



Philip of Spain

Henry Kamen

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Philip II of Spain—ruler of the most extensive empire the world had ever known—has been viewed in a harsh and negative light since his death in 1598. Identified with repression, bigotry, and fanaticism by his enemies, he has been judged more by the political events of his reign than by his person. This book, published four hundred years after Philip's death, is the first full-scale biography of the king. Placing him within the social, cultural, religious, and regional context of his times, it presents a startling new picture of his character and reign.

Drawing on Philip's unpublished correspondence and on many other archival sources, Henry Kamen reveals much about Philip the youth, the man, the husband, the father, the frequently troubled Christian, and the king. Kamen finds that Philip was a cosmopolitan prince whose extensive experience of northern Europe broadened his cultural imagination and tastes, whose staunchly conservative ideas were far from being illiberal and fanatical, whose religious attitudes led him to accept a practical coexistence with Protestants and Jews, and whose support for Las Casas and other defenders of the Indians in America helped determine government policy. Shedding completely new light on most aspects of Philip's private life and, in consequence, on his public actions, the book is the definitive portrayal of Philip II.

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