



Mad for God: Bartolomé Sánchez, the Secret Messiah of Cardenete

Sara Tilghman Nalle

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Convinced he was the Elijah Messiah, the Spanish peasant Bartolomé Sánchez believed that God had sent him in divine retribution for the crimes committed by the Inquisition and the Church. Sánchez's vocal and intolerable religious deviance quickly landed him in the very court he believed he was sent to destroy. Fortunately for him, the first inquisitor assigned to his case came to believe that Sánchez was not guilty by virtue of insanity, and tried to collect the proof that would save his life.

For seven years, Sánchez shuttled between jails, hospitals, and his home village while his fate hung in the balance. Nalle convincingly evokes the compassion of Sánchez's first inquisitor, Pedro Cortes, as he struggled to save his prisoner's life, and argues that the Spanish, compared to other Europeans of the day, were remarkably rational and humane when dealing with the mentally ill.

A gripping tale of madness and religious conviction, *Mad for God* offers new historical insight into the ongoing debate over the nature of religious inspiration, insanity, and criminal responsibility.

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