# God's Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World

*Cullen Murphy*
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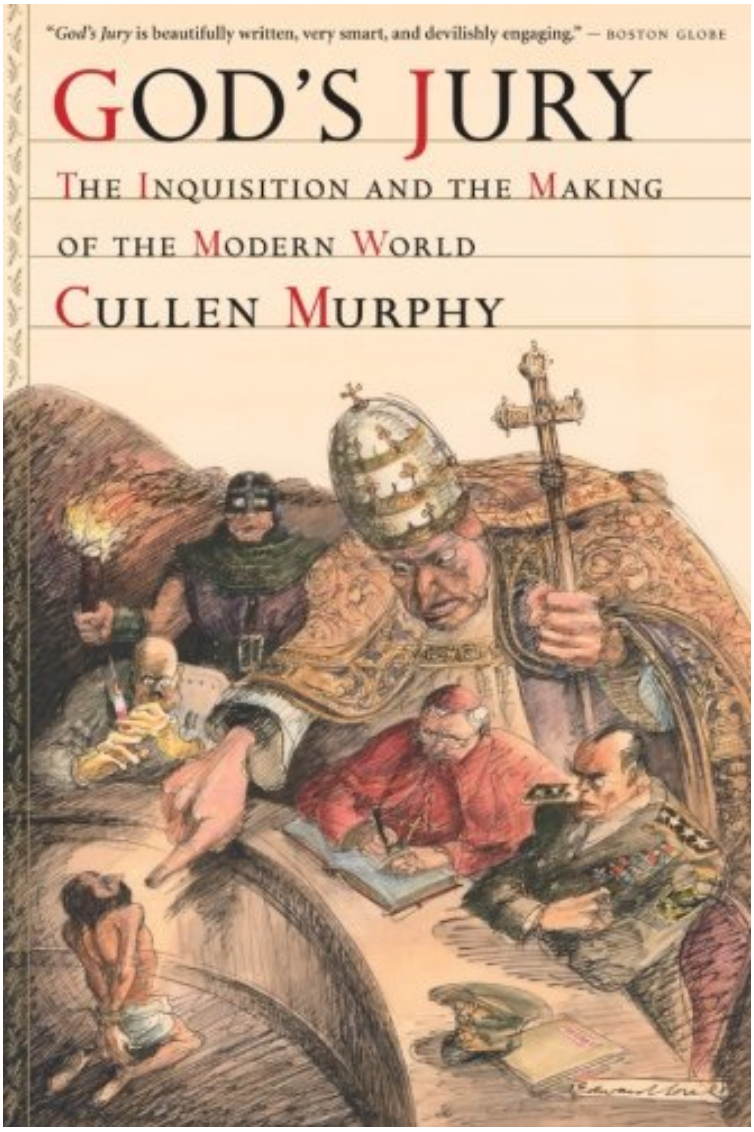




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**Cullen Murphy : God's Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised God's Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great Read.By Bashar ElsbihiGreat book. The 2nd half does not make a strong case though as it seems more like the author is trying to make a comparison that is not there. The current communication age does make us all more vulnerable to government watch agencies, but it certainly is a far

cry from what has taken place during the inquisition. We are all susceptible to government abuses without due process of the law, regardless of the time and place. However in today's Western world at least we have come too far to let clergy class ever again abuses our hard earned free thinking. But overall, the book is a great read for all so we can always be vigilant about the danger of religious fanaticism and always be on guard.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating history but some of the contemporary connections seem tenuous at bestBy W. V. BuckleyWith the relatively recent opening of the Vatican's archives on the Inquisition (or, more acurately, Inquisitions) it seemed only a matter of time before we'd see books about the Church's attempts to enforce strict adherence to its dictates and dogma. Cullen Murphy has done a great service by condensing 800 years of history and three separate Inquisitions into a readable and entertaining format.Most people think of the Inquisition in terms of the Spanish Inquisition that started under Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to rid their nation of Jews and Muslims (and enrich the monarchy with confiscated property). But Murphy elightens readers with information on the Inquisitions that came before and after the Spanish Inquisition. In the Midieval Inquisition, the Church sought to stamp out heretics in the form of Cathars in France and in the Roman Inquisition the Church went after heretics not only in Roman, but around the world (including Mexico and other other New World locations).God's Jury: The Inquisition and the Making of the Modern World makes for a fascinating overview of such a pivotal era of history and Murphy has a gift for presenting the information in a clear and very readable style. The only problem I have with the book is the second half of its subtitle, "and the Making of the Modern World." I have a hard time forcing myself to go where Murphy goes in drawing connections between the Inquisitions and Guantanamo and the war on terror. While I can see his point and even sympathize with it, I just can't bring myself to make the leap of faith required to connect a religious inquisition with a secular one. Perhaps Murphy comes across a bit too heavy-handed for my taste.Granted, our move toward a surveillance state as a result of the war on terror makes for a dramatic modern background, but it's always seemed to me that America came must closer to its own Inquisition during the McCarthy era with its hearings and public denunciations. But the references for McCarthy in God's Jury - all made in passing - can be counted on one hand.Despite my personal opinions on the dangers of America's own "inquisitional instincts," I still find myself wanting to recommend God's Jury to readers interested in the Inquisition and its impact on today's world.3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Thanks.By B. CampbellOften I just think it's officious of me to pretend I am sufficiently knowledgeable to render a cogent comment about a book. Rarely I am just lost for words. Reading this book was like riding the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in late spring (think about the sudden rapids for which you're unprepared) or like listening to Beethoven's Fifth, but with the full orchestral score in hand for the very first time. All I can do is thank the author, whom I have read before, for words that will not soon leave me.

Established by the Catholic Church in 1231, the Inquisition continued in one form or another for almost seven hundred years. Though associated with the persecution of heretics and Jews and with burning at the stake its targets were more numerous and its techniques more ambitious. The Inquisition pioneered surveillance, censorship, and scientific interrogation. As time went on, its methods and mindset spread far beyond the Church to become tools of secular persecution. Traveling from freshly opened Vatican archives to the detention camps of Guantnamo to the filing cabinets of the Third Reich, the acclaimed writer Cullen Murphy traces the Inquisition and its legacy, showing that not only did its offices survive into the twentieth century, but in the modern world its spirit is more influential than ever.With the combination of vivid immediacy and learned analysis that characterized his acclaimed Are We Rome?, Murphy puts a human face on a familiar but little-known piece of our past and argues that only by understanding the Inquisition can we hope to explain the making of the present.

.com Exclusive: A QA with Author Cullen Murphy Q: Why the Inquisitionand why now? A: This question gets to the very heart of the book. Weve all heard of the Inquisitionand we all remember the Monty Python line, "No one expects the Spanish Inquisition"but we tend to think of it as something safely confined to the past, something "medieval" that in an enlightened age weve moved far beyond. But thats exactly the wrong way to think about the Inquisition. Rather than some throwback, its really one of the first modern institutions. This attempt by the Catholic Church to deal with its enemies, inside and outside, made use of tools that hadnt really existed before, tools that have only improved and that are part of our lives today. Q: Like what? A: Well, lets start with what an inquisition is: its a disciplinary effort designed to enforce a particular point of view, and its built in such a way that it can last for a long timein this case, for centuries. To last for a long time you need to have some sort of functioning bureaucracy. You need to have trained people"technocrats," we might call them todaywho can run the machinery, and you need to be able to keep training new people. You need to be able to watch and keep track of individuals, know what they think, collect and store information, and then be able to put your hands on the information when you need ityou need what today wed call search engines. And you need to be able to exert control over ideas you dont likein a word, censorship. Its quite a feat of organization. We take these kinds of capabilities for granted today. With the Inquisition, you can watch them being invented. Q: Go back to the beginning and fill us inwhen did the Inquisition start, and why? A: Over a period of about seven hundred years, there were many Inquisitions mounted under Church auspices, and they varied in intensity from

era to era and place to place. That said, you can divide the Inquisition into three basic phases. The first of them, called the Medieval Inquisition, is usually given a starting date of 1231, when the pope issued certain founding decrees. It was mainly concerned with Christian heretics, especially in southern France, whom the Church saw as a growing threat. Then, in the late fifteenth century, came the Spanish Inquisition. It was run by clerics but effectively controlled by the Spanish crown, not by the pope, and its main targets were Jews and to a lesser extent Muslims. After that, in the mid-sixteenth century, came the Roman Inquisition, which was run from the Vatican, and was mainly concerned with Protestants. This is a very simplified outline. And all kinds of people were caught up in the Inquisitions machineryJews and heretics, yes, but also witches, homosexuals, rationalists, and intellectuals. Q: How did the Inquisition work? A: In the early days inquisitors would arrive in a particular locale and ask people to come forward to confess their misdeeds or to point the finger at others. Because there was a "sell by" dateanyone who came forward by a certain time would be treated with leniencea dynamic of denunciation was set into motion. Interrogation was at the center of the inquisitorial processhence the Inquisitions name. The accused was not told the charges against him or the names of the witnesses. The questioning often made use of torture. Detailed records were kept. Most of those who came before tribunals received sentences short of deathfor instance, they had to wear a special penitential gown for a year or two. But tens of thousands were burned at the stake for their beliefs. In all, hundreds of thousands of people passed through the tribunal process. The psychological imprint on society would have been profound. And as time went on, the Inquisition in some places became a fixture, with its own buildings and with officials in permanent residence. In some places, the networks of informers were complex and dense. Q: Burning at the stake frankly doesnt seem all that contemporary. Why do you say that the Inquisition is essentially "modern"? A: Ill start by asking a different question: why was there suddenly an Inquisition when there hadnt been one before? After all, intolerance, hatred, and suspicion of the "other," often based on religious and ethnic differences, had always been with us. Throughout history, these realities had led to persecution and violence. But the ability to sustain a persecutionto give it staying power by giving it an institutional lifedid not appear until the Middle Ages. Until then, the tools to stoke and manage those omnipresent embers of hatred did not exist. Once these capabilities do exist, inquisitions become a fact of life. They are not confined to religion; they are political as welljust look at the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. Or, on a far lesser scale, the anti-communist witch hunts. The targets can be large or small. An inquisition impulse can quietly take root in the very systems of government and civil society that order our lives. Lets think about those toolsthe ability to put people under surveillance; to compile records and databases, to conduct systematic interrogations, to bend the law to your needs, to lodge your activities in the hands of a self- perpetuating bureaucracy, and to underpin all this with an ideology of moral certainty. The modern world has advanced far beyond the medieval one on all these fronts. Look at what governments can do when it comes to listening in on private conversations, or what corporations can do to distill personal information from the Internet, or what law enforcement can do on a hint of a suspicion. Q: In the wake of 9/11, torture has certainly made a comeback. A: Yes, it has, and it has done so for the same reason it always does: when the stakes seem very high, and when the people who want to do the torturing believe fervently that their larger cause has the full weight of morality on its side, then all other considerations are irrelevant. If youre absolutely certain that your cause is blessed by God or history, and that its under mortal threat, then in some minds torture becomes easy to justify. The Inquisition tried to put limits on torture, but the limits were always pushed. Thus, if the rules said you could torture only once, you could get around that obstacle by defining a second session of torture as a "continuance" of the first session. Thats how it is with tortureonce its deemed permissible in some special situation, the bounds of permissibility keep being stretched. Theres always some desired piece of information just beyond reach, and theres always the hope that one more little turn of the screw will secure it. The Bush administration pushed the limits not only in practice but also in theory. In its view, an act wasnt torture unless it caused organ failure, permanent impairment, or death. Ironically, thats a far narrower definition than what the Inquisition would have accepted. The Inquisition understood that torture began well short of that thresholdand if it was reached, it had to stop.