

GOD'S JURY

The
INQUISITION
and the
MAKING
of the
MODERN WORLD

Cullen Murphy



Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

BOSTON • NEW YORK

2012

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www.hmhbooks.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Murphy, Cullen.

God's jury : the Inquisition and the making of the modern world / Cullen Murphy.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-618-09156-0

1. Inquisition. I. Title.

BX1713.M87 2012

272'.2—dc23

2011028599

Book design by Brian Moore

Printed in the United States of America

DOC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For A.M.T.

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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

The Paper Trail

No one goes in and nothing comes out.

— A VATICAN ARCHIVIST, 1877

Theology, sir, is a fortress; no crack
in a fortress may be accounted small.

— REVEREND HALE, *THE CRUCIBLE*, 1953

The Palace

ON A HOT FALL day in Rome not long ago, I crossed the vast expanse of St. Peter's Square, paused momentarily in the shade beneath a curving flank of Bernini's colonnade, and continued a little way beyond to a Swiss Guard standing impassively at a wrought-iron gate, the Porta Cavalleggeri. He examined my credentials, handed them back, and saluted smartly. I hadn't expected the grand gesture, and almost returned the salute instinctively, but then realized it was intended for a cardinal waddling into the Vatican from behind me.

Just inside the gate, at Piazza del Sant'Uffizio 11, stands a Renaissance palazzo with the ruddy ocher-and-cream complexion of so many buildings in the city. This is the headquarters of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose job, in the words of the Apostolic Constitution, *Pastor bonus*, promulgated in 1988 by Pope John Paul II, is “to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals throughout the Catholic world.” *Pastor bonus* goes on: “For this reason, everything which in any way touches such matter falls within its competence.” It is an expansive charge. The CDF is one of nine Vatican congregations that together make up the administrative apparatus of the Holy See, but it dominates all the others. Every significant document or decision emanating from anywhere inside the Vatican must get a sign-off from the CDF.

The Congregation also generates plenty of rulings of its own. The Vatican's pronouncements during the past decade in opposition to cloning and same-sex marriage originated in the CDF. So did the directive ordering Catholic parishes not to give the names of past or present congregants to the Genealogical Society of Utah, a move that reflects the Vatican's “grave reservations” about the Mormon practice of posthumous baptism. The declaration *Dominus Jesus*, issued in 2000, which reiterated that the Catholic Church is the only true church of Christ and the only assured means of salvation, is a CDF document. Because the Congregation is responsible for clerical discipline, its actions—and inactions—are central to the pedophilia scandals that have shaken the Catholic Church. For more than two decades, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was headed by Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, who during his long reign as prefect was known as the enforcer and sometimes as the *Panzerkardinal*—bane of liberals, scourge of dissidents, and bulwark of orthodoxy narrowly construed. The Congregation has been around for a very long time, although until the Second Vatican Council it was called something else: the Congregation of the Holy Office. From the lips of old Vatican hands and Church functionaries

everywhere, one still hears shorthand references to “the Holy Office,” much as one hears “Whitehall,” “Foggy Bottom,” or “the Kremlin.”

But before the Congregation became the Holy Office, it went by yet another name: as late as 1908, it was known as the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition. Lenny Bruce once joked that there was only one “*the* Church.” The Sacred Congregation of the Universal Inquisition was the headquarters of *the* Inquisition — the centuries-long effort by the Church to deal with its perceived enemies, within and without, by whatever means necessary, including some very brutal ones. For understandable reasons, no one at the Vatican these days refers to the Congregation as “the Inquisition” except ironically. The members of the papal curia are famously tone-deaf when it comes to public relations — these are men who in recent years have invited a Holocaust-denying bishop to return to the Church, have tried to persuade Africans that the use of condoms will make the AIDS crisis worse, and have told the indigenous peoples of Latin America that their religious beliefs are “a step backward” — but even the curia came to appreciate that the term had outlived its usefulness, although it took a few centuries.

It’s easy to change a name, not so easy to engage in genetic engineering (which the Church would not encourage in any case). The CDF grew organically out of the Inquisition, and the modern office cannot escape the imprint. Ratzinger, when he was still a cardinal, was sometimes referred to as the grand inquisitor. New York’s John Cardinal O’Connor once introduced the visiting Ratzinger that way from a pulpit in Manhattan — a not entirely successful way to break the ice. The epithet may have originated in “the fevered minds of some progressive Catholics,” as a Ratzinger fan site on the Web explains, but it became widespread nonetheless. (In response to a Frequently Asked Question, the same site offers: “Good grief. *No, Virginia, Cardinal Ratzinger was not a Nazi.*”)

The palazzo that today houses the Congregation was originally built to lodge the Inquisition when the papacy, in 1542, amid

the onslaught of Protestantism and other forms of heresy, decided that the Church's intermittent and far-flung inquisitorial investigations, which had commenced during the Middle Ages, needed to be brought under some sort of centralized control — a spiritual Department of Homeland Security, as it were. Pope Paul III considered this task so urgent that for several years construction on the basilica of St. Peter's was suspended and the laborers diverted, so that work could be completed on the palace of the Inquisition. At one time the palazzo held not only clerical offices but also prison cells. Giordano Bruno, the philosopher and cosmologist, was confined for a period in this building, before being burned at the stake in Rome's Campo dei Fiori, in 1600.

When I first set foot in the palazzo, a decade ago, it was somewhat shabby and ramshackle, like so much of Rome and, indeed, like more of the Vatican than one might imagine. Outside, Vespas tilted against kickstands. In a hallway beyond the courtyard, a hand-lettered sign pointed the way to an espresso machine. A telephone on the wall dated to the 1950s. Here and there, paint flaked from ceilings and furniture. But the Congregation has a Web site now, and e-mail, and a message from Piazza del Sant'Uffizio 11 can still fray nerves in theology departments and diocesan chanceries around the world.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith inherited more than the Inquisition's institutional DNA and its place on the organizational charts. It also inherited much of the paper trail. The bulk of the Vatican's records are part of the so-called Archivio Segreto, and for the most part are stored in a vast underground bunker below a former observatory. (*Segreto*, though translated as "secret," carries the connotation "private" or "personal" rather than "classified.") But the Vatican's holdings are so great — the indexes alone fill 35,000 volumes — that many records must be squirreled away elsewhere. The Inquisition records are kept mainly in the Palazzo del Sant'Uffizio itself, and for four and a half centuries — up until 1998 — that archive was closed to outsiders.

At the time of my first visit, the Inquisition archive — officially, the Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede — spilled from room to room and floor to floor in the palazzo's western wing, filling about twenty rooms in all. It was under twenty-four-hour papal surveillance, watched over by a marble bust of Pius XII, a stern and enigmatic pontiff and now a candidate for sainthood, despite his troubling record in the face of the Holocaust. Pius was assisted in his duties by the sixteenth-century cardinal-inquisitor and papal censor Robert Bellarmine, whose portrait dominated a nearby wall, larger in oil than he was in life. The rooms were bathed in a soft yellow light. A spiral staircase connected upper and lower levels. Dark bookshelves stood in tight rows, sagging under thick bundles of documents. Many were tied up with string in vellum wrappers, like so much laundry. Others were bound as books. The spines displayed Latin notations in an elegant antique hand. Some indicated subject matter: "*De Spiritismo*," "*De Hypnotismo*," "*De Magnetismo Animale*." Most were something else entirely. They contained the records of individual cases and also the minutes of the Inquisition's thrice-weekly meetings going back half a millennium. The meetings were held on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and the pope himself presided once a week.

The cataloguing is by modern standards haphazard, even chaotic, reflecting centuries of handling and the peculiar organizational psychology of the Holy See. As one scholar has noted, the Vatican archives were arranged in a way that made sense for the curia, not for the convenience of modern historians. Pull down a bundle and you may stumble on internal deliberations over the censorship of René Descartes. Pull down another and you may discover some Renaissance cardinal-inquisitor's personal papers: the original handwritten records of all his investigations, chronologically arranged; a bureaucratic autobiography — he was proud of what he had achieved — with reflective comments scrawled in the margins; and here and there a small black cross indicating that a sentence had been duly carried

out. Pull down a third bundle and you may find an account of a routine meeting, the sudden insertion here and there of several black dots by the notary indicating that the inquisitors had gone into executive session and the notary had been dismissed from the room — a more reliable procedure than the modern practice, employed by intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, of “redacting” a sensitive document with heavy black bars. No court order or Freedom of Information Act can unlock what the black dots conceal.

The atmosphere in the reading room is one of warmth and stillness. Hints of slowly crumbling leather hang in the air. A few scholars sit at tables. No one talks: *silentio* is the explicit rule. Espresso must be left outside. Smoking is prohibited. The physical experience is that afforded by any ancient library, enfolding and reassuring — which serves only to heighten a sense of psychic disconnection. When the Archivio was first opened, a Vatican official, Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, expressed the hope that it might contain “some pleasant surprises.” But the record preserved on the millions of pages in these rooms is mainly grim: a record of lives disrupted and sometimes summarily put to an end; of ideas called into question and often suppressed; of voices silenced, temporarily or forever; of blind bureaucratic inertia harnessed to moral certainty and to earthly and spiritual power. It is a record of actions taken in the name of religion, though the implications go beyond religion.

Any archive is a repository of what some sliver of civilization has wrought, for good or ill. This one is no exception. The Archivio may owe its existence to the Inquisition, but it helps explain the world that exists today. In our imaginations, we offhandedly associate the term “inquisition” with the term “Dark Ages.” But consider what an inquisition — any inquisition — really is: a set of disciplinary procedures targeting specific groups, codified in law, organized systematically, enforced by surveillance, exemplified by severity, sustained over time, backed by institutional power, and justified by a vision of

the one true path. Considered that way, the Inquisition is more accurately viewed not as a relic but as a harbinger.

A 700-Year Trial

Say what you will about the Inquisition, but it was an unequivocal success in one respect: everyone knows its name. And everyone knows at least enough to throw its name around casually, to summon the Inquisition as a metaphor, to exploit it for entertainment, to wield it in argument as a quiet stiletto or a clumsy bludgeon.

“No one expects the Spanish Inquisition,” cries Monty Python’s Michael Palin, bursting into a room in a cardinal’s robes. In the movie *History of the World: Part 1*, the Inquisition becomes a showstopping Mel Brooks dance number: “The Inquisition (What a show!). / The Inquisition (Here we go!).” You could compile a substantial monograph on just the Inquisition’s contribution to the field of humor. An apt epigraph for it would be Woody Allen’s observation that “Comedy is tragedy plus time.”

On ABC’s *Good Morning America*, the political commentator Cokie Roberts was asked about government officials who had become the focus of special investigations: “Cokie, you talk to these people a lot. Do they feel like they’re targets of the Inquisition?” On Fox News, the anchorman Brit Hume described media scrutiny of Sarah Palin’s record in Alaska as “the full Inquisition treatment.” In *Fortune*, a column about captains of finance who were summoned to testify on Capitol Hill carried the title “The Inquisition Convenes in Washington.”

Sometimes the references become more specific. In an interview with Kenneth Starr, whose investigations of President Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky resulted in the exhaustive *Starr Report*, Diane Sawyer began by noting that Starr had been “compared to Saddam Hussein, Nero, to Torquemada, who was the head of the In-

quisition.” Starr replied, “I had to learn who Torquemada was. Yeah . . . that was a new one to me.” Gore Vidal already knew, of course. Looking back on his life in an interview, the aging and acerbic writer attacked various members of the Kennedy family, as he had often done, singling out Bobby as “a phony, a little Torquemada.” The columnist Taki Theodoracopulos, criticizing the tactics of Carla Del Ponte, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, raised the specter of defendants’ “being railroaded by a Swiss woman who thinks she’s Torquemada, and looks like him to boot.” The comparisons are often flip — but just as often deadly serious. Maureen Dowd, writing about the sex-abuse scandal that reaches to the highest levels of the Church, headlined a column “Should There Be an Inquisition for the Pope?”

No series of events in recent times has produced more invocations of the Inquisition than the prosecution of the war on terror since September 11, 2001. The enactment of tough new legal instruments, the use of extralegal surveillance, the detention without trial of suspected enemies, the reliance on torture in interrogations, the pervading atmosphere of religious suspicion: taken together, these developments help account for the fact that a Google search of “inquisition” today yields upward of eight million entries.

For all its familiarity as a reference point, the real Inquisition remains very little known. Few people can relate even a handful of basic historical facts about it. When did it start, and why? How long did it last? What countries did it affect? How was it conducted? What consequences did it have? How did it end? Does it, in various guises, reside with us still? And what, in the end, do we even mean by that word “it”? At best, common knowledge encompasses not much more than this: the Inquisition took place in the distant past, promoted persecution of the Jews, and notably employed torture and burning at the stake. All true enough, but just a small portion of the story.

Though its influence waxed and waned, the Inquisition continued in one form or another for more than seven hundred years. It

touched on episodes as diverse as the suppression of the Knights Templar and the siege of the heretic fortress at Montségur. It intervened in the lives of Galileo and Graham Greene. Associated most commonly with the persecution of the Jews, the Inquisition was in fact far more wide-ranging in its targets, and initially was not much concerned with Jews at all. Indeed, the Inquisition's specific warrant was to enforce discipline among members of the Church, not those outside it: people who had fallen into error, who had embraced heretical movements, or who had in some other way loosened the bonds of faith.

In the year 1231 Pope Gregory IX appointed the first “inquisitors of heretical depravity” to serve as explicit papal agents. Thus began what is called the Medieval Inquisition, which was launched to deal with the menace posed to the Church by Christian heretics, notably the Cathars of southern France. The newly established Dominican Order, whose priests and nuns are identifiable to this day by their white habits, was instrumental in combating the Cathar heresy. Its founder, Dominic Guzmán, is the man celebrated in the 1963 song “Dominique,” by the Singing Nun (said to be the only Belgian song ever to hit No. 1 on the American charts). The inquisitors solicited denunciations and, as their name implies, conducted interrogations. Their efforts were highly localized — there was no central command. The inquisitors were aided in their work by the papal bull *Ad extirpanda*, promulgated in 1252, which justified and encouraged the use of torture, wielding philosophical arguments that have never wanted for advocates and that would eventually echo in the White House and the Justice Department. Within a century, the work of the Medieval Inquisition was largely done. One modern writer, reflecting on what makes inquisitions come to an end, calls attention to a simple reason: an eventual shortage of combustible material. The Dominicans were nothing if not thorough. As a Catholic growing up with many Jesuit friends, I remember hearing a comment about the difference between Dominicans and Jesuits: Both orders were created to

fight the Church's enemies — Cathars in the one case, Protestants in the other. The difference: Have you ever met a Cathar?

A second chapter, the Spanish Inquisition, commenced in the late fifteenth century. As King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile consolidated their rule, the Inquisition in a recently unified Spain pursued its targets independent of Rome. It was effectively an arm of the government, and the monarchs appointed its personnel. The Spanish Inquisition was directed primarily at Jews who had converted to Christianity and whose conversions were suspect — in other words, who were thought to be (or said to be) secretly “judaizing,” or reverting to Judaism. It also focused its efforts on the many Christianized Muslims, who might likewise be reverting to the faith of their heritage. The first inquisitor general in Spain, Tomás de Torquemada, a Dominican monk, embarked on a career that made his name synonymous with the Inquisition as a whole, sending some 2,000 people to be burned at the stake within a matter of years. The Inquisition in Spain would lead to a cataclysm: the expulsion, in 1492, of unconverted Jews from the kingdom.

Because the domains of the Spanish sovereigns eventually extended to Asia and America, the Inquisition traveled far beyond Iberia. It was active in areas of what is now the United States — New Mexico, for instance. In Santa Fe, religious disputes in which the Inquisition played a role led to executions outside the Palace of the Governors, on the plaza, within sight of today's boutique restaurants and upscale art galleries. From Spain the Inquisition spread to Portugal and thence to the Portuguese Empire. It could be found operating in Brazil and India, and in places between and beyond.

The Spanish Inquisition ended at different times in different places. It survived in Mexico until 1820, when independence from Spain was just a few months away, and in Spain itself until 1834, when a royal decree abolished it once and for all. It conducted its last execution in 1826 — the victim was a Spanish schoolmaster named Cayetano Ripoll, who had been convicted of heresy. (He was hanged

rather than burned at the stake.) In some ultraconservative Catholic precincts there are those who contemplate the record of the Spanish Inquisition with at most a shrug: Yes, the methods were perhaps too enthusiastic — but it was a different time. Let's not be anachronistic. And don't forget the threat to the Church! A group of Catholic clerics and activist laypeople are today pressing to have Queen Isabella declared a saint.

The third but not quite final chapter of the Inquisition, the so-called Roman Inquisition, began in the sixteenth century with the advent of the Reformation. This is the inquisition for which the palazzo was built. The main focus of the Roman Inquisition was Protestantism, but it did not spare Jews, homosexuals, people accused of practicing witchcraft, and certain kinds of quirky or annoying free-thinkers and gadflies who might today be called “public intellectuals.” With the Roman Inquisition, the inquisitorial process was for the first time lodged in an organ of state under direct papal supervision. It was a centralized bureaucracy overseen by a papal inquisitor general, whose job was often a stepping-stone to the papacy itself. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, no fewer than three grand inquisitors went on to become pope. The inquisitorial bureaucracy was a fertile recruiting ground for bishops and cardinals. It populated the curia the way the security services now staff the Kremlin. The operations of the Sacred Congregation of the Universal Inquisition were entwined with those of the Congregation of the Index, which oversaw censorship efforts — this at a time when the diffusion of the printing press had made ideas more dangerous, and censorship more difficult, than ever before. It was the Roman Inquisition that put Galileo on trial for his arguments about the heavens. In some ways it behaved like a modern institution — its rhythms and procedures, and even its inanities, will be recognizable to anyone with experience of a large bureaucracy. But the chief target was modernity itself, and the ideas and cast of mind that underlay it.

In 1870, the unification of Italy brought about the demise of the

Papal States, the domains where the pope ruled as a temporal monarch. Except for matters of purely internal Church discipline, which carry no threat of secular penalty or physical harm but which can stifle intellectual life and dissent all the same, the Roman Inquisition was at an end. It would take almost sixty years for the pope's dominion over the tiny walled 108-acre rump state of Vatican City to be recognized by Italy, in a concordat signed by Benito Mussolini and Pope Pius XI. By then, the Congregation of the Inquisition had disappeared into the organizational charts of the Roman curia, though as one historian observes, "No death certificate has ever been issued." The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith preserves the processes and functions of the Roman Inquisition in milder form. Until the 1960s, it remained in the business of censoring and banning books, though few took heed, and some of those who did pay attention did so for the wrong reasons. During my Catholic childhood, the relegation of a book to the Papal Index seemed to serve mainly as an inducement (though not always a reliable one, as those who tried reading Hobbes or Pascal under the covers with a flashlight will have discovered). Following the practice of the old Inquisition, the CDF still holds regular weekly meetings. It is to the Congregation that bishops, papal envoys, and others send complaints about teaching and theology — the modern-day analogue of medieval denunciations, though the official term is not "denunciation" but "delation," as if to suggest referral for a medical procedure. I have sometimes found myself conflating the CDF with the CDC — the Centers for Disease Control. There is a certain parallel.

The Inquisition, plainly, is not what it was. And yet in some ways it is as robust as ever. The historian Edward Peters has noted that the long decline of the actual Inquisition over the centuries was paralleled by the rise of a metaphorical Inquisition that lives on in folklore and popular culture, in works of art and literature, in comedy and polemic. Partly this was a response to, even a mythologizing of, a receding past — a coming to terms with what the Church had done, as

perceived through many lenses. Partly it was a response to an evolving present. The world may have been rushing toward whatever we mean by “modernity,” but the methods and mind-set of the Inquisition were clearly not confined to the Church. They had taken on lives of their own and could be found in the institutions of the secular world. Arthur Koestler set his inquisitorial novel, *Darkness at Noon*, in a simulacrum of Stalin’s Russia, at the height of the purges in the 1930s. In the late 1940s, Justice Robert H. Jackson, the chief American prosecutor at Nuremberg, cited the Inquisition in his summation at the close of the trial of major Nazi war criminals. In the 1950s, Arthur Miller evoked the witch hunts of colonial Massachusetts in his play *The Crucible*, a parable of the McCarthy era. Other writers — Aldous Huxley, Ray Bradbury, George Orwell — looked ahead to imagined societies, just over the horizon, where inquisitions of some kind had won control. To conduct surveillance, to impose belief, to censor, to manipulate, to punish people who think differently from those in power: in the modern world the inquisitorial dynamic was more in evidence than ever, and enabled by ever more powerful instruments.

Dostoyevsky’s tale “The Grand Inquisitor,” in *The Brothers Karamazov*, is as much a secular parable as a theological one — it is about the corruption of any faith. Dostoyevsky wrestled with religious questions all his life. He also suffered censorship and imprisonment at the hands of the czarist state. On one occasion he endured the trauma of what turned out to be a mock execution. In “The Grand Inquisitor,” Jesus returns to the living world — to Seville, “in the most horrible time of the Inquisition” — and is brought before the leading cleric for interrogation. Jesus himself never speaks, but the Grand Inquisitor delivers a scathing indictment, condemning Jesus for the gift of moral freedom, which mankind can neither comprehend nor wisely use. But no matter. The Church understands full well the implication — understands that moral freedom leads only to trouble — and so has taken steps to curb it. The Grand Inquisitor tells Jesus, “We have corrected your deed. . . . And mankind rejoiced that they were

once more led like sheep.” And he asks, “Why have you come to hinder us now?”

In the end, Jesus makes no answer, save to kiss the old man on the lips. The Grand Inquisitor sets him free, but with this injunction: “Go, and do not come again.”

Into the Archives

The speed limit for motor vehicles inside Vatican City is 20 miles an hour. The forward motion of the curial bureaucracy is slower, as you'd expect with gerontocrats at the wheel. The Holy See takes its time. In 1979, the historian Carlo Ginzburg wrote a letter to Karol Wojtyla, who had recently been installed as Pope John Paul II. Ginzburg, who is Jewish, had firsthand experience of hatred and persecution. His father, Leone, was an anti-fascist agitator who was beaten to death by the Nazis, and young Carlo spent the war in hiding with his non-Jewish maternal grandmother, under the name Carlo Tanzi. In his letter, Ginzburg petitioned the pope to open the Archivio to scholars. Ginzburg no longer has a copy of what he sent — it is probably under seal in the archives somewhere — but he remembers that it began like this: *“Chi le scrivo e uno storico ebreo, ateo, che ha lavorato per molti anni sui documenti dell’Inquisizione”* — “The writer of the present letter is a Jewish historian, an atheist, who has been working for many years on inquisitorial papers.”

He heard nothing for nearly twenty years, until, in 1998, he received a letter from Ratzinger inviting him to the opening of the Archivio. Ah, bad luck: he had a conflict, Ginzburg wrote back. Then came a phone call from a monsignor at the Vatican. Ginzburg again demurred. “That’s a pity,” said the monsignor, “because your letter played a role in the opening of the Sant’Uffizio archive.” “Which letter?” was Ginzburg’s reaction. The monsignor said, “Your letter to the pope.” “What a memory!” Ginzburg replied. He found a way to change his plans.

The Archivio was not opened fully — scholars could examine documents only up to the death of Pope Leo XIII, in 1903. (“Naturally,” said a Vatican official, without elaboration.) But it was a start. “We know all the sins of the Church,” Cardinal Ratzinger said in making the announcement, “and I hope more will not be added to them.”

In the academic and religious worlds, the partial opening of the Archivio was a very big deal. It was marked in Rome by two conclaves of Inquisition scholars. Ratzinger was present at the first of them, and the pope himself welcomed participants at the second. The ravages of Parkinson’s disease hampered John Paul’s speech, and those who heard him didn’t quite know what he had said until a transcript was made available the next day. Among other things, John Paul asked the historians not to “overstep the boundaries of their discipline and give an ethical verdict” on the Church’s behavior. Two years later, on Ash Wednesday 2000, the pope led a penitential procession through the streets of Rome to apologize for errors and misdeeds of the past — including, prominently, the Inquisition. Pointedly, the apology referred to deeds done by followers of the Church rather than by the Church itself.

The man who today presides over the Archivio is Monsignor Alejandro Cifres Giménez, fifty-one, a diminutive Spaniard from Valencia (the city where, as it happens, the Spanish Inquisition’s last execution took place). Cifres is mild-mannered, genial, and competent. He sometimes displays a dry sense of humor. When I asked him whether the magazine I work for was being considered for papal condemnation, he said, “Not yet.” He listens to country-and-western music, has a CD player in his car, and once revealed that among his favorite movies is *Happy, Texas*, a comedy about convicts on the lam who disguise themselves as gay beauty-pageant coaches, which would probably have earned two thumbs down from the Papal Index. Cifres is not a historian. He is by training a theologian, and also a certified archivist and paleographer. He was brought to the Archivio to be