



# A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain

*Chris Lowney*

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In a world torn by religious antagonism, lessons can be learned from medieval Spanish villages where Muslims, Christians, and Jews rubbed shoulders on a daily basis--sharing irrigation canals, bathhouses, municipal ovens, and marketplaces. Medieval Spaniards introduced Europeans to paper manufacture, Hindu-Arabic numerals, philosophical classics, algebra, citrus fruits, cotton, and new medical techniques. Her mystics penned classics of Kabbalah and Sufism. More astonishing than Spain's wide-ranging accomplishments, however, was the simple fact that until the destruction of the last Muslim Kingdom by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1492, Spain's Muslims, Christians, and Jews often managed to bestow tolerance and freedom of worship on the minorities in their midst.

*A Vanished World* chronicles this panoramic sweep of human history and achievement, encompassing both the agony of Jihad, Crusades, and Inquisition, and the glory of a multi-religious, multi-cultural civilization that forever changed the West. Lowney shows how these three controversial religious groups once lived and worked together in Spain, creating commerce, culture, art, and architecture. He reveals how these three faith groups eventually veered into a thicket of resentment and violence, and shows how our current policies and approaches might lead us down the same path.

Rising above politics, propaganda, and name-calling, *A Vanished World* provides a hopeful meditation on how relations among these three faith groups have gone wrong and some ideas on how to make their interactions right.

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