputation proved Christianity right. Such Jews were primarily from the upper echelons of society, and they proved a demoralizing example to humbler Jews, who followed in their footsteps rather than try to salvage what was left of their community.[31] In addition, the Disputation lasted some two years; Fray Vicente took advantage of those communities left leaderless during this time and continued his "preaching tours" in those places, successfully swelling the number of converts. As well, laws similar to those instituted in Castile in 1412 were enacted in Aragon in 1415.[32]

Living with the *conversos*

From this point on, we can no longer speak of Spain as a "land of three religions" for we now have a fourth group – the converts, known in Spanish as the *conversos*. Even though these conversions had been so earnestly sought by contemporary religious and political authorities, they did not have the desired effect of creating a seamless Christian society. Although the Jewish population had shrunk dramatically, they were by no means wiped out; visitors to Spain were still aghast at the number and position of Jews within Iberian society.[33] As well, this new group, the *conversos*, gradually became more problematic than the Jews had been – they increasingly came under the suspicion of being "crypto-Jews"; of holding to the Jewish faith and tradition privately, merely acting as Christian in public. Far more sinister than crypto-Judaism, however was Judaizing and the fear that sincere

---

[31] Ibid.
[32] J. N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), v. 2, 142-44.

conversos would be swayed back to Judaism. The way this was believed to be done seems to have been rooted in behaviour. The cases brought before the Inquisition in its first decades of operation were almost all concerned with accusations of Judaizing, and, as an exemplar, of the twenty three cases of Judaizing brought before the Inquisition at Ciudad Real between 1483 and 1512, only six were concerned with doctrinal matters, the remaining seventeen were concerned with ritual practices.[34] Edwards claims that any threat felt by "old Christians" in regards to *conversos* lay in their behaviour and not in their understanding or acceptance of matters of doctrine.[35]

The first significant anti-*converso* incident occurred in Toledo, in 1449, although it seems that this conflict was rooted in political and economic tensions, rather than in issues concerning doctrine or religious practice. *Conversos* often acted as financiers and tax-collectors; although converted to Christianity, they still had limited access to land and thus many remained in their former professions. Alvaro de Luna, constable of Castile and the *privado* (favourite) of Juan II, imposed a tax which triggered a rebellion in Toledo, in which the *conversos*, as tax-collectors and representatives of the Crown, were the targets. Their houses and posessions, visible evidence of their social position and wealth, were looted and burnt. After the ensuing violence was dealt with, the town council met to create a new statute, one that would bar *conversos* from councillor positions and other public offices, on the basis of their Jewish lineage. This was the first of the so-called "purity of blood" statutes enacted in Castile; it would not be the last.

---

[33] G. G. King, *The Way of Saint James*, 3 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), 570.
[34] Haim Beinart, ed., *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real, I, 1483-84; II 1494-1512* (Jerusalem: 1974-7).

Eventually the fears and suspicions regarding the Judaizing nature of the *conversos* led to the establishment of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, in 1478. While *conversos* were not the only ones investigated by the Inquisition, they were its primary targets, especially in the first decades of operations. With the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, fears regarding Judaizing diminished somewhat, though that is not to say they disappeared all together. In addition, another group of converts – the *moriscos* (forcibly converted in 1502) took some of the Inquisitorial focus off the *conversos*. However, purity of blood statutes remained in effect until the seventeenth century and concerns about lineage remained of paramount concern to Spaniards.[36]

Again we find ourselves dealing with numerous reasons why the *conversos* were problematic for the Christians. As the Toledan dispute of 1449 shows, often the anger towards them was rooted in jealousy over their economic and social successes.[37] The *conversos* had indeed taken advantage of new opportunities afforded them via conversion; marriages were made with prominent Christian families, many *conversos* sought and found positions at court, new opportunities for businesses were now available.[38]

This much abbreviated and somewhat cursory overview of fifteenth-century Spain serves to explain the reasoning behind Seidenspinner-Nuñez's interpretation of the fifteenth century as witness to the formation of a persecuting society. However,

---

[35] Edwards, "Religious Belief," 126.
[36] Sicroff, *Limpieza de sangre*. Chapter 7 in particular details the diminishment of the statutes in the seventeenth century. Henry Kamen also gives a (briefer) overview of the use of the statutes in *The Spanish Inquisition*, chapter 11.
[37] Sarah T. Nalle, *God in La Mancha: Religious Reform and the People of Cuenca, 1500-1650* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

there are some problems with collapsing the events of an entire century into a teleological framework which leads to the establishment of the Inquisition and institutionalized persecution. Historians have been especially quick to link the conversions of 1391 and 1412-15 with the 1449 Toledan rebellion, as if they are causally connected, as if the events of 1449 prove that the *conversos* adhered to Judaism and that their baptisms were therefore invalid. Yet to do so ignores generations in between. As David Nirenberg explains, this was a massive social and religious shift, comparable to an "earthquake [jolting] Christian religiosity out of its ancient Pauline course into a new channel, this one carved by nature rather than by grace."[39] To go from the belief that all who were baptized were also saved to asserting that the very Jewish nature of converts is an impediment to salvation reflects a dramatic change in belief, and likely would not have happened quickly.

In addition, some historians conjecture that the conversions temporarily solved any sort of inter-religious strife in the first half of the fifteenth century, indeed, even going so far as to say that "Spanish society received the neophytes with open arms."[40] The idea that Jewish converts could not be sincere Christians did not immediately take root. According to Nirenberg, the generation immediately following

---

[38] Linda Martz, *A Network of Converso Families in Early Modern Toledo : Assimilating a Minority* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 26-27.
[39] David Nirenberg, "Enmity and Assimilation: Jews, Christians, and Converts in Medieval Spain," *Common Knowledge* 9, no. 1 (2003): 138.
[40] M. Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de los Heterodoxos Españoles,* 1963, Quoted in Netanyahu, *Origins*, 255. Netanyahu goes on to explain his theory that conflict between "old Christians" and *conversos* existed, but was censored by "interested parties." See also Angus MacKay, "Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile," *Past and Present*, no. 55 (1972)., 33-67, esp. p. 46; Scarlett Freund and Teofilo Ruiz, "Jews, Conversos, and the Inquisition in Spain: The Ambiguities of History," in *Jewish-Christian Encounters over the Centuries*, ed. Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

the conversions is interesting precisely for its lack of scrutiny into *converso* religious practices, something with which the latter half of the century was unquestionably concerned.[41] This is a notable point, for one might think that it would be the years immediately following the conversions that would have been the most difficult. Overnight someone who was, if not actively hated, certainly discriminated against and seen as "Other" becomes part of one's community, part of accepted society. Surely there must have been some unease, some trouble between "old Christians" and *conversos*. Yet none has (as yet) been uncovered by historians. Rather, the focus has been on the generation who converted, and their children, for whom the immediate effects were dual: along with confusion, uncertainty, anxiety and spiritual distress, there was a degree of constancy. Newly converted Jews went back to their own homes and if they could, continued in the same line of work. In some cases, families were split along religious lines, as not all members were willing to convert.[42]

It is this very constancy which is the focus of the "old Christians" at first. Accordingly, we see glimpses of an attempt to maintain the divide between *Jews* and Christians; a divide which became all the more important after the conversions, precisely because of the connections remaining between Jews and *conversos.* In Aragon, King Joan in 1393 complained that it was now impossible to tell who was a Christian and who was a Jew, and therefore *conversos* were forbidden contact with Jews. Jews were to wear badges and hats so that they could be easily differentiated.[43] Rather than an obsession with Judaizing, or fear of the *conversos*, what we have is a

---

[41] Nirenberg, "Enmity and Assimilation." 140.
[42] Melammed, *A Question of Identity*, 10.
[43] Nirenberg, "Enmity and Assimilation," 142.

"crisis of classification and identity."[44] This crisis was a direct result of the circumstances surrounding the conversions – the sheer numbers involved, the mob mentality of some of the events, and the confusion that reigned regarding who precisely had converted and who had not. Added to this was the fact that although one's religious affiliation might have changed, little else had, especially immediately. This blurring of lines between religious groups was the opposite of what was wanted. A sermon of Fray Vicente's from 1412 tells his audience that segregation is what is needed:

> And above all there should be no communication with them in the home, for Christian and infidel should not dwell together in the same house, for it is an evil which is contagious, that is, luxury, for many are thought to be the children of Jews, but are really Christian, and vice versa. And therefore just as Jews and Muslims are different from Christians in law, they should be different from them in habitation.[45]

Obviously, in the two decades after the first wave of conversions, it was the boundary between *Jews* and Christians that had to be maintained, while scant attention is paid to the boundary between *conversos* and Christians. Indeed, to speak of a boundary at all is misleading; at this time, the *conversos were* part of the Christian population. We see them rising in society, intermarrying with "old Christians" – Alonso de Santa María, bishop of Burgos, advocated marriage between "old Christians" and *conversos*, in 1431, as a means of "preserving the purity of the faith."[46] Welcoming the *conversos* into the Catholic faith and keeping them "on the

---

[44] David Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth Century Spain," *Past and Present*, no. 174 (2002): 10.
[45] Colegio del Corpus Christi de Valencia, MS 139, fo. 113; in Cátedra, "Fray Vicente Ferrer y la predicación antijudaica", 30–1, quoted in Ibid.: 12, n. 24.
[46] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 120. We must remember, of course, that Alonso de Santa María was himself a *converso*.

right side" were of utmost importance for the church and monarchies at this time. Yet this welcome eventually would wear out, and the *conversos* would be rejected by this very society which sought their conversion so wholeheartedly.

Historiography of the *conversos*

In trying to understand this rejection, one of the main ideological questions historians have struggled with is the problem of proving or disproving the Jewishness (or, conversely, the Christianity) of the *conversos*. Was the "old Christian" rejection of the *conversos* warranted, or simply a return to a centuries old social paradigm which maintained the "otherness" of Jews? This debate evinces itself already in the time period under investigation; by the mid-fifteenth-century theologians and historians were attempting to ascertain the validity of the *conversos'* Christian faith. Some of the more virulent in the crypto-Judaic camps are works that will come under discussion later – most notably the petition against the *conversos* issued by the city of Toledo in 1449.[47] In brief, the petition maintained that the *conversos* were "heretics and infidels" who secretly held to Jewish customs and rituals.[48] It is important to note that these debates became commonplace only in the latter half of the century; there are several possible explanations for this. Actions of Judaizing would not have been

---

[47] Crypto-Judaism is slightly different from the *conversos*. A crypto-Jew was one who at first adhered to Judaism secretly, whilst performing as a Christian in public. This situation led to the formation of what has been termed a syncretism in later generations, combining aspects and rituals from both Judaism and Christianity. See David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The religion of the crypto-Jews*, (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), for a thorough investigation of crypto-Judaism.

[48] Eloy Benito-Ruano, *Toledo en el Siglo XV* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Escuela de Estudios Medievales, 1961). The text of the petition, which will be

anticipated, and therefore it would take some time for such acts to become noticed by the church and the rest of society. If, as Nirenberg maintains, scant attention was paid to the religious practices of the *conversos* in the first few post-conversion generations, then such practices could easily have gone undetected for years, if not decades. Alternatively, (or perhaps complementarily, as one theory does not necessitate the rejection of the other) perhaps anti-*converso* sentiment in the latter half of the fifteenth century was rooted in jealousy over the social and economic successes of the *conversos*. To that end, time would also be required for such envy to develop.

There are historians today who hold to the former viewpoint, and interpret evidence as showing that the *conversos* did, in fact, hold to their ancestral beliefs, especially in private, while maintaining a public façade of Christianity. In addition, these few scholars see no cessation of intolerance, "ill will" and explicit manifestations of hostility towards the *conversos*. Benzion Netanyahu cites letters written by Enrique III to the cities of Burgos and Toledo, adjuring them to refrain from hostilities towards the new converts. While of interest, we might approach these letters with some caution; Netanyahu places them within the same discriminatory paradigm as pre-1391 anti-Jewish sentiment. In point of fact, he sees no difference at all between "old Christian" attitudes towards pre-conversion Jews and *conversos*. Evidence of unease between "old Christians" and *conversos* is not to be lightly dismissed, but at the same time, Netanyahu's very argument in some ways takes away from that significance. By asserting that "old Christians" did not differentiate between Jews and *conversos*, he in effect erases the entire group. His interpretation of the

---

examined in greater detail later, is included in the appendices, a collection of documents, 191-

sources maintains that for the "old Christians", there was never a difference between a *converso* and a Jew, the conversions were from the first meaningless and there was no change in the social and religious situation.[49]

Yitzhak Baer agrees with Netanyahu's argument that "old Christians" did not see a difference between *conversos* and Jews, but he approaches the question from a different angle. Baer, famously, writes: "*Conversos* and Jews were one people, united by bonds of religion, destiny and messianic hope, which in Spain took on a unique coloration typical of the people and the country."[50] According to Baer, the "old Christians" were correct to view the conversions as meaningless; none of the *conversos* were sincere, all remained Jews in their religious beliefs, and thus "old Christian" society treated the two as one.

Haim Beinart concurs; a scholar in Baer's footsteps to such an extent that he claims the union of Jews and *conversos* is so clear that it "requires no further discussion" save the statement that it exists. He also believes that "old Christians" were hostile towards the *conversos* and that riots protesting almost anything the *conversos* did, whether a move from one neighbourhood to another, an attempt to find employment in fields which were designated "Christian" or an attempt to "infiltrate" Christian society, were commonplace in the fifteenth century. He also suggests that there was no "clear cut plan" for the "solution" of the "*converso* problem" until the

---

196.

[49] Netanyahu, *Origins*, 167-69.

[50] Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Spain*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: 1961), 424.

1460s, when "various suggestions were made to the authorities" (it is not stated by whom).[51]

Cecil Roth is another of this "lachrymose" school of thought. He posits that the *conversos* were "Jews in all but name, and Christians in nothing but form." His view is sustained by numerous factors. Roth believes that many *conversos* still kept the Sabbath, as well as they were able; that they purchased meat only from Jewish butchers; and that they formed ostensibly Christian associations which were mere guises under which to maintain and uphold Jewish customs.[52] Many inquisitorial records recount episodes of *conversos* who subverted the Catholic mass by not kneeling or looking at the host when it was elevated, by not reciting the creed, or disparaging the mass by not removing their hat or by turning their back on the altar when leaving the church.[53] These events have been primarily interpreted as indicating a resistance to Catholicism. Another place scholars find evidence of crypto-Judaism is in the fact that many *conversos*, upon leaving Castile for other parts of the Spanish empire, attempted to join the local Jewish communities, rather than live as Christians.[54] Despite such evidence, this type of analysis advocates an ideological position which positions the *converso* within the context of a long tradition of European anti-Semitism. There have been attempts to explain these Judaic practices

---

[51] Haim Beinart, *Conversos on Trial: The Inquisition in Ciudad Real*, trans. Yael Guiladi (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1981), 4-5. He goes on to (ominously) suggest that the Inquisition was established as an "organised solution" by the State and Church to the *converso* problem. The language used is deliberate.
[52] Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1974), 20.
[53] David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 149-50.

as adherence to cultural, rather than religious phenomena – funerary rites might fall under this category.

Even if Baer and his colleagues are explicitly ideological in their historical analysis, it must be said that their most vocal opponent also occupies a no less tacit ideological position: Netanyahu opines that the *conversos* were sincere in their Christian faith, and it was the inability of the Christians to accept the *conversos* as brothers and sisters in their faith which lead to continued anti-*converso* sentiment. His ideology, then, not only speaks to the fragility of life in the Jewish Diaspora, but also to the inherent racial bias of Christianity against Jews. [55]

Interestingly, as Nirenberg recently asserted, although the two scholarly positions seem to be diametrically opposed, there is a stunning commonality: "Both camps dissolve the paradoxical tension between assimilation and persecution, and they do so by agreeing that those differences most essential to enmity and to identity remained unchanged by conversion."[56] Rather than hold to that position, I agree with Nirenberg that the conversions "transformed the sacred and social worlds in which they occurred"; the focus of this transformation will be examined in much greater depth in subsequent chapters.[57]

---

[54] For an overview of *converso* life elsewhere in Europe, see Miraim Bodian, ""Men of the Nation": The Shaping of Converso Identity in Early Modern Europe," *Past and Present* 143, no. May (1994).
[55] Netanyahu, *Origins*. Netanyahu's position is explicated in Nirenberg, "Enmity and Assimilation," 138-40. Yirimiyahu Yovel gives a succinct overview of the respective positions of these scholars in "The New Otherness: Marrano Dualities in the First Generation" *The 1999 Swig Lecture* http://www.usfca.edu/judaicstudies/yovel.html accessed February 5, 2007.
[56] Nirenberg, "Enmity and Assimilation," 140.

Transformation of identity

This transformation is the key to unpacking the markers of identification discussed previously. Traditionally, as we have seen, those markers have been located in a strong adherence to religious orthodoxy and violent racism, which includes the obsession with lineage. While some of this scholarship is little more than the reiteration of an old strain of historiography, it is certainly not to be entirely discarded.[58] The authors mentioned at the beginning of the chapter undertook projects in which liminal identities (*converso* or *morisco*) were the focus. Any work concerned with *converso* or *morisco* history must necessarily paint a picture of Spanish Christianity as a backdrop for their study. Such a canvas is completed with the broadest strokes possible, for it is not the subject of the work, and therefore will come under little scrutiny. Suffice to say that early modern Spanish Christianity was intolerant, and then one is free to explore the ways and means of such intolerance, and its impact on those affected. Consequently, the question always under consideration, in some form or other, is: how did the *conversos* or *moriscos* respond to their new situation? How did they negotiate their new identity? An approach from this direction is not to be criticized; it is a natural question to ask, and the number of works penned on this matter speaks to its depth and historical importance. However, it also begs the question: just who or what is this monolith of intolerance, this paranoid majority of which these scholars speak? And more importantly, what was *their* response to their new situation? How did it affect them? The standard response,

---

[57] Ibid.

as seen above, is a teleological rise in intolerance, ethnic as opposed to religious discrimination and eventually the horrors of Inquisition.

A different tack is possible. This is not revisionist history; few scholars would attempt to ignore the very real atrocities Spanish Jews, *conversos*, Muslims and *moriscos* suffered. Rather, by exploring some of the watershed events of the latter half of the fifteenth century, and examining the nuances of those events, I hope to portray a society somewhat more riddled with uncertainty regarding issues of identity and religion than most scholars would admit. There is no doubt that fifteenth-century Spain was rife with intolerance, both institutional and popular, that *conversos* were hated, despised, rejected, incarcerated, tortured and murdered. Yet beneath this overarching narrative, other stories emerge. Some *conversos* were successful; both at court and in the very church which was supposedly attempting to destroy them. Some areas of Castile and Aragon were relatively untouched by the Inquisition; *conversos* and "old Christians" lived together quite peacefully, and many "old Christians" saw no need for discriminatory legislation such as the purity of blood laws. In fact, there almost seems to be a duality, a split of some kind in Spanish society. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to speak of *dualities*, for these so-called splits were constantly in flux. This is not an easy divide between institutions and popular sentiment, for not all institutions adopted the racially discriminatory statutes, while some popular opinion was extremely anti-*converso*. There is simply no consensus regarding the *conversos*

---

[58] I refer here to the so-called Black Legend, a strain of historical writings from England and Flanders, which, for religious and political reasons, painted an extremely harsh picture of Catholic Spain. This strain will be discussed in greater detail later.

whatsoever, and therefore this historiographical insistence on an ossified belief system which tolerated no dissent is troubling at best.

Chapter Two: Social Status, Origins and Identity

Limpieza de sangre

Any scholar of early modern Spain must confront these markers of Christian identity which have been taken to evince an orthodox and rigid belief system. One of the most famous and controversial of these markers are the "purity of blood" laws, the statutes of *limpieza de sangre*. Spanish historiography has long adhered to the tradition that the statutes were, in actual fact, of Jewish origin and if so, there is, as David Nirenberg writes, "a certain exculpatory irony in the fact that their own monstrous children turned so violently against them."[1] Numerous historians have supported this argument; both Américo Castro and Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, agreed on this particular, if on nothing else.[2] More recent scholars argue the converse – that these ideas were Christian in origin, enabling them to exclude the converted Jews from their society.[3] However, both of these positions assume a discrete, essentialist origin of such ideology, genetic itself in the way it is transmitted; a contrary opinion is offered by Nirenberg. He believes that this type of thought process stemmed from a "specific historical process of conflict in which lineage became a newly meaningful way of thinking about religious identity."[4] I concur, yet at the same time, Spain is not unique in its emphasis on genealogy or origins, as will be demonstrated below.

---

[1] Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion," 6.
[2] Américo Castro, *The Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History*, trans. Willard F. King and Selma Margaretten (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), 193. Claudio Sanchez-Albórnoz, *España: un enigma historico*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana 1962), ii, 16, 255.
[3] Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion," 5. Specifically mentioned are Yitzhak Baer, Benzion Netanyahu, Cecil Roth.
[4] Ibid.: 6.

Limpieza de sangre statutes were first implemented in Toledo in 1449, and it is obvious that the motivations behind the statutes were rooted in political and economic reasons.[5] There was a growing animosity towards the *privado* (chief minister) of Juan II, Alvaro de Luna. Luna was of *converso* origin himself, and one of his enemies was the chief magistrate of Toledo, Pero Sarmiento. When a new tax was imposed, Sarmiento succeeded in rousing the populace to revolt. As the city treasurer, Alfonso Cota, was also a *converso*, the protesters (all "old Christians") targeted the *conversos* and plundered or destroyed their homes and property in riots which occurred on the night of January 27. Thus, whether the ensuing anti-*converso* sentiment, which began to manifest itself much more noticeably from this point forward, was rooted in economics rather than religion is something which is unclear. Certainly economics played a factor, as many *conversos* maintained their former (Jewish) professions such as tax farming.

The campaign quickly evolved into other issues, perhaps because it was believed the crown would undoubtedly support the *conversos*, who were, after all, working for the monarchy. Thus, on June 5 of that same year, the town council enacted the *Sentencia Estatuto de sangre*, which proclaimed anyone of the "perverse" Jewish lineage to be unfit and unworthy to hold any official office, which disqualified some fourteen officials already in office.[6] The claim was made for both legal and

---

[5] Henry Kamen notes that while the Toledan statute was the first one officially implemented, there were other, unofficial attempts to bar *conversos* from town offices previous to this, in Barcelona, Valencia and Catalonia, all in 1436; Lleida in 1437 and Villena in 1446. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 231.

[6] "... todos los dichos conversos descendientes del perverso linaje de los judíos ... sean habidos e tenidos como el derecho los ha e tiene por infames, inhábiles, incapaces e indignos para haber todo oficío e beneficio público y privado en la dicha cibdad de Toledo" Benito-

religious reasons, but the main accusation against the *conversos* was that they were "suspect in the holy Catholic faith" and guilty of committing grievous errors of dogma: making the claim that Christ was not divine, belief in a male and female God, and the maintenance of the "old law", for example, roasting lambs and making burnt sacrifices on Maundy Thursday while the holy oil of the Chrism was being consecrated, which smacked of Judaizing in the eyes of the "old Christians."[7]

The initial response from authorities was not in favour of the statutes. Pope Nicholas V issued a bull on September 24 1449, denouncing the statutes as unchristian in their attempt to exclude anyone on the basis of blood, and excommunicating the authors. However, King Juan II apparently bowed to political pressure and formally approved the statutes in 1451, asking Nicholas to suspend the excommunications.[8] Some twenty years later, in 1467, further riots in Toledo meant that authorities were pressured to sustain the statutes; that same year Enrique IV also passed similar statutes for the city of Ciudad Real.

Ruano, *Toledo en el Siglo XV*, 194. The entire text of the *Sentencia* is included in the appendices. A list of the fourteen men appears on page 195.

[7] "... ser personas muy sospechosas en la santa fé cathólica, de tener e creer grandissimos errores contra los artículos de la santa fé cathólica, guardando los ritos e ceremonias de la ley vieja, e diciendo e afirmando ser nuestro Salvador e Redemptor Jesuchristo un hombre de su linaje colgado, en que los christianos adoran por Dios, y otrosí afirmando y diciendo que hay Dios y Diosa en el cielo; e otrosí en el Jueves Santo mientras se consagra en la Santa Iglesia de Toledo el santíssimo óleo y chrisma, e se pone el Cuerpo de nuestro Redemptor en el Monumento, los dichos conversos degüellan corderos, e los comen e facen otros géneros de olocaustos e sacrificios judaizando..." Ibid., 193. Benzion Netanyahu has examined the legal claims made by the Toledans in the *Sentencia*, and found them extremely weak. The response by both king and pope to the statutes upholds his findings. See Benzion Netanyahu, "Did the Toledans of 1449 Rely on a Real Royal Privilege?," in *Toward the Inquisition: Essays on Jewish and Converso History in Late Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[8] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 34-35. Kamen suggests that the crown adopted this position due to political instability and the desire to "win friends by conciliation."

Linda Martz, an historian who has worked extensively on *converso* families in Toledo, has traced the implementation of the statutes in that city following 1449. She sees the riots of 1467 as evidence that although the statutes were officially upheld, they were not necessarily put into practice. How else could *conversos* again be in official positions a mere eighteen years later?[9] In addition, there is continuing evidence that the statutes were by no means accepted by the church: in 1468 the Archbishop of Toledo, Alonso Carrillo, condemned the "divisions" and reiterated that in the church ". . . whether Jew, Greek or Gentile we are regenerated by baptism and made into new men. From which it is obvious how culpable are those who, forgetting the purity of the law of the gospel, create different lineages."[10] This striving towards unity, and the notion of "purity" linked to religious belief evinces itself numerous times throughout the early modern period.[11]

A few more instances of anti-*converso* violence occurred over the next decade, the worst in Córdoba in 1473.[12] Increasing accusations against the *conversos* regarding Judaizing (in part) led to the establishment of the Inquisition in 1478, its primary focus to rout out any and all cases of such heretical behaviour. A focus on genealogy thus became critical in the workings of that institution, and while its administrators did not believe that being a *converso* automatically made one a heretic, they did condition Spaniards to believe that *conversos* were more prone to heresy

---

[9] Martz, "Pure Blood Statutes," 85.
[10] Quoted in Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 35.
[11] See below, Chapter 3.
[12] See John Edwards, "The Judeoconversos in the Urban Life of Córdoba, 1450-1520," in *Villes et sociétés urbaines au Moyen Âge : hommage à M. le professeur Jacques Heers* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1994).

than others.[13] Surprisingly, the office itself adopted no official statute of *limpieza* until the middle of the sixteenth century; however, in 1483 a papal bull did order that all Episcopal inquisitors must be "old Christians."[14] The military orders of Alcántara and Calatrava implemented statutes of *limpieza* that same year, as did the *Colegios Mayores* of San Bartolomé in Salamanca in 1482 and Santa Cruz in Valladolid in 1486.[15] The *Colegios Mayores* were a type of fraternity; members retained connections long after graduation, and often aided in advancing each other's careers, a sort of early modern "Skull and Bones" society. Such societies and connections were to become incredibly important in the sixteenth century. Religious orders also implemented *limpieza* statutes: the Jeronimites in 1486, after a "nest of Judaizers" was discovered in the monastery of La Sisla in Toledo. It would seem the prior was found guilty of pronouncing, when elevating the host: "Up, little Peter, and let the people look at you." He and four others were sent to the stake by the Inquisition of Toledo.[16] The Dominicans also seem to have enacted some type of exclusionary policy by 1489, though one which specifically referred to *limpieza* was only adopted in Aragon.[17]

---

[13] Hernando del Pulgar, quoted in Henry Kamen, "A Crisis of Conscience in Golden Age Spain: The Inquisition against *limpieza de sangre*," in *Crisis and Change in Early Modern Spain*, ed. Henry Kamen (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993).
[14] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*.294, 286.
[15] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 233. Kamen also mentions the intriguing case of the college of San Clemente in Bologna, to which many Castilians went to study. The college issued a statute excluding only those *conversos* accused of heresy, and only those from Seville. However, in 1485, an alumnus, the inquisitor Pedro Arbués, was murdered by *conversos* in the Saragossa cathedral. This act served to cool off any opposition towards the Inquisition, and any sympathy "old Christians" in Aragon had had for the *conversos*. In addition, San Clemente adopted a statute excluding all *conversos* from this point forward.
[16] Ibid., 235.
[17] Ibid.

Intermixed with the discrimination based solely on Jewish ancestry was the canon law, established in 1488, which stipulated that children and grandchildren of convicted heretics (whether condemned or reconciled) were considered unfit for either holy orders or public office.[18] Often, especially in the first decades in which the Inquisition was operational, the majority of convicted heretics were *conversos*, and therefore the conflation of heretical behaviours and Jewish origins was invisible. What we see here is evidence of what David Graizbord calls two "intertwined yet logically incompatible interpretations of evil."[19] The first posited that evil was an ideological deviance, yet not incurable, if one confessed and repented. The second implied that heresy (in these cases, "Jewish" heresy) was a "natural attribute" and thus irreversible.[20] This latter notion was rooted not in modern conceptions of race, but in the idea that one's moral traits were transmitted through blood, and therefore one's lineage became immeasurably important in ascertaining the "purity" of one's faith. If a person's ancestors were accused of heresy, that person was regarded as particularly suspect, more prone to heretical behaviour than someone whose ancestors were free from the taint of heresy. Thus, prejudice and religious deviance become inextricably linked

It was not until the beginning of the sixteenth century that other institutions adopted *limpieza* statutes. The cathedral chapter of Badajoz in 1511; the cathedral chapter in Seville in1515; the university of Seville in 1537, all implemented such

---

[18] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, vol 2, 287.
[19] Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*, 117.
[20] Ibid.

statutes. The Franciscans did not adopt any exclusionary policies until 1525.[21] Their policy included not only descendants of Jews, but also of those convicted by the Inquisition, again conflating the two situations.[22]

Despite the increasing number of institutions adopting *limpieza* statutes, we have no real evidence of any mania for *limpieza* sweeping the populace. It seems that, much like the ineffectual *Sentencia* of 1449, the implementation of statutes and the practice of exclusion were entirely different things. The statute was a contentious issue for the Jeronimite order; in 1507 a monk of Guadalupe wrote a vicious attack against his order for having adopted the statute. The Franciscan order, likewise, was deeply divided on the issue, and the statute was later revoked, as was the statute in the cathedral in Salamanca.[23] In addition, there are examples of institutions which made no reference to ethnic origins whatsoever when stipulating eligibility for professorships and admittance: the University of Alcalá is one such institution.[24]

Even so, 1532 the *Cortes* of Segovia decreed that an "old Christian" must be able to prove his or her Christian ancestors up to four generations past, thus showing that interest in matters genealogical was very much in the public mind. Perhaps this was, in part, due to the actions of the Inquisition: as we have seen ancestry was of paramount importance. The Inquisition began keeping records of those reconciled or relaxed, as well as the names of their families, for future reference. This action was, as Henry Lea puts it, "infinitely disquieting to subsequent generations," adding that

---

[21] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 234-35.
[22] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 288.
[23] Kamen, "A Crisis of Conscience."
[24] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 287.

these accounts were publicly accessible.[25] Thus, despite a possible laxity in the implementation of *limpieza* statutes, issues regarding one's ancestry were very much a part of the public mindset of Spain.

Some decades later, we again see evidence of this genealogical mentality arising in Toledo. In 1547, the archbishop, Juan Martínez Siliceo, succeeded in imposing a *limpieza* statute on the cathedral there. Siliceo was an "old Christian", but born of impoverished parents. Most historians agree that this rendered him extremely bitter and almost obsessed with discredited *conversos*, who were, as we have seen, generally financially successful.[26] Siliceo had worked hard and was very ambitious: after spending six years at the University of Paris, he returned home to teach at the prestigious university of Salamanca, and soon caught the attention of the court. He was appointed tutor to Charles V's son, Philip, and remained in that post for 10 years, afterwards appointed to the see of Toledo in 1546.

The trouble started almost immediately. Pope Paul III had recently appointed a *converso*, Dr Fernando Jiménez, as a new canon in the cathedral. Not only was this an affront to Siliceo, but Jiménez's father had been condemned by the Inquisition as a Judaizer. Siliceo categorically refused to accept the appointment. The pope relented, and withdrew the appointment, but Siliceo felt more could be done. Thus he drew up a statute excluding all *conversos* from office in the cathedral. A chapter meeting was held forthwith, (perhaps so that opposition could be forestalled, as not all members were present) and the statute was passed by a vote of twenty-four to ten.

---

[25] Ibid., 287-88.
[26] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 236, Netanyahu, *Origins*, 1064, Sicroff, *Limpieza de sangre*, 126.

There was immediate and vocal protest. Several of the protesters were *conversos*, most notably, the dean of the cathedral, Diego de Castilla, whose attack on the statute maintained that the church was in danger of being destroyed by those of low birth, and not the *conversos*.[27] Such an argument is obviously an intended slight against Siliceo's humble origins; the dean himself, though *converso*, came from an "irrefutably aristocratic lineage." The dean's protest was supported by other canons, included two members of the very powerful and noble Mendoza family. The archdeacons of Guadalajara and Talavera – both "old Christians" – also lodged protests claiming that the statute was both unjust and improper, since not all members of the cathedral chapter were at the meeting.[28] In addition, the city council protested, and went to Prince Philip claiming that the statute, if enacted, would endanger the peace of the city. Philip appointed the president of the council of Castile to arbitrate the matter, and he ruled against the statute, which Philip suspended in September, 1547, claiming that the matter needed to be set before the emperor, his father. Charles brought the matter to Rome, and though the pope was officially against the statute, Henry Lea claims that he was swayed by Siliceo's spokesperson, Diego de Guzman, and secretly signed a brief upholding the statute. This way, both sides could claim papal support.[29] This dovetails with Henry Kamen's suggestion that it was precisely

---

[27] ." . . mi voto es que en caso que el estado desta Sancta Yglesia cerca de las personas que adelante han de ser en ella admitidas or beneficiados se aya de mudar, limiar, o restringir de cómo haora se platica, diria que solo en ella de aquí adelante se admitan cavalleros ylustres, o nobles hijosdalgo, o letrados graduados por rigor de examen conforme á las pregmaticas destos Reynos, y no otra persona alguna porque admitir otra gente baxa y popular sin tener otras qualidades que les aiuden so color de ser los tales cristianos viexos es destruir la grandeza y autoridad desta Sancta Yglesia. . ." Sicroff, *Limpieza de sangre*, 134, n. 32.
[28] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 236-37.
[29] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 291.

due to the heated feelings on both sides that the matter was sent to Rome for arbitration. No one wanted a recurrence of the violence of 1449 or 1468.[30]

Siliceo did not give up, however, and nine years later the statute was finally passed. This time, both Philip (now king) and the Pope approved it, and it was ratified in 1556. Albert Sicroff believes this shows evidence of Philip's growing anti-Semitism, as his affirmation includes the statement: "all the heresies which have occurred in Germany and France have been sown by descendants of Jews, as we have seen and still see daily in Spain."[31] Kamen disagrees: he is rather more reluctant to see any evidence of anti-Semitism in Philip, and claims that Philip was quoting Siliceo and not expressing his own feelings. He also maintains that Philip was swayed by anti-*converso* advisors, and that "substantial elite opinions" opposed any kind of *limpieza* statutes.[32] Nevertheless, *limpieza* statutes continued to be upheld: they existed at the six university *Colegio Mayores*, the Dominican, Franciscan and Jeronimite orders, some ten cathedral chapters (including Córdoba, Seville, Toledo and León) and the military Order of Santiago. Smaller institutions, such as town councils and confraternities, primarily in Castile, also maintained statutes of exclusion. Kamen points out that though this might not seem like an extensive list, admittance into these institutions was crucial for any ambitious Spaniard. A career in

---

[30] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 83. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 238.
[31] "Considerese, que por no haver tenido en Francia el advertencia, que fuera justo tener en que los de la Generacion de Moros y Judios fueran conocidos y estubieran diferenciados de los demas Catolicos Cristianos viejos han inficionado con sus heregias, todo aquel Reyno y de aquí se concluye, que todas las heregias que há habido en Alemania-Francia España [sic] las han sembrado descendientes de Judios como se ha visto y se ve cada día en España." Sicroff, *Limpieza de sangre*, 172, n. 84.

either the Church or government was forestalled without membership in a *Colegio Mayor*, thus *conversos* could find advancement difficult, if not impossible. Yet ways around the statutes existed: bribery was common, as was the purchase of fraudulent certificates of *limpieza*. Thus, for example, throughout the sixteenth century, *conversos* are found in the universities (both as students and professors) – for example, the university at Salamanca appointed the *converso* Pablo Coronel as professor of Hebrew in 1531, while in 1559, another *converso*, Martín Martínez de Cantalapiedra was appointed the chair of Hebrew.[33]

Indeed, although from one aspect it seems that racial discrimination was growing, and that Spanish society was becoming increasingly obsessed with lineage, in point of fact, the best word to describe the situation is "inconsistent." In 1557, for instance, just one year after the infamous Toledan statute was ratified, a known *converso* was appointed as canon to the Cathedral. (Siliceo had died by this point, which no doubt made such an appointment possible).[34] Philip himself appointed another known *converso* to be his own chaplain at the cathedral of Sigüenza, which had a *limpieza* statute in place. When informed that his choice violated the statute, Philip agreed to suspend the appointment but demanded that the statute be looked into.[35]

Inquisitorial records show vacillation as well: certain officials are mentioned as either having proven, or having to prove, their *limpieza* before they could take up

---

[32] Kamen cites Philip's biographer, Cabrera de Córdoba who claimed the statute was "detested by those who decide the principles of good government" and also claimed the Cortes had an "undying hatred" of the statutes. Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 238.
[33] Ibid., 241.
[34] Ibid., 240.

their office, yet in other cases, nothing regarding the matter is mentioned at all.[36] It is evident that there was no definite system in place for dealing with issues of *limpieza*, no doubt due to the fact that it was not a universal law, but the choice of each individual institution.

Concomitant with statutes of *limpieza* were (as mentioned above) statutes of infamy, such as the one established at the cathedral of Seville in 1515 which barred anyone with an ancestor who had been reconciled or relaxed by the Inquisition from the cathedral chapter. Such a statute was not uncommon, and made no mention of the descendents of Jews or Muslims. Indeed, it seems that the farther removed in time from the point of conversions in the late fourteenth- and early fifteenth- century Spanish society became, the less such ancestral religious distinctions mattered.. However, this is not to say that notions of *limpieza* or genealogical mentalities diminished.

By the mid-sixteenth century, the statutes of the Colegios Mayores were increasingly important, since members of Spain's growing bureaucracy (civil and clerical servants known as *letrados*) were drawn from these institutions. Statutes of *limpieza* retained for these institutions and their alumni an element of elitism, a "meritocracy as opposed to [a] blooded aristocracy."[37] In fact, the growing emphasis on *limpieza* in the latter sixteenth century seems to have less to do with race, and more to do with "self-definition, defensiveness, political advancement, and status

---

[35] Ibid.
[36] Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 294-95.
[37] Stafford Poole, "The Politics of Limpieza de Sangre: Juan de Ovando and His Circle in the Reign of Philip II," *The Americas* 55, no. 3 (1999): 366.

seeking."[38] Certainly by this point, some one hundred and fifty years after the expulsions of the Jews and the Muslims, there was little danger from Judaizing Jews or from crypto-Muslims. *Limpieza*, then, became linked to a social ideology, to status; an answer, for the *letrados*, to the ancient noble bloodlines.[39]

Thus one of the most well known markers for Spanish Christian identity formation, seemingly solid evidence of the growth of a racist mentality within that group, comes under suspicion. Debated and contested from the first implementation, the statutes cannot be taken as proof of the solidification of Spanish Christian society. Rather, the statutes are an important case study and exemplar of the level of dissent within Spanish Christianity. This dissent is the result, I believe, of the disintegration of standard religious demarcations which previously defined all Spaniards. Unease over this disintegration engendered various strategies by which Spaniards attempted to negotiate not only their own identity, but that of their communities. *Limpieza de sangre* was one such strategy, others were equally as ideologically important as, and ideologically linked to, *limpieza de sangre*.

Genealogical Mentalities

As we have seen, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, *limpieza* was almost undifferentiated from an elitist mentality. Medieval Spain did not have a feudal society such as we see in other regions of Europe. This was in part due to the nature of agrarian culture in the Iberian peninsula; although there were farms, notably

---

[38] Ibid.: 368.
[39] For a detailed overview of the *letrado* system, see Richard Kagan, *Students and Society in Early Modern Spain*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974, especially ch. 5-6.

in Andalucía and Galicia, the most important agricultural product on the peninsula was sheep. Flocks and shepherds roamed the *meseta* – the arid plateau in the centre of Castile – in migratory fashion, travelling anywhere between 300 to 800 kilometres over the year.[40] Such workers were therefore not tied to the land the way peasants in rural France or England were. The fertile areas of Andalucía, where olives and orchards grew in abundance, were under Muslim control for much of the medieval period, and again, this precludes a feudal culture. As these lands came under Christian control, from the thirteenth century on, they were regarded as a frontier region, and still quite unstable. Battles and skirmishes were common, and although some peasants attempted a life of agriculture, from time to time they experienced the necessity of speedy removal from their property. Such volatility entailed a fluidity to the society which developed as people who were more mobile than their counterparts in other regions of Europe.

In addition to physical mobility, social mobility was much more common as well. As the Christian kings pushed southward during the reconquest, land and titles became common rewards for successful battles. Such rewards were not solely meted out for winning battles against the Muslims; the fourteenth century saw Castile pitted against Aragon, and then against itself in a vicious civil war. Only a fifth of the noble families (the *ricos hombres*) survived the civil wars; thus a plethora of titles were available.[41] After Enrique II killed his brother Pedro in 1369, he bestowed titles and privileges upon his supporters, in an effort to stabilize his crown. (The Mendoza

---

[40] Jaime Vicens Vives, *An Economic History of Spain*, trans. F. M. López-Morillas (Princeton: Princeton University, 1969), 252-55.
[41] Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms*, 54.

family, for example, which originated from humble origins in Alava and became the most powerful family in the realm by the end of the fifteenth century, were ennobled by Enrique).[42] In such a socially mobile society, it becomes increasingly clear why religion was the predominant method of identification. However, that too changed abruptly, and it is in this "violent destabilization" of religious categories we locate the increasing primacy of genealogy.[43]

David Nirenberg sees genealogy as the result of a new strategy of categorizing religious identity, what he calls a "dialogic" process of "rereading . . . traditions."[44] Thus, the issue of whether or not *limpieza* statutes had their roots in Jewish or Christian tradition is now rendered moot. It is certainly the case that both Judaism and Christianity emphasized lineage prior to this point; Jews in medieval Spain used lineage to assert authority amongst various rabbinic dynasties. For Spanish Christians, origins were also important, for differing reasons. In Aragon, for example, the nobility were exempt from taxation, and therefore proving that one's ancestors were noble became a financially beneficial task. In Castile the situation was slightly different, although nobles were exempt from taxes there, too. As noted previously, the civil wars of the fourteenth century created an entirely new circle of noble families which had to "establish [their] bona fides."[45] Thus, if we step aside from the issue of religion for a moment, we see genealogical mentalities being evoked, quite naturally, in a bid for credible respectability.

---

[42] Ibid., 55.
[43] Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion," 6.
[44] Ibid, 7
[45] Ibid 8.

Helen Nader has summarized the evolution of late medieval Spanish historiography, especially how that pertained to issues of legitimacy for Enrique II. She maintains that since Enrique II realized the greatest threat to his throne came from within his own royal family (he himself a prime example), he counterbalanced this threat by bestowing political power on two other groups: the *caballeros* (knights) and the *letrados* (the civil servants). These two groups, while working together to provide a buffer between Enrique and his tempestuous relatives, nevertheless had very differing political views. The *caballeros* saw themselves as partners with the monarchy in governing the realm, the *letrados* held to the belief that the king was divinely ordained and the pinnacle of an "immutable hierarchy" of bureaucratic institutions.[46] It was the *letrado* view, rooted in medieval scholastic ideas, which came to influence early modern Spanish historiography, especially by the time of Fernando and Isabel. This view, first developed by Pablo de Santa María and his son, Alfonso de Cartagena, introduced a new political and theological approach to Spanish history. Rather than looking to the Roman Empire and classical history for the origins of Spanish Christian society, the *letrados* focused instead on the Gothic period. Despite this innovation, the *letrado* idea of history still clung to the "medieval epistemology of origins" wherein "truth and value are fixed – grounded – at their sources."[47] The Goths were not a new historical source; in the wake of the Muslim

---

[46] Nader, *The Mendoza Family*, 20.

[47] R. Howard Bloch, "Genealogy as a Medieval Mental Structure and Textual Form," in *La litterature historiographique des origines a 1500*, ed. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Ursula Link-Heer, and Peter-Michael Spangenberg (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1986), 136. See also Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). especially chapter 6, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography" which explains how twelfth

invasion in the eighth century Asturian chroniclers had insisted on a line of continuity between their monarchs and the vanquished Goths. Over the course of the reconquest this historiographical viewpoint seeped into Castilian histories, as the Asturian kingdom evolved into the kingdom of León which melded with Castile in the early thirteenth century.[48]

In the fifteenth century, as Castile came to dominate the peninsula, the "Gothic thesis" was used to solidify the Trastámaran position on the throne. The Goths were touted as most Christian leaders and thus the reconquest was not the establishment of any new polity, but a restoration – a reestablishment of Christian governance in lands which were essentially and historically Christian. Here we begin to see the appellation "Catholic" applied to monarchs: Pablo de Santa María describes Enrique III as *tan católico* (so very Catholic); Alfonso de Cartagena writes that unlike other European kings, who fought against other Christians, Spanish monarchs waged divine war against the heathen Muslims.[49] Such a view was bolstered by Spanish victories against the Muslims, peaking during the reign of Fernando and Isabel, who were given the formal titles of *los Reyes Católicos* in 1496 by Pope Alexander VI.

Honour

Thus far we have seen how the concept of being a Christian became linked to notions of nobility and conflated with an appeal to genealogical longevity. In the mid-

---

century French nobility applied genealogical methods to exalt their families and legitimize power.

[48] For a concise overview of the evolution and development of the "Gothic thesis" in Spanish historiography, see Andrew Devereux, "Royal Genealogy and the Gothic Thesis in Medieval Iberian Historiography," *Foundations* 2, no. 1 (2006).

sixteenth century this concept evolved slightly. In an effort to bolster a weakened treasury, Philip II agreed to sell offices and noble titles, which allowed the newly rich to be ennobled. The majority of these newly rich were of *converso* origin, who also made use of *linajudos*, forgers who traded in false genealogies and certificates of *limpieza*.[50] Obviously, status and nobility were for sale, which also speaks to the economic factors behind statutes of *limpieza*.

This social mobility created tensions and anger within all strata of society. The elite were not pleased because these sales "flooded the market" and rendered their own positions less distinguished. The commoners were jealous of the wealth of the *conversos*, and it is here where we find the most virulent proponents of *limpieza*, Juan Martínez Siliceo being a prime example.[51] Although noble lineage was supposed to be determined by purity of both blood and faith, the reality of nobility was obviously much more tenuous. Wealth was now able overcame purity, or, to put it another way, wealth could augment honour.[52]

The concept of honour is not one unique to Spain, and yet it is something for which Spaniards of the empire were known. Indeed, the men of Spain were thought to prize their honour above all else: Francesco Guicciardini claimed that Spaniards "value honor so greatly that most will choose death rather than tarnish it." A French

---

[49] Ibid.: 21.
[50] Bartolomé Bennassar, *The Spanish Character: Attitudes and Mentalities from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Benjamin Keen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 228. For a detailed examination of *linajudos* see Ruth Pike, *Linajudos and Conversos in Seville: Greed and Prejudice in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Spain*, New York: Peter Lang, 2000.
[51] Jaime Contreras, "Aldermen and Judaizers: Cryptojudaism, Counter-Reformation, and Local Power," in *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, ed. Anne J. Cruz and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1992), 95-95.

chronicler of the Italian wars concurred: "these crazy Spaniards have more regard for a bit of honor than for a thousand lives."[53] Certainly the Spanish prized honour; however, this is not to say that there was any sort of obsession with honour – we must consider the source of these claims. As Spain became enmeshed in European politics under Charles V, and indeed, increasingly identified with the Catholic church during the Wars of Religion in Flanders, a deep sense of Spanish honour developed. In 1588, during the war with England, the Jesuit Ribadeneira asked "If the honour of Spain is at stake, what Spaniard would fail to seek the fame and glory of his nation?"[54] This "national" sense of honour is linked to an individual sense of honour; as Spaniards regarded each individual as the "depository and guardian of values essential to collective life."[55] I would extend these values to include collective *identity* as well.

The *Siete Partidas*, a law code written by Alfonso X in the thirteenth century had connected honour with social position by claiming that public insults were able to dishonour a person and should be taken most seriously.[56] Thus honour, for Spaniards, was rooted in how they were viewed by the community. Spaniards were thus very aware that no one "is entirely master of his honor, and the theatre of the golden age, like the code of the *Partidas* four centuries earlier, never ceases to recall that it is in the power of others to tarnish it."[57] Two examples outlined by Bartolomé Bennassar

---

[52] Ibid., 97-98. See also Bennassar, *The Spanish Character*, 219.
[53] Both are quoted in Bennassar, *The Spanish Character*, 214. It should be remembered that these writers were of a favourable opinion of Spain, and regarded their regard for honour as an unhealthy obsession.
[54] Quoted in M. J. Rodríguez-Salgado, "Christians, Civilised and Spanish: Multiple Identities in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 238.
[55] Bennassar, *The Spanish Character*, 217.
[56] Ibid., 213.
[57] Marcellin Defourneaux Ibid., 215.

will provide context as to how this might be accomplished in early modern Spanish society.

An assault on honour could be rooted in vengeance. In 1607, Francisco de Aguayo, a *caballero*, attempted to seduce a fifteen-year-old girl from a common family. When he failed to win the girl with the merit of his personal charms, he proposed to purchase her favours from her mother, who also refused him. Thoroughly unhappy, Aguayo went to the father of the girl and told him that his wife and daughter were whores. Because the man was a *caballero*, and of a higher social position than the family, the father believed him and his family was subsequently ruined.[58] Here, then, we see how someone who was perceived by a community as honourable was able to manipulate that perception to his own ends.

Defamation did not only result from lies said with an air of authority, but also from whispers and rumours. In 1632 a case came before the Inquisition at Teruel, in which Gaspar Bueno y Martín and his uncle, Antonio Martín y Adrain, were accused of not being *limpios*. The two gentlemen, who were "old Christians", protested and the witnesses who made the claim, Baltasar Hernández and his sister Esperanza, were brought before the Inquisition. Their accusations were proven false and the two were subsequently punished.[59]

In another interesting example, we see that race did not trump honour. Fray Pedro de León, the chronicler of executions in Seville between 1578 and 1616 writes of the case of a black man who was "courageous and honest" and who "enjoyed the

---

[58] Ibid., 216.

reputation of being an *hombre honrado* (honourable man)."[60] (The man came to the notice of León as he was killed in a duel and his murderer subsequently executed.) These examples provide us with information as to how honour was conceived of and practiced in early modern Spain. It was certainly an integral part of Spanish society, and allowed people to position themselves within the shifting social atmosphere. Threats to honour were taken very seriously, and had the potential to ruin one's position in society.

We see, then, how both a socially mobile society and the practise of using genealogy and notions of honour to bolster claims of status were part of the ideological framework within which the *limpieza* statutes originated. It also becomes clear where the ideology of an unmarred, essentialist form of "Spanishness" originates. The appeal to origins, such a common strategy in the medieval world, allows the myth of the Gothic thesis to take root within Spanish historiography. It is from this root whence Claudio Sánchez Albornoz derived his own ideology concerning Spanish history, an ideology vehemently opposed to Américo Castro's theory of *convivencia*.

Rather than an obsession with race, then, there is an obsession with origins, with social status and with identity. This combination allowed for the extremely useful tool of *limpieza* to be used in an attempt to reorder society. As religious distinctions were so familiar in Spain, it would have been nonsensical to create a new

---

[59] Ibid., 261-62. Unfortunately we do not discover the reasons for the accusations, whether they were rooted in vengeance or personal dislike. Bennassar provides us only with the documents of the case, in the appendix.

system. The evidence displaying the controversy and inconsistency of the statutes is, however, irrefutable, and it becomes obvious that this strategy of social reorganization ultimately failed. Intermixed with the *conversos* were the heretics, and the ideology of the Inquisition soon came to dominate Spanish society. Outside of Spain's borders the Reformation was transforming the religious landscape, and as part of the Hapsburg empire, Spain was pulled into the Wars of Religion in the north. The Americas were also marked by the mindset of the Spanish Church, a land filled with heathens in need of conversion and salvation.

These factors all play a role in the formation of Christian identity in Spain. The Spanish church increasingly attempted to position itself in defence of the Catholic Church and as an ardent supporter of the Counter-Reformation. A certain nostalgia for the reign of Fernando and Isabel, the apogee of triumphal Christianity, permeated historical writings.[61] The watershed events of their reign portended an era of Christian (Catholic) supremacy: the conquest of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews and the discovery of the New World, all in 1492, indicated the favour of God upon Spain. But now, in the sixteenth century, an increasingly beleaguered Spanish church might have wondered where that favour had gone.

---

[60] Ibid., 221.
[61] For examples, see below, Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Looking Back and Looking Forward: Nostalgia and Reform

Los reyes católicos – Purity and Prophecy

The term "Golden Age" is used frequently today to refer to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain.[1] This period saw the height of Spain's empire, with holdings in far-flung parts of the world as well as control over much of Europe. However, it is precisely during this period that Spaniards found themselves longing for the past, recalling the reign of Fernando and Isabel as a "Golden Age."[2] What was it that was longed for, precisely? The Castilian historian Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo described their reign as "a golden time and a time of justice."[3] Martín González de Cellórigio wrote in his *Memorial,* published in 1600, that Fernando and Isabel "raised Spain to the highest state of happiness and greatness it had ever known."[4] But where, specifically, was this justice, happiness and greatness located? Since the ascension of Charles V to the throne brought Spain into the Hapsburg empire, the nation found itself necessarily much more involved in European affairs and strife than previously. The Americas, too, focused Spain's attention outward, whereas under Fernando and Isabel, Spain was able to look inward. Furthermore, during their reign there was an

---

[1] The term is more commonly applied to literary studies of the period, but see, for example, Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *The Golden Age of Spain, 1516-1659*, New York: Basic Books, 1971.
[2] Barton, "National Question in Spain," 108.
[3] Quoted in Henry Kamen, "The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?," *Past and Present* 81 (1978): 27-28.
[4] Ibid.: 28, n. 14.

increasing promise of political and religious unity, a promise which was never fulfilled under the Hapsburgs.[5]

The marriage of Isabel and Fernando linked the two largest kingdoms on the Iberian peninsula, Castile and Aragon, and some historians have insisted upon looking to this period as the birth of the Spanish nation-state.[6] This is a prescient assertion to make, as neither Isabel nor Fernando married with the express idea of uniting the peninsula, and certainly the crowns of Castile and Aragon remained separate and distinct throughout their reign. The promise lay with their son, Juan, to be the unifier of the kingdoms; his death in 1497 was a severe blow to those hopes.

Part of what would become the myth of Isabel and Fernando began even while they sat the throne. Because Isabel had gained her crown after a turbulent civil war in which she wrested the crown from her niece, Juana la Beltraneja, her chroniclers were at pains to portray her as not only the rightful heir to the throne, but also the most suited to occupy it.[7] She had a useful foil in her brother, Enrique IV, who was not the strongest of leaders. His faults were magnified by Isabel's chroniclers, and the real Enrique "disappeared under exaggeration, innuendo and a few outright lies"[8]

---

[5] Ibid. Henry Kamen claims that Spaniards felt themselves in an era of decline, or certainly an era of "unrealized hopes" during the time of Charles V and Philip II, rather than during the later Hapsburg monarchs, as most historians are wont to do. See 27.

[6] Barton, "National Question in Spain," 107. See also José Álvarez Junco, "The Formation of Spanish Identity and its Adaptation to the Age of Nations," *History and Memory* 14, no. 1/2 (2002): 13-14.

[7] For an overview of the war and Isabel's efforts to gain the crown, see Peggy K. Liss, *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times*, Revised ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), chapter 4.

[8] ———, "Isabel, Myth and History," in *Isabel la Católica, Queen of Castile: Critical Essays*, ed. David A. Boruchoff (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 60.

Enrique's reputation had suffered even during his own reign, and rumours of his homosexuality and impotence were rife. These rumours enabled Isabel to make her bid for the throne, claiming that Juana la Beltraneja was not Enrique's daughter. There was more: Enrique's own chronicler, Palencia, painted a portrait of a king mired in the "fetidness of corruption," an anti-king, implicitly paralleled to Antichrist.[9] Isabel thus came to the throne with eschatological rhetoric clinging to her (and by extension, Fernando's) persona as monarch.

Isabel knowingly made use of this apocalyptic imagery: John the Evangelist was her patron saint, the book of the Apocalypse her text, a statue of St Michael battling the dragon was commissioned by Isabel to adorn the tomb of her younger brother, Alfonso.[10] This motif was enhanced at the birth of Prince Juan. Isabel's chronicler Hernando de Pulgar notes:

> Look at the Gospel that is preached on the day of St. John; it is something so fitting that it does not seem but that one birth is the mold of the other; the other Isabel, this Isabel of ours. The other John in those times and this one in these days.[11]

The comparisons with John the Baptist, known as Jesus' cousin, were conflated with John the Evangelist, and therefore the poet Gómez Manrique has the prince claim "I am Juan, that *privado* of my Lord and cousin" in one of his poems.[12] Not only was

---

[9] Alonso Fernández de Palencia, *Crónica de Enrique IV*, ed. Antonio Paz y Meliá (3 v., Madrid, 1973-1975), dec. 1, lib. 1, cap. 2, quoted in Liss, *Isabel the Queen*, 28.
[10]. ———, "Isabel, Myth and History," 61-62.
[11] Hernando de Pulgar, *Letras* ed. J. Domínguez Bordona (Madrid, 1929), letra 9, quoted in ——, *Isabel the Queen*, 169. Isabel is the Spanish form of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.
[12] *Cancionero castellano del siglo XV*, ed. R. Foulché-Delbosc (2 v., Madrid, 1915) quoted in Ibid.

Juan to be the political unifier of Spain, but also the religious unifier: Pulgar claims he was born to be the terror of those of the mountains, echoing the Gospel of Luke's claims regarding John the Evangelist, and also alluding to the mountainous region of Granada. Peggy Liss also sees this as a reference to Ezekiel 7.17: "they that shall at all escape shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, every one in his iniquity." She believes Pulgar is suggesting that Juan will defeat both the Muslims of Granada *and* the unfaithful within the Christian kingdoms.[13]

All the promise that lay with Juan reflected on Isabel as well. Diego de Valera wrote to her:

> It can in truth be said that just as our Lord wished that our glorious Lady might be born in this world because from her would proceed the Universal Redeemer of the human line, so he determined that you, My Lady, would be born to reform and restore these kingdoms and lead them out from the tyrannical government under which they have been for so long.[14]

The religious imagery went further: Liss goes on to claim that Isabel was

> hailed by contemporaries as Mary's earthly counterpart and a spiritual virginity was claimed for her, a moral purity, a *limpieza* that was the sine qua non of divine election. Moreover, as royal head of the body politic, tradition obligated her to extend that *limpieza*, to cleanse that body, her realm, of the stain – the defilement, infection, and impurity – associated not only with original sin but, and repeatedly in Castile in the recent past, with heaven's displeasure.[15]

Liss' commentary is telling, her word choice significant. *Limpieza* signifies a moral cleanliness and has nothing to do with race or blood. I am aware that no contemporary chronicler used the term *limpio* to describe Isabel, but they certainly ascribed a moral purity to her and saw her as one who would rid the kingdom of impurities. It is

---

[13] Pulgar, *Letras*, letra 9, quoted in Ibid., 434, n.18.
[14] Valera "Epistolas" epis. 13, quoted in Ibid., 171.

important to note that in this instance, those impurities were located in the past, as part of Enrique's morally suspect court.

This is not to say that the notion of purity with regard to blood and faith were absent from the Spanish Catholic world view at this time. We have already seen how the *limpieza* statutes were at play by this point within Spanish society. Marc Shell makes the claim that "the myth of the Pure Blood (*sangre pura*) unmixed with Muslim or Jewish blood took hold. . . . Fernando and Isabella benefited, perhaps, as they unified Spain as a nation of one blood."[16] While the unification of Spain is still more a perception of historians rather than any active political plan on the part of Fernando and Isabel, this notion of one blood is pertinent to the period of their reign. We have already seen the appeal of their chroniclers to the Gothic thesis; Joan Margarit, bishop of Gerona claimed the two were "restoring the lost Spanish unity of the Goths."[17] By accessing the Gothic thesis, and asserting their place in an unbroken line of Christian Kings, Fernando and Isabel played into this concept of restoration as part of a divine plan.

Isabel, then, as the personification of purity, ensured God's blessing. For his part, Fernando was poised to take on the role of a redeemer-king. It was hoped that he would be the one not only to conquer the Muslims, but also to retake Jerusalem; the conquest of Granada certainly seemed to point to his fulfillment of this popular

---

[15] Ibid., 173.
[16] Marc Shell, "Marranos (Pigs), or from Coexistence to Toleration," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (1991): 311.
[17] Liss, *Isabel the Queen*, 170.

Spanish prophecy.[18] Isabel and Fernando conflated the prevailing notions of apocalyptic with the ideology of holy war and couched the renewal of the war against Granada in terms of the fulfillment of a divine decree. This "political theology" extended to lend support to other royal policies: it later justified the Inquisition and the expulsion of the Jews.[19]

The success of the war against Granada also indicated divine favour resting on Isabel and Fernando, and by extension, on Spain. Combined with the appeal to an exclusive and continuous Christian historical past, we see what became the "master-fiction" of the monarchs' politics.[20] This master-fiction had major historic consequences for their grandson and great-grandson, who were inspired to emulate their ancestors as defenders of the faith in their turn. Their failures, especially the drawn-out war against the Protestant heretics in Flanders, were contrasted with the success of Isabel and Fernando, and it seemed as though Spain now laboured under "the burden of unrealized hopes . . . lost opportunity . . . frustrated potential."[21] These setbacks also seemed to prove that Spain was no longer blessed with divine favour, ostensibly due to the lack of a sincere and pure faith amongst its peoples. Thus, the crown believed in a continuing need for the Inquisition and stricter policies regarding reform and adherence to orthodoxy in the Church. Here we also see a Spanish identity

---

[18] Sara T. Nalle, "The Millennial Moment: Revolution and Radical Religion in Sixteenth Century Spain," in *Towards the Millenium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Mark R. Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 152. See also Liss, *Isabel the Queen*, 74-75.
[19] Liss, "Isabel, Myth and History," 64.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Kamen, "The Decline of Spain," 27.

rooted in terms of "service to God and king against the enemies of the church."[22] This crusading mentality, borne of the centuries of conflict with Islam, transferred easily towards the Protestants of the north, and any suspicion of heterodoxy within their own borders.

The Black Legend

The conflict between Spain and the Protestants in the Netherlands and England helped to create the myth of a Spanish character borne of pride, intolerance, racism and a rigidly orthodox Catholicism. The historical roots of this myth lay in something called the Black Legend, perceptions of Spain (primarily) from outside its borders.[23] A great deal of the myth's conception is owed to fortuitous circumstance; as discussed above, the throne of Spain came to Charles V due to his uncle's death and the lack of male children in his mother's family. The King of Spain was thus also the ruler of the Habsburg empire. Together with the newly discovered territories in the Americas, Spain now controlled much of the known world. J. N. Hillgarth compares European perceptions of Spain at this time to anti-British sentiment in the nineteenth century and anti-American sentiment in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, calling it the

---

[22] Rodríguez-Salgado, "Christians, Civilised and Spanish," 243.
[23] Much has been written about the Black Legend, classic works include Charles Gibson, *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (New York: Knopf, 1971); William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1971).; Sverker Arnoldsson, *La leyenda negra: estudios sobre sus orígenes* (Göteborg: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1960); Julián Juderías, *La leyenda negra; estudios acerca del concepto de España en el extranjero* 16th ed. (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1974)

"hatred and jealousy any superpower inevitably attracts."[24] This is certainly part of the basis for the Black Legend, but religion also played a very strong role.

It is important to note here that one tremendously important work which contributed to the creation of the Black Legend was written by a Spaniard. Bartolomé de las Casas published a book entitled *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* in 1552, a vivid and vitriolic description of Spanish actions in the Americas. Las Casas wrote the book for Philip II, and his goal was to mitigate the violence enacted against the indigenous populations in the Americas, proposing instead to win their loyalty through conversion and treating them as equal subjects of the crown. His book, written for a Spanish audience, was part of a fierce internal debate over the rights of indigenous Americans, stemming from the belief that conquest was only justified if the end result was the Christianization of the indigenous people. In England or France, this religious aspect was not an issue; force was considered "sufficient title" for conquest.[25]

Hillgarth notes that Las Casas certainly did not consider the Spaniards crueller than any other Europeans, but as his work was part of a larger debate, what he wrote was very much a polemic. Non-Spaniards read this work outside of that context, and co-opted it as part of their own anti-Spanish campaigns, particularly the Dutch.[26] Versions of Las Casas' text were first published in Latin in 1598; later editions were published in Dutch, German, French and English. In 1620 an edition by Jan

---

[24] J. N. Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain, 1500-1700: The Formation of a Myth* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000), viii.
[25] Ibid., 317.

Everhardts Cloppenburch was published in Amsterdam and included horrific illustrations of "Indians being grilled alive and of children being thrown to the dogs."[27] Cloppenburch added a preface which claimed the Spanish would, if possible, treat the Dutch in similar fashion, since they, in their Lutheran heresy, were deemed as pagan as the Indians.[28]

Of course this propaganda is rooted in the conflict of the time: the Dutch revolt against Spain (*circa* 1568-1648). Historians differ as to how much emphasis to place on politics or religion when it comes to explaining the revolt; certainly the two seem intertwined in providing an explanation for the impetus behind the revolt.[29] As an indication of the importance of religion to this conflict, we must remember that it was the massive Calvinist iconoclastic movement in 1567 which prompted Philip II to send in the Duke of Alba with his troops.[30] The Dutch rallied around William of Orange, and the Netherlands "became the focal point for all the political and religious struggles

---

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 323. Reprints of these pictures are found in Hillgarth's text, 319-322.
[28] Jan Everhards Cloppenburch, *The Mirror of Spanish Tyranny in the West Indies*, (Amsterdam, 1620), fol. 6, quoted in Ibid.
[29] J. N. Hillgarth maintains that there was a complex mix of both religion and politics; that not only did the revolt needed the impetus of Calvinist preaching, but also that those preachers would not have found a favourable audience if not for the social and economic discontent of the period. Ibid., 310. Henry Kamen, on the other hand, sees the revolt as primarily political in origin. Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 113, 233. For an overview of the conflict, see Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555-1609*, 2nd ed. (London: Ernest Benn, 1962), or Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, Revised ed. (London: Penguin, 1985).
[30] Kamen, *Philip of Spain*, 116.

of western Europe – the only place where, as yet, France and England dared to challenge the hegemony of Spain."[31]

The conflict became increasingly couched in religious terms, primarily, Hillgarth suggests, because a revolt against a legitimate monarch "did not enjoy the prestige it has acquired since 1789."[32] Spain, with its lack of Protestants, was increasingly identified with a corrupt Catholic church, the clergy of which were seen as conspiring to gain political control. A work published in Heidelberg in 1567 accused Philip of wanting to introduce the Spanish inquisition into the Netherlands, to deal with the Lutherans and Calvinists. [33] Another source of Dutch propaganda came from Philip Marnix of Sainte-Aldegonde, who compared the Spaniards to Turks, claiming both to be anti-Christian, and that Spain's ambition was boundless, its fires spreading throughout Europe, all of which would be "swallowed up in this monsterous gulf of Spanish ambition."[34] William of Orange's *Apologie* added to the attacks on Spain: the Spaniards were "an accursed race . . . cruel, avaricious, proud, . . . [who saw] the rest of the world as bestial in comparison to themselves."[35]

Obviously the propaganda created by the Dutch is similar to propaganda seen in any conflict, where dire accusations against one's enemy serve to justify violence. Yet the Black Legend was not limited to Dutch perceptions of Spain; this type of

---

[31] Helmut Georg Koenigsberger, *The Habsburgs and Europe, 1516-1660* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 146.
[32] Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain*, 312.
[33] Ibid., 312-13.
[34] Philippe de Marnix de Sainte Aldegonde, *Écrits politiques et historiques*, ed. A Lacroix, (Brussels, 1859), 21, quoted in Ibid., 314.

propaganda permeated Europe throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In some cases, it was directed against the character of the Spaniards, as seen in William of Orange's *Apologie*. In the case of England, however, religion was far more pertinent to the anti-Spanish sentiment than elsewhere.

The fluctuating religious situation in England caused great upheaval and instability from the time of the schism during Henry VIII's reign until well after Elizabeth was on the throne and Protestantism had been established as the official religion. During Mary's reign, Protestants could not oppose her policies on religious grounds, therefore, they turned to her marriage to Philip II as a site for dissent. Some feared that a child would mean that England would be brought into the Spanish empire.[36] Anti-Spanish sentiment was thus engendered during Mary's reign. Upon Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, that sentiment became increasingly conflated with anti-Catholicism.

To English eyes, Spanish Catholicism was either "mere hypocrisy . . [or] a positive encouragement to vice."[37] Walter Raleigh claimed that he would need an entire volume to "set down how irreligiously they cover their greedy and ambitious pretences with that veil of piety."[38] James Wadsworth called the Spaniards "little

---

[35] William of Orange, *Apologie*, ed. A Lacroix, (Brussels, 1858), 81-82, 104, quoted in Ibid., 316.
[36] D.M. Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government and Religion in England, 1553-1558* (London: E. Benn, 1979), 219.
[37] Maltby, *The Black Legend in England*, 30.
[38] Walter Raleigh, in Robert Kerr, A general history and collection of voyages and travels, arranged in systematic order: forming a complete history of the origin and progress of navigation, discovery and commerce, by sea and land, from the earliest ages to the present time, (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1824), 413.

better than Atheists, only making use of the Pope for their own particular ambitions and ends . . . and under colour of Religion to make Subjects become Slaves."[39] While such rhetoric and the conception of Catholicism in general as a façade was neither new nor limited to Spaniards, contemporary accounts of the Inquisition in Spain became much conflated with perceptions of Spanish Catholicism. Part of this perception stemmed from the experience of English sailors in Spain; for example, the trial and execution of two English sailors, William Brook and Nicholas Burton, in Seville in1560.[40] Thus the English perception of *Spanish* Catholicism became particularly odious.

Even more influential was John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, or the *Book of Martyrs*. Foxe was in exile during Mary's reign, and it was at this time that he began writing his book, working under the influence of Edmund Grindal and John Bale.[41] Foxe's work is more than a polemic against Spain; he positions the Marian martyrs as participants in the Augustinian perception of the conflict between good and evil.[42] The Catholic Church, and by extension, Spain, are obviously on the side of evil. Foxe denounces the "execrable Inquisition of Spayne," noting in particular the execution of Lutherans at Valladolid in 1559. Philip II and his Spanish Dominicans are cast as villains "ragyng and foaming" at the execution of Thomas Cranmer.[43]

---

[39] James Wadsworth, The English-Spanish Pilgrime, or, a New Discoverie of Spanish Popery and Iesuitical Stratagems, (London, 1630), 81.
[40] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 96.
[41] Maltby, *The Black Legend in England*, 33, Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain*, 359.
[42] Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain*, 359.
[43] John Foxe, *The Acts and Monuments* , ed. J. Pratt, 8 vols. (London, 1877), book 7: 458, book 8: 89, quoted in Ibid., 360.

What made Foxe so influential was the wide distribution of his book throughout Protestant England; by the turn of the sixteenth century, the book was second only to the Bible in popularity.[44] In addition, the woodcuts which accompanied the text would have left an indelible impression upon readers. Although Spain and the Protestants executed by the Spanish Inquisition take up but a small section of the text, the reader, Hillgarth tells us, is "left with a deeply negative picture of Spain and the Spaniards."[45] This negative view only solidified during Elizabeth's reign. English Catholics were viewed with suspicion, and Spain as a possible source of assistance was deemed a significant threat. Elizabeth's foremost councillor, William Cecil, warned that both Spain and Philip II were to be considered enemies: "Spain, yea, Spain it is in which all causes do concur to give a just alarm . . . first, in religion he [Philip II] is so much the pope's and the pope in policy so much his."[46] Here we begin to see the conflation of Spain with Catholicism which permeated foreign perspectives of Spain for so long. Certainly Spain's adherence to Catholicism during and after the Reformation added to this view.

Spanish Catholics were therefore hypocrites, hiding their ambitions behind the veneer of piety and Catholic ritual; bloodthirsty fanatics, who longed to see the Inquisition set up in the Netherlands to take care of the Protestant heretics; and were in league with the Pope in a bid to wipe out Protestantism and restore the Catholic

---

[44] According to Maltby, nine editions alone were published between 1563 and 1641. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England*, 33, 143, n. 13.
[45] Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain*, 361.
[46] "The Lord Treasurer Burleigh's Advice to Queen Elizabeth in Matters of Religion," quoted in Ibid., 366.

Church to its former dominant position in Europe. This was the perception of Spain from the outside. However, the Church in sixteenth-century Spain was in fact dealing with serious issues of reform.

Catholicism in Early Modern Spain

When first established, as noted previously, the Inquisition was primarily concerned with *conversos* and issues regarding Judaizing. However, during the sixteenth century, it became increasingly clear that heterodoxy was rife throughout the peninsula, even amongst the "old Christian" population. Throughout the sixteenth century we see glimpses of a Spain that, far from being "profoundly Christian," simply operated under the veneer of Christianity.[47] The majority of unorthodoxies stemmed from a lack of knowledge, which pertained to doctrine as well as ritual. Many of the parishes in Spain were either vacant or had to share clergy with other parishes, and suffered from a lack of priestly attention. In addition, many of the clergy themselves were inadequately educated and thus of little use. Inquisitors found case after case of laxity and ignorance.[48] In Vizcaya in 1539 we hear of "men aged ninety years who did not know the Hail Mary or how to make the sign of the cross;" in Bilbao in 1547 an inquisitor was told that "one in twelve of the souls there never go to confession;" another inquisitor found that in Aragon in 1549 many villages "have never had sight

---

[47] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 256. Jean Pierre Dedieu makes the claim: "Ces espagnols sont profondément chrétiens." *L'administration de la foi. L'Inquisition de Tolède (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)*, (Madrid, 1989).

[48] For a case study of the issues of education and clergy absenteeism see Sarah Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, especially Chapter 1.

of nor contact with the Church."[49] Obviously the Spanish Church was in desperate need of reform and education.

By this time the Spanish Church had achieved a strong measure of independence from Rome. Isabel and Fernando had set the standard when they demanded (and received) the right to veto any appointment made by the Pope. By 1523 this privilege had evolved and Pope Clement VII had bestowed on Charles V the authority to nominate all prelates in Castile and Aragon. In addition, two earlier papal bulls had granted the crown control over all ecclesiastical finance and appointments in the Americas, subordinated the American Church to the King and the Council of the Indies, rather than the Spanish bishops.[50] The crown thus became essential to the reform movement in Spain.

As early as 1480 the Synod of Alcalá had expressed concern over the religious education of the laity. In addition, Francis Ximénez de Cisneros, then bishop of Sigüenza, embarked on a mission of reform in the last decade of the fifteenth century. Priests were instructed to teach the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, the *Credo* and the *Salve* as well as the Ten Commandments and the General Confession.[51] By the opening decades of the sixteenth century, various religious orders were becoming

---

[49] All examples quoted in Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 256.
[50] Henry Kamen, *Spain 1469-1714: A Society in Conflict* (London: Longman, 1983), 177-78. This situation in part led to the development of the *letrado* historical viewpoint, positioning the king at the pinnacle of a divinely ordained hierarchy, as discussed in Chapter 2.
[51] Jean Pierre Dedieu, ""Christianization" in New Castile: Catechism, Communion, Mass, and Confirmation in the Toledo Archbishopric, 1540-1650," in *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, ed. Anne J. Cruz and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1992), 3.

aware of the need for change and therefore instigating a campaign to reform religious belief and practice.

One major concern for reformers was the adherence to superstitious beliefs and practices by the laity, and without educated priests, such beliefs and practices would continue. The Sevillian Church council of 1512 noted that "many of our subjects arrive at the age of discretion without knowing the prayers laid down by the Church, through the neglect and carelessness of the parish priests."[52] Since the ability to recite the aforementioned prayers and the Confession were used by the Inquisitions as tests of Christian faith, it became paramount that the laity know these prayers, and a reiteration of Cisneros' mandates was instituted.

Overseas considerations began to factor into the reform movement as well. As the religious orders embarked on their process of evangelization in the Americas, comparisons between the indigenous population and the laity in Spain were noted, and from the mid-sixteenth century onward it became common parlance to label gravely ignorant (often rural) communities as "Indies."[53] Religious education continued to be of prime concern, and thus we see publication of catechisms in Spain by the 1540s, a full century before they were published elsewhere in Europe.[54]

Reform was advocated from various positions: from the crown just as much as the Church; the Inquisition as well as various religious orders. The Dominicans worked to evangelize and educate those in the remoter areas of the peninsula while the

---

[52] Quoted in Kamen, *The Phoenix and the Flame*, 84.
[53] Ibid., 84-85.
[54] Dedieu, ""Christianization" in New Castile," 4-5.

Jesuits were heavily involved in popular missions from the 1540s onward. In addition, humanist bishops such as Cisneros and Alonso Carrillo, continued striving to improve clergy education. Nevertheless, the lack of organization and jurisdictional confusion meant that reform occurred in a piecemeal fashion.[55]

Despite these very noticeable efforts made towards education and reform, A. D. Wright maintains that "tension persisted between the ideal of a perfectly Catholic society, conceived in racial as much as in strictly religious terms, and consciousness of the unsatisfactory reality of belief and practice among the Old Christian clergy and laity."[56] Thus in 1572 we see the same complaint as earlier in the century: an inquisitor argued that the region of Galicia had "no priests or lettered persons or impressive churches or people who are used to going to mass and hearing sermons. . . . They are superstitious and the benefices so poor that as a result there are not enough clergy."[57] This is not to say that reform efforts were completely in vain. Sarah Nalle clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of educational reforms in Cuenca over the latter half of the sixteenth century.[58]

A unity of purpose concerning reform was needed; thus far, reforms had had little effect on what the Church deemed was problematic. A sense of cohesion was provided in large measure by the decrees of the last session of the Council of Trent which lasted from 1561-1563. By 1564 those decrees had already been set as laws by

---

[55] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 256-57.
[56] A. D. Wright, *Catholicism and Spanish Society Under the Reign of Philip II, 1555-1598, and Philip III, 1598-1621* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellor Press, 1991), 3.
[57] Quoted in Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 256.
[58] Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, Chapter 4.

Philip II.[59] As the problem seemed rooted in the ignorance of the clergy itself, the Tridentine reforms regarding priestly education resulted in a flurry of new seminaries.[60] Other educational reforms were imposed in training of missionaries and the establishment of schools, as well as practical reforms such as the adoption of a new mass, prayer book and calendar.[61] Yet even with this concerted effort, Spain still did not become a land of orthodox believers, for which reason the court and Inquisition became more stringent in its efforts to consolidate Catholicism. Racial categories of distinction, something which had waned over the century, were pushed to the forefront of social consideration once again. This was in part a result of the influx of Portuguese *conversos* who entered Spain after Phillip became King of Portugal in 1580, as well as the forced migration of *moriscos* from Granada in an effort to more readily assimilate them into the Christian population. However, unease about the *moriscos* is further evinced by expulsion edicts enacted by both Philip II and Philip III against them; the migrations obviously did not have the intended effect.[62]

---

[59] Kamen, *Spain 1469-1714*, 181.
[60] Helen Rawlings, *Church, Religion and Society in Early Modern Spain* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 71-72.
[61] Kamen, *Philip of Spain*, 105.
[62] David Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada: Society and Religious Culture in an Old-World Frontier City, 1492-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 7-8. *Moriscos* were first expelled from the city of Granada, in three separate occasions in June and December of 1569 and in July of 1570. By 1571 *morisco* communities had been expelled from the region of Granada and resettled in various communities of Castile. Finally, between 1609 and 1614 they were expelled from Spain completely. On the result of the forced migrations, see Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, 127-128. Cuenca is but one location; there, however, mutual distrust and unfamiliarity between "old Christians" and *moriscos* made the latter's assimilation virtually impossible.

The transformation and decline of *limpieza*

Although the monarchy seemed renewed in its commitment towards *limpieza* statutes and racial categories of distinction, Kamen notes unease amongst clergy regarding the issue. He goes so far as to call it a *crise de conscience*, when the council of the Inquisition resolved in 1580 to petition the king about eliminating the statutes.[63] Philip II began the process of setting up a committee to look into the statutes when he died in 1598.[64] In that last decade of the century, we see increasing calls for some kind of overhaul of the statutes. The main concern, outlined by Dominican Agustín Salucio was the abuse of *limpieza* proofs: false testimonies, as well as a preponderance of bribery and forgery. Salucio claimed that these "scandals and abuses . . . have provoked a secret war against the authority of the statutes."[65] Aside from weakening the authority of the statutes, given the corruption in the system, Salucio also maintained that any good they may have contributed was negated by the harm that they now produced. "It would be a great comfort," he wrote, "to the assurance of peace in the realm to restrict the statutes so that Old Christians and Moriscos and conversos should all come to form one united body, and that all should be Old Christian and in peace."[66] As long as the statutes remained in place, Spain would never be a nation united in the Catholic faith.

---

[63] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 247.
[64] ———, "A Crisis of Conscience," 9.
[65] Fray Agustín Salucio *Discurso sobre los estatutos de limpieza de sangre*, (Cieza, 1975), quoted in ———, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 248.
[66] Ibid.

Although supported by the Inquisitor General Pedro Portocarrero, Salucio's book served to polarize the Inquisition on the issue. Some called for the banning of his book: Dr Antonio Portocarrero, the *fiscal* of the Suprema, argued that it was "against all honesty for one person to condemn what so many have approved."[67] Others, like Pedro Portocarrero and his successor, Cardinal Niño de Guevara, supported Salucio's position. Although members of the Suprema sustained the decision to ban the book, Salucio had already distributed copies to the *procuradores* to the *Cortes*, with the result that a debate was held on the statutes in January, 1600. The outcome of this debate was the production of a memorial, which was presented to Philip III asking for reforms on the issue of the statutes.

This public statement is indicative of the way in which *limpieza* had evolved over the century, and how it had come to be used in ways which had nothing to do with race or even religion. "In Spain," the memorial declares, "we esteem a common person who is *limpio* more than a hidalgo who is not *limpio* [resulting in two sorts of nobility] . . . a greater, which is that of *hidalguía*; and a lesser, which is that of limpieza, whose members we call Old Christians."[68] In addition, "irrational criteria of purity" had come into play, for example, any swordsman was reputedly *limpio* and any physician, Jewish; any person who hailed from León or Asturias were supposedly "old

---

[67] Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Inquisition, leg. 2156[1], quoted in Kamen, "A Crisis of Conscience," 11.

[68] "Papel que dio el Reyno de Castilla a uno de los SRes ministros de la Junta diputada para tratarse sobre el Memorial presentado por el Reyno a S.M. con el libro del Pe Mro Salucio" Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MS. 13043, folios 116-27, quoted in ———, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 248.

Christians" while all those from Almagro were deemed *conversos*.[69] These distinctions were arbitrary and said more about the nature of society than about anyone's genuine lineage.

A third criticism discussed by the memorial was how the statutes had ensured the loss of many eminent people who might have become great jurists, theologians or other contributing members of society, but had been excluded. People without rank or learning had therefore risen to high positions, to the detriment of the nation.[70] Furthermore, those supporting reforms looked to France and Italy, noting how the lack of discrimination had allowed *conversos* to assimilate peacefully into society in those countries. The opposite was true in Spain, where soon a tiny *limpio* minority would be surrounded by a mass of people who were "affronted, discontented and ripe for rebellion."[71] Again, the statutes were deemed divisive.

Someone who would concur with the divisive nature of the statutes was Juan Roco Campofrío, another inquisitor. In 1621 he wrote a *Discourse* against the statutes, worrying that they had divided Spain in two constantly warring halves; ninety percent of the civil and criminal trials in the courts at this time were suits over the statutes.[72] As we have seen before, *limpieza* were often used as a tool of personal vengeance or attack, which was answered with an inevitable suit. The overuse of this stratagem

---

[69] Ibid. Kamen also notes that towards the end of the eighteenth century, *limpieza de sangre* implied "purity from any taint of servile office or trade," and that the term *limpieza de oficios* was used interchangeably. 253-254.
[70] Ibid., 248-49.
[71] "Papel que dio el Reyno de Castilla," quoted in Ibid., 249.
[72] "Discurso de un inquisidor sobre los estatutos de limpieza" Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MS 13043, folios 132-71, quoted in Ibid.

rendered it ineffective and discredited the statutes as much as did the forgeries and briberies.[73]

The statutes were also increasing evidence of the xenophobia of Spaniards as well. Francisco Murcia de la Llana, a censor of the Inquisition, wrote in 1624, admonishing his fellow Spaniards to: "Look in yourself and consider that no other nation has these statutes, and that Judaism has flourished most where they have existed."[74] Obviously, Judaism would not be flourishing in Spain at this time; the Jews were forcibly expelled in 1492. However, rather than stamping out difference, the statutes only served to continually place the *conversos* under scrutiny and intensified their otherness. In addition, Llana saw prejudice against other non-Spaniards:

> And in your pride, if any of your sons marries a Frenchwoman or a Genoan or an Italian, you describe his wife by saying: she is a foreigner. What ignorance! What overwhelming Spanish madness![75]

While such xenophobia might be explained by remembering Spain's very negative experiences in Flanders and its turbulent relations with England, this hostility towards other countries seems to have been part of a defensive mindset which had taken hold in Spain. I stress that the xenophobia which is criticized here is reflected outward, on other European peoples; *conversos* and *moriscos* are not mentioned. It is an unfortunate and ironic world view, as Spaniards were, due to their imperial holdings,

---

[73] Ibid., 253.
[74] "Buele en ti, y considera que ninguna nacion tiene estos estatutos, y q. adonde se echò, y a donde mas florecio el Iudaismo fue en ellos" "Discurso politico del desempeño del Reyno,"in Julio Caro Baroja, *Los Judíos en le España moderna y contemporánea*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Arion, 1961), v. 3, 318-20.

now exposed to new areas of the world to an unprecedented degree. In fact, in 1626, the *Suprema* of the Inquisition issued a document for Philip IV, hoping that his aspirations were

> that your several kingdoms should act in conformity and unity for both good and ill, joining together in friendly equality, so that Castile should act with Aragon, and both with Portugal, and all of them with Italy and the other realms, to help and aid each other as if they were one body. . . . These considerations, so in keeping with God's intentions, are in large measure frustrated if there remain such odious divisions and such bloody enmities as those which exist between those held to be *limpio*, and those held to be stained with the race of Judaism.[76]

Although there was certainly controversy and discussion regarding the statutes, they were never entirely abolished until into the nineteenth century. However, already by the late seventeenth century, Kamen tells us that the few remaining statutes were "being openly ignored" or "contravened in every walk of life."[77] Far from simply shaping Spanish society in the sixteenth century, then, they were a site of controversy and much debate.

If Spanish identity was rooted in both extreme loyalty to the monarchy and a strict adherence to the Catholic Church and all its doctrine, the sixteenth century becomes a time where that identity would have been strongly shaken.[78] Certainly this would explain the nostalgia for the reign of Fernando and Isabel, whose work to

---

[75] "y tu te precias, si alguno de tus hijos se casa con Francesa, Ginouesa, ò Italiana, que califique tu esposa con decir: Estrangera es. O ignorancia! Cuadrada locura Española!" "Discurso politico del desempeño del Reyno,"in Ibid.
[76] "El Inquisidor General y Real Consejo de la Suprema", Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Inquisition, lib. 124, folios 6-11, quoted in Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, 251.
[77] Ibid., 253.

establish a triumphal Catholicism within their realms seemed to have been wasted by their heirs. The supposed blessings brought to Spain by their Hapsburg rulers – authority over vast dominions in Europe as well as new territory in the Americas – became a burden, enmeshing Spaniards in the conflicts in Flanders and in a new "reconquest" overseas. Spain had no time to enjoy the cessation of war in their own territory, nor the ability to work to assimilate minority groups before these new responsibilities shifted their focus outside of their borders.

The Inquisition, meanwhile, had discovered an appalling religious ignorance amongst "old Christians." Suddenly the Church triumphant was the Church beleaguered; the threat from *conversos* and Protestants no where near as menacing as the realization that the Church in its entirety needed to be reformed and better educated. How could Spain be the defender of the faith if members of its own Church had no idea what that faith was?

Yet we still see historians claiming that early modern Spanish identity revolved around a "deep attachment to Roman Catholic dogma," as Junco claims.[79] He continues: "it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this religious allegiance, which almost superseded and replaced the political link (the fact of being the subjects of the same king)."[80] That deep attachment may have been the goal of some of the upper echelons of the Church hierarchy, those members of the clergy and Inquisition actively engaged in reform. It certainly was the goal of Philip II, who was quick to

---

[78] The argument for this type of identity formation is found in Junco, "Formation of Spanish Identity," 15.
[79] Ibid.: 16.

implement Tridentine reforms in his lands. Nevertheless, we see little evidence that the majority of Spaniards in the sixteenth century were even aware of what Roman Catholic dogma entailed, let alone deeply attached to it. While they undoubtedly considered themselves Christians, and believed that their behaviour and beliefs were evidence of their Christian faith, we have seen much evidence to show that many of those behaviours and beliefs deviated from Church doctrine.

Junco complements his argument: along with this appeal to Catholicism as a marker of Spanish identity, he adds "the pride of being "Old Christian," that is, of "pure" or "clean" blood."[81] However, we have also seen the transformation of the *limpieza* statutes to the point where they become more markers pertaining to class distinctions than anything to do with race or religion.

These are two intersecting points, both of which seem to exclude certain segments of Spanish society. Reform was very much of a "top-down" nature, enforced by the archbishops and bishops onto a (sometimes) recalcitrant clergy.[82] In addition, *limpieza* had now become a marker of elite status, along with notions of honour. Where, then, are popular conceptions of identity found? How or when did the majority of Spaniards participate in identity formation? Although this is an area as yet rather unstudied, some small glimpses can be caught in the sources.

---

[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Thus far, little work has been done on the issue how the reforms were received; Sarah Nalle has looked closely at the reaction of local clergy to the Tridentine reforms, and sees evidence that resistance stemmed from the ensuing change of lifestyle – *ie.* loss of income and enforced celibacy. Issues regarding doctrine, however, were never resisted. Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, 45-47.

It is true that reform of the Church was instigated by the upper echelons, however, from local studies we can see that the reception by the laity was primarily favourable. Perhaps this was due in part because the Church did not attempt to do away with local practices revolving around local saints and shrines, but rather "sanitized" such customs, bringing them under diocesan control.[83] The people of Cuenca, as previously mentioned, readily submitted to reforms concerning education and indoctrination.[84] Indeed, Nalle claims that "Catholic reform in Cuenca was an incongruous mixture of official compulsion and popular religious enthusiasm."[85] This enthusiasm was linked to notions of honour, for

> the use of inquisitorial and episcopal edicts exhorting people to confess their transgressions and denounce those of others, as well as the public humiliations, drew alternately on conquenses' feelings of guilt and personal honor. Such emotional blackmail . . . effectively produced compliance – if one's conscience did not suffice to combat sin, then the threat of losing one's honor was a powerful incentive.[86]

Thus although religious reform was instigated by the elite of the Church hierarchy, and honour was a concept primarily utilized by the nobility, this is not to say that the lower echelons were either ignorant of or completely excluded from these markers of identity. The cook of the archbishop of Burgos once complained that he could not "bear to be scolded because I am an Old Christian, as much a Hidalgo as the King!"[87]

---

[83] William A. Christian, Jr., *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 162.
[84] Nalle, *God in La Mancha*, 118-23.
[85] Ibid., 209.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Madame D'Aulnoy, *Relation du voyage d'Espagne* Ed. R. Foulché-Delbosc. Paris, 1926. Quoted in Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain*, 531.

The picture which emerges from my explication of sixteenth century Spain is one of a place striving for unity more than anything else. There was a unity that was promised during the time of Fernando and Isabel, but that promise was lost when their son died and the throne passed to Charles V, who brought with him all the complexities of empire. Although Charles ruled over much of the peninsula as a unified realm, it was no more than one part of his responsibilities. The establishment of political unity and a strong cohesive nature to his Spanish lands thus eluded him. Spaniards might feel loyal to their king, but how did that impact on their sense of identity any differently than on any person living elsewhere in the Hapsburg empire? Charles, and Philip II as well, were not beacons of "Spanish-ness" around which their people could rally in the way Fernando and Isabel were.

The Church was also striving for unity. The desperate need for reform arose from the divergence in religious education across the population. Every reform put in place aspired to unify the Church and create a cohesive religious system. This desire for conformity saw a brief resurgence in the racial nature of *limpieza* statutes, but even they came to be condemned, for the incredible divisiveness they created. By and large discredited or ignored, they came more to represent class rather than religious distinctions.

Nevertheless, unity remained elusive. Nostalgia for the "purity" of Fernando and Isabel, rigorous reform in the attempt to establish a "pure" Catholic Church both speak to this need. Rather than focusing on racial categories and continuing on a path

of exclusivity and divisiveness, the areas in which Spaniards found themselves united became crucial.

Conclusion

I began this study by discussing events which occurred some six hundred years ago; the mania for *limpieza* which was supposed to have resonated throughout Spain over the following two hundred years is certainly now long dead. And yet, as my opening remarks noted, attempts to defame by using the religious insults linked to this era occur even in the twenty-first century.

A major shift occurred in Spanish historiography when Américo Castro began to write about the three "castes" of Spain and the way their shared living experience created the modern nation of Spain; historians are still grappling with this shift today. No serious historian today questions that there was some measure of *convivencia* on the peninsula during the medieval period. Rather, they investigate the ways and means of that *convivencia*. How did it manifest itself? How did the various populations of different locales, which included differing ratios of each religious group negotiate their daily life? Indeed, how did they maintain the boundaries which allowed them to share urban spaces and towns amicably, interspersed with periodic violence against each other?[88] Many historians have undertaken to answer just such questions, some

---

[88] David Nirenberg gives a fascinating account of ritual violence enacted against Jews in Spain in the fourteenth century. The Christian Holy Week was consistently marked by this violence, which at times was no more violent than children throwing rocks against the gate of the *aljama* (Jewish quarter), but other times escalated to the destruction of synagogues and physical threats against Jews. However, it is rare that the violence escalates further than that, and Nirenberg believes these episodes were evidence of "ritualized agonistic events re-enacting and encapsulating the foundational history of Jewish-Christian events." David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages,* (Princeton, 1996), 215.

concerned with local histories, others with broad overviews. They bring to such studies differing ideologies and goals which necessarily colour their projects.

The answer to the question of who the early modern Spaniards were, then, in many ways depends upon who is answering and how they are providing their answer. The seeming multiplicities of identities speak to the very nature of *convivencia*. Much work has already been done to unpack the question of who the *conversos* were, and who the *moriscos*, although scholars who tackle those issues are at times in disagreement over their conclusions. However, the concept of Spanish Catholicism as rigid, parochial and intolerant, and the gradual dissolution of a harmonious society into one of prejudice and violent racism remains. The Spanish Inquisition is still fixed in popular culture as the epitome of cruelty, torture and horrific death in the name of Christianity, a forerunner of the Holocaust, while the atrocities of the medieval Inquisitions and the persecution of both Protestants and Catholics elsewhere go relatively unnoticed. Spanish pride and an obsession with both honour and lineage remain stereotypes. Indeed, the backlash of vitriolic scholarship which responded to Castro's thesis almost seems proof of those stereotypes.

The historic truth is, as always, much murkier and indiscernible than that. What I have attempted to accomplish here is to examine the ideological impact the statutes of *limpieza* had on the society which produced them, in the hope of better understanding that society. Rather than becoming the defining attribute of early modern Spanish society, the statutes emerge as a point of contention and divisiveness, or merely a stricture set in place but only nominally used. They are part of a much

larger picture of a society attempting the practice of purity in an effort to construct identity. However, Spanish Christian identity remains something elusive. The early modern period was a time when *all* Spaniards were negotiating their identity; the different strategies used, and the differing outcomes of those strategies speak to the heterodox nature of the Spanish character. Undoubtedly there were those in Spain who firmly believed in the superiority of the Christian faith, and conflated that with notions of race. There were those who strongly believed the *limpieza* statutes were necessary and served only to better Spain. And certainly the Inquisition tortured and subjected people to a horrible death because of a disapproval of their religious beliefs. At the same time we have evidence of opposition to the statutes, of arguments against the violence of the Inquisition. There were those who longed for a sense of a unified Spain, but knew that it could not come at a knife point, that education and reform were the keys.

It is in uncovering these latter voices that more work needs to be done. A project such as this is but a beginning. I have been able to examine just one small aspect of Spanish Christian identity, one tool which was used to help define that identity, and shown only a few of the myriad ways in which that tool impacted the society which wielded it.

Far from occupying a position of hegemony which drowned out other voices, Spanish Christianity was heavily involved in the process of ascertaining just what the position they did occupy entailed. Too often Spanish Christians have been explicated by those who were adamantly opposed to their supposed ideologies. Yet pockets of

resistance to those very ideologies are found time and again throughout the narratives encompassing the late medieval and early modern period. Urban patriciate families allowed their children to marry *conversos* in the early fifteenth century; *conversos* were again in positions of power not twenty years after the first *limpieza* statutes were imposed in Toledo; much of the dissent concerning the statutes in the sixteenth century came from Inquisitors themselves. These are but a few examples proving that Spanish Christianity was a space of disagreement and negotiation, that the practice of purity was neither an obsession with race nor a universal anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim prejudice.[89] Many more examples remain to be explicated; other tools remain to be examined.

In short, there is much work left to be done in the area of Spanish historiography. For too long, ideological myths have taken the place of history for this country. Américo Castro shattered one of those myths, the effect of which still ripples throughout the discipline. In his wake, other seemingly implacable myths have begun to crumble. Henry Kamen has sought to retell the story of the Inquisition in his recent study, which contextualizes that institution and, while not apologizing for it, shows that it does not deserve the unmitigated horrific reputation it has had for so long.[90] J.N. Hillgarth has examined the European roots of the Black Legend and shown how Spain's reputation was undeservedly damaged by religious propaganda within the

---

[89] I stress here the word "universal." That some members of Spanish society were obsessed with race, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim is unquestionable.
[90] Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition.*

context of a specific conflict.[91] Linda Martz has worked hard to show how *conversos*, far from being ostracized and excluded, gained and retained prestigious social and political positions at a time when they were presumably barred from those positions.[92] Scholars such as these have, as a by-product of their work, begun the rehabilitation of the reputation of Spain. More importantly, they, like Américo Castro some fifty years ago, have broken new ground within the canon of Spanish historiography, making the work of scholars to come that much easier.

---

[91] Hillgarth, *The Mirror of Spain*.
[92] Martz, *A Network of Converso Families*.

Bibliography

Baer, Yitzhak. *A History of the Jews in Spain.* Vol. 2. Philadelphia, 1961.

Baroja, Julio Caro. *Los Judíos en le España moderna y contemporánea.* 3 vols. Madrid: Arion, 1961.

Barton, Simon. "The Roots of the National Question in Spain." In *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context*, edited by Mikuláš Teich and Roy Porter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Beinart, Haim. *Conversos on Trial: The Inquisition in Ciudad Real.* Translated by Yael Guiladi. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1981.

———, ed. *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real, I, 1483-84; II 1494-1512.* Jerusalem, 1974-7.

Bekkum, Wout J. van, and Paul M. Cobb. "Introduction: Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity." In *Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, edited by Wout J. van Bekkum and Paul M. Cobb. Paris: Peeters, 2004.

Benito-Ruano, Eloy. *Toledo en el Siglo XV.* Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Escuela de Estudios Medievales, 1961.

Bennassar, Bartolomé. *The Spanish Character: Attitudes and Mentalities from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century.* Translated by Benjamin Keen. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.

Bloch, R. Howard. "Genealogy as a Medieval Mental Structure and Textual Form." In *La litterature historiographique des origines a 1500*, edited by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Ursula Link-Heer and Peter-Michael Spangenberg, 135-56. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1986.

Bodian, Miraim. ""Men of the Nation": The Shaping of Converso Identity in Early Modern Europe." *Past and Present* 143, no. May (1994): 48-76.

Castro, Américo. *The Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History.* Translated by Willard F. King and Selma Margaretten. Berkeley: University of California, 1971.

Christian, William A., Jr. *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Coleman, David. *Creating Christian Granada: Society and Religious Culture in an Old-World Frontier City, 1492-1600*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Contreras, Jaime. "Aldermen and Judaizers: Cryptojudaism, Counter-Reformation, and Local Power." In *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, edited by Anne J. Cruz and Mary Elizabeth Perry, 93-123. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1992.

Dedieu, Jean Pierre. ""Christianization" in New Castile: Catechism, Communion, Mass, and Confirmation in the Toledo Archbishopric, 1540-1650." In *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, edited by Anne J. Cruz and Mary Elizabeth Perry, 1-24. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1992.

Delanty, Gerard. "The Frontier and Identities of Exclusion in European History." *History of European Ideas* 22, no. 2 (1996): 93-103.

Devereux, Andrew. "Royal Genealogy and the Gothic Thesis in Medieval Iberian Historiography." *Foundations* 2, no. 1 (2006): 3-26.

Edwards, John. "The Judeoconversos in the Urban Life of Córdoba, 1450-1520." In *Villes et sociétés urbaines au Moyen Âge : hommage à M. le professeur Jacques Heers*, 287-97. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1994.

———. "Religious Belief and Social Conformity: The 'Converso' Problem in Late-Medieval Córdoba." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31 (1981): 115-28.

Elliott, J. H. *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1964.

Freund, Scarlett, and Teofilo Ruiz. "Jews, Conversos, and the Inquisition in Spain: The Ambiguities of History." In *Jewish-Christian Encounters over the Centuries*, edited by Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer. New York: Peter Lang, 1994.

Friedman, Jerome. "Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 1 (1987): 3-30.

Fuchs, Barbara. *Passing for Spain: Cervantes and the Fictions of Identity*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2003.

Gitlitz, David M. *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews*. Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996.

Graizbord, David L. *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580-1700*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania 2004.

Hillgarth, J. N. *The Mirror of Spain, 1500-1700: The Formation of a Myth*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000.

———. *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

Junco, José Álvarez. "The Formation of Spanish Identity and its Adaptation to the Age of Nations." *History and Memory* 14, no. 1/2 (2002): 13-36.

Kamen, Henry. "A Crisis of Conscience in Golden Age Spain: The Inquisition against *limpieza de sangre*." In *Crisis and Change in Early Modern Spain*, edited by Henry Kamen. Aldershot: Variorum, 1993.

———. "The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?" *Past and Present* 81 (1978): 24-50.

———. *Early Modern European Society*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

———. *Philip of Spain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

———. *The Phoenix and the Flame: Catalonia and the Counter Reformation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

———. *Spain 1469-1714: A Society in Conflict*. London: Longman, 1983.

———. *The Spanish Inquisition : A Historical Revision*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

King, G. G. *The Way of Saint James*. 3 vols. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920.

Koenigsberger, Helmut Georg. *The Habsburgs and Europe, 1516-1660*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971.

Lea, Henry Charles. *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*. 4 vols: Macmillan, 1906-07.

Liss, Peggy K. *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times*. Revised ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004.

———. "Isabel, Myth and History." In *Isabel la Católica, Queen of Castile: Critical Essays*, edited by David A. Boruchoff, 57-78. New York: Palgrave, 2003.

Loades, D.M. *The Reign of Mary Tudor: Politics, Government and Religion in England, 1553-1558*. London: E. Benn, 1979.

MacKay, Angus. "Popular Movements and Pogroms in Fifteenth-Century Castile." *Past and Present*, no. 55 (1972): 33-67.

Maltby, William S. *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1971.

Martz, Linda. *A Network of Converso Families in Early Modern Toledo : Assimilating a Minority*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

———. "Pure Blood Statutes in Sixteenth Century Toledo: Implementation as Opposed to Adoption." *Sefarad* 54, no. 1 (1994): 83-108.

Melammed, Reneé Levine. *A Question of Identity: Iberian Conversos in Historical Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Moore, R. I. *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*. New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Nader, Helen. *The Mendoza Family in the Spanish Renaissance, 1350-1550*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1979.

Nalle, Sara T. "The Millennial Moment: Revolution and Radical Religion in Sixteenth Century Spain." In *Towards the Millenium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, edited by Peter Schäfer and Mark R. Cohen. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Nalle, Sarah T. *God in La Mancha: Religious Reform and the People of Cuenca, 1500-1650*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Netanyahu, Benzion. "Did the Toledans of 1449 Rely on a Real Royal Privilege?" In *Toward the Inquisition: Essays on Jewish and Converso History in Late Medieval Spain*, 76-125. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

———. *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*. 2nd ed. New York: Random House, 2001.

Nirenberg, David. "Enmity and Assimilation: Jews, Christians, and Converts in Medieval Spain." *Common Knowledge* 9, no. 1 (2003): 137-55.

———. "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth Century Spain." *Past and Present*, no. 174 (2002): 3-41.

Pohl, Walter. "Introduction: Strategies of Distinction." In *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, edited by Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Poole, Stafford. "The Politics of Limpieza de Sangre: Juan de Ovando and His Circle in the Reign of Philip II." *The Americas* 55, no. 3 (1999): 359-89.

Rawlings, Helen. *Church, Religion and Society in Early Modern Spain*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Rivkin, Ellis. "Les controverses des Statuts de "Pureté de Sang" en Espagne du XVe au XVIIe Siècle, by Albert A. Sicroff (Book Review)." *Commentary* 33, no. 6 (1962): 544-47.

Rodríguez-Salgado, M. J. "Christians, Civilised and Spanish: Multiple Identities in Sixteenth-Century Spain." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 233-51.

Roth, Cecil. *A History of the Marranos*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1974.

Sanchez-Albórnoz, Claudio. *The Drama of the Formation of Spain and the Spaniards: (another new polemic venture)*. Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1979.

———. *España: un enigma historico*. 2 vols. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana 1962.

Seidenspinner-Nuñez, Dayle. "Prelude to the Inquisition: The Discourse of Persecution, the Toledan Rebellion of 1449, and the Contest for Orthodoxy." In *Strategies of Medieval Community Identity: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, edited by Wout J. van Bekkum and Paul M. Cobb, 47-74. Paris, Leuven, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2004.

Shell, Marc. "Marranos (Pigs), or from Coexistence to Toleration." *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (1991): 306-35.

Sicroff, Albert A. *Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre: controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII*. Translated by Mauro Armiño. Madrid: Taurus, 1985.

Spiegel, Gabrielle. *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Vives, Jaime Vicens. *An Economic History of Spain*. Translated by F. M. López-Morillas. Princeton: Princeton University, 1969.

Wright, A. D. *Catholicism and Spanish Society Under the Reign of Philip II, 1555-1598, and Philip III, 1598-1621*. Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellor Press, 1991.