

EL SABOR DE HEREJIA: THE EDICT OF 1525, THE ALUMBRADOS
AND THE INQUISITORS' USAGE OF *LOCURA*

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The *alumbrados* of Spain were a mystical Christian movement that arose in the 1510s. Initially enjoying noble patronage and an environment of spiritual exploration fostered by the reforms of Cardinal Cisneros, the *alumbrados* spread their ideas throughout Castile. Led by charismatic female spiritual leaders or *beatas*, the *alumbrados*' brief era of success ended when two of its leaders came before the Tribunal of Toledo in 1524. With a membership consisting mostly of second-generation *conversos*, the *alumbrados* advocated an interiorized approach to Christianity under the aegis of *dejamiento*. The meditational practice of *dejamiento* called upon its practitioners to "abandon" themselves to God and His will effectively releasing themselves from their ties (*ataduras*) to the material world that included the Church and the priesthood.

By 1525, convinced of the heretical nature of *alumbradismo*, the Inquisitors published *El edicto contra los alumbrados* consisting of 48 *alumbrado* Propositions followed by official Inquisitorial refutation and condemnation. The Edict of 1525 presented the *alumbrados* as a dangerous group of heretics in its attempt to delegitimize their beliefs.

This study focuses on the Inquisitors' diction in their responses to and qualifications of the *alumbrado* Propositions, specifically their usage of the words *loca* (crazy) and *locura*

(madness). The usage of *loca* is then placed within a discourse about the attitudes prevalent in Castilian society towards conversos and beatas with the understanding that stereotyping and general dislike and fear of both groups contributed much to the Inquisitors' reactions to the *alumbrado* Propositions. The Edict also reveals the Inquisitors' interpretative difficulties in classifying *alumbradismo* and placing it within their continuum of heresy. The usage of *loca* as a negative qualifier in Inquisitorial responses was meant to highlight the danger the movement posed to Catholic orthodoxy. The *alumbrados* challenged the Inquisitors' cosmological views and pre-established categories of heresy. In turn, the Inquisitors designated the *alumbrados* a novelty placing them in a third space of heresy, one neither crypto-Jewish nor Protestant and lying somewhere between heterodoxy and orthodoxy.

The analysis of the intertwined factors of the Inquisitorial portrayal of the *alumbrados* and the *alumbrados*' status as conversos and women is placed within an overall discourse that addresses the historiographic problems that historians of *alumbradismo* have faced. As such, the *alumbrados* are presented as free as possible from labels of heresy or comparison to other contemporary religious movements. Inquisitorial testimonies and documents remain the primary sources of *alumbrado* history, however, this thesis attempts to set aside the Inquisitors' interpretation of *alumbradismo* when representing their ideas. The *alumbrados* then function as an example of the growing spiritual and religious unrest prevalent in sixteenth century Europe and as an example of a uniquely converso understanding of Christianity.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The alumbrados of Castile were a movement that caused much trouble during the first three decades of the sixteenth century. Their ideas were represented by the “Big Three” *beatas* who, under noble patronage, for at least a decade previous to the arrest in 1524 of the “mother” of the movement (Isabel de la Cruz) had successfully proselytized and spread their ideas throughout Old and New Castile.¹ Prospering in the environment of Catholic spiritual exploration fostered by the personal theological interests of the Archbishop of Toledo Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros the alumbrados presented an interiorized approach to Christianity. Equipped with the meditational practice of *dejamiento* the alumbrados stressed the importance of an individual, pseudo-mystical “abandonment” to God and His will. They also emphasized the insignificance of external rituals and works, calling them *ataduras* or “shackles” to the material world, ties that only served to hinder one’s abandonment to God.

The alumbrados certainly were a charismatic bunch; they enjoyed success with the elites of Castilian society, *comuneros*, but above all with women and conversos. As a religious movement led by women the alumbrados were part of a growing trend of individual, charismatic female piety. By the time of Cardinal Cisneros’s death in 1517, however, the era of the alumbrados and their grassroots converso spirituality was nearing its end. While the actual heyday of their movement was short-lived the alumbrados made a huge impact upon the minds

¹ A *beata* is a woman who for a variety of reasons, usually lack of money, cannot enter a traditional religious order. These spiritually inclined women frequently became part of lay orders like the Franciscan tertiary order; as a result they were semi-autonomous, grassroots religious figures in their communities who were often possessed of visions or other perceived spiritual benefices. For more on the *beatas* see: Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) and Ángela Muñoz Fernández, *Beatas y Santas Neocastellanas: Ambivalencia de la Religión Correctoras del Poder (SS XIV-XVII)* (Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, Dirección General de la Mujer, 1994) and Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, “Negotiating Sanctity: Holy Women in Sixteenth-Century Spain”, *Church History* 64, no. 3 (Sep. 1995): 373-388.

of the Inquisitors who prosecuted them and upon the Spanish religious imagination, an impact that would last across seas and time.

The primary document of interest in this paper is the *Edicto de los Alumbrados de Toledo*. The Edict, bearing the date of 23rd September 1525, is the seminal document in alumbrado history. Consisting of 48 alumbrado Propositions followed by the Inquisitors' qualifications, the Edict simultaneously allows us to gaze into the alumbrados' beliefs and the Inquisitors' opinion of the movement. The Edict is a form of propaganda in that it presents the alumbrado beliefs through the filter of the Inquisitors' qualifications and interpretations. It is also like propaganda in that it was a publicly circulated document, one that was read aloud by priests to the Castilian Catholic masses. When one reads the Edict of 1525 it becomes quite apparent that the Inquisitors who gathered in conference to draft this document sought to craft a particular image of the alumbrados. The Inquisitors' refutations of and reactions to the alumbrado Propositions present an interesting mix of emotions and thought processes, from cool and collected theological defenses of Catholic doctrine to virtually instinctual, scandalized emotional responses. In particular, the Inquisitors referred to eight of the alumbrado Propositions as containing ideas that were *loca* or "crazy". This paper seeks to explain the usage of *locura* as an Inquisitorial response to alumbrado doctrines by individually analyzing each instance of the qualification's usage in the context of the Edict: from the point of view of the Inquisitors and the alumbrados.

When the usage of *loca* is considered in light of the Edict's tone and mood it becomes apparent that the Inquisitors' sought to craft a particular image of the alumbrados as the antithesis of Catholic orthodoxy. This image in turn was based on several factors: the doctrinal and theological implications of the alumbrados' doctrines, the status of the movement's leaders

as *beatas* and the converso background of a majority of the movement's members. At the same time that it seeks to present a negative image of the alumbrados the Edict also bears witness to the interpretative difficulties that the alumbrados presented the Inquisitors, difficulties that were related to the novelty of the movement. Ultimately, it is the combination of the alumbrados' public presentation in the Edict with the cognitive difficulties brought about by the movement's novelty that has led me to conclude that the alumbrados presented both a uniquely converso take on Christianity and a significant enough threat that the Inquisitors were forced to place the movement in its own "space". The alumbrados challenged the Inquisitors' Catholic cosmology and worldview. In turn, responding to this challenge to their pre-established categories of heresy, the Inquisitors declared the alumbrados a novelty, placing them in a third space of heresy; a space that was neither crypto-Jewish nor Protestant and one that lay somewhere within or without orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

The Castilian Alumbrados' Historical Background

In May of 1519 the Inquisitorial tribunal of Toledo received the denouncement of a certain *beata*, Mari Núñez. Núñez for at least seven years prior had formed part of a movement now known to us as *alumbradismo*.² Núñez, along with her friend Isabel de la Cruz, for a time had comprised the core of the movement. Isabel del la Cruz was a member of the tertiary order of the Franciscans and like Núñez she enjoyed the patronage of the large, influential and affluent Mendoza family.³ Núñez's influence and popularity as a *beata*, however, were waning and in a

² Some English and Spanish language secondary sources may also refer to this movement as "illuminism" or "Iluminismo", but for the most part "alumbradismo" and its adjective "alumbrado" remain the most popular designations. Alumbradismo is a term that quite often instigates curiosity in people, especially if you use its alternative designation of illuminism, but in spite of popular portrayals, e.g. Dan Brown's novels, this movement has little to do with its fictional counterparts.

³ The Mendozas, of converso background, were the third Dukes of Infantado during this time period.

bid to best her rival she denounced Isabel and two of her followers, Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz and María de Cazalla, to the Inquisition in Toledo.⁴

A few months later, in December of 1519, the Inquisitorial tribunal of Valladolid called for Francisca Hernández. Hernández like her colleagues in Guadalajara was a *beata* and without university education. Initially, however, Hernández and her followers were separate from those of Cruz and Núñez. In Valladolid Francisca established a strong male following, particularly amongst the Franciscan order, and was “reputed for her beauty, her holiness, and her miraculous powers of healing.”⁵ It is this male following that garnered the Inquisition’s attention and led to their investigation of the relations between Francisca and her followers. She was soon released upon the condition that she was to be monitored by the Inquisition. It is at this time that Hernández lodged with the royal accountant Pedro de Cazalla, a cousin of María. During her time at Cazalla’s home Francisca once again became the object of controversy when Pedro’s wife Leonor became jealous of the attention that he gave to Francisca. Eventually Francisca would be denounced by Leonor de Cazalla and brought before the Inquisition in 1529.⁶

The first denunciations did not lead to any trials for either the group in Guadalajara under Cruz’s tutelage or for Hernández’s group in Valladolid. Those in Guadalajara were simply reprimanded and released. The exact reasons for the Inquisition’s leniency in the case of the Guadalajara group is not known. It may have been due to the aristocratic protection enjoyed by Cruz and Alcaraz. Pedro Alcaraz’s skills as a lawyer may also have been a factor in persuading

⁴ Alastair Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alumbrados* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1992), 51. Hamilton asserts that the origins of Núñez’s denunciation stem from “squabbles in the households of the Mendozas.” The Mendozas, were the primary patrons of the alumbrada *beatas* at the time. Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza was the head of the family holding the title of the third Duke of Infantado, “one of the richest and most powerful of the Spanish grandees”. See Hamilton, 21.

⁵ Hamilton, 52.

⁶ For more on the fascinating history of Francisca Hernández see Mary E. Giles, “Francisca Hernández and the Sexuality of Religious Dissent,” in *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World*, ed. Mary E. Giles. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999): 76-77.

the inquisitor Juan de Mendoza of the benign nature of his religious ideas.⁷ It is also possible that the *comunero* revolt of May 1520-April 1521 were a factor in the delay of the alumbrados' persecution by the Inquisition.⁸ The revolt's origins lay in the attempt of imperial advisers to force the Cortes to allocate funds for Emperor Charles V's travelling expenses. Due to this attempt on the part of the Crown to infringe the traditional rights of Castilian cities, groups of rebels formed and banded together. Some of the rebels with a more radical bent called for the abolition of the Holy Office and equal rights before landowners. By September 1520 the nobility became involved, successfully combating the rebel threat on behalf of the absent Emperor. By April of 1521 the rebel groups had been defeated. During the time of the revolt, however, there was much turbulence throughout Castile, particularly in Toledo and its environs as the city had been the first to rebel and the last to surrender. The degree to which the revolt can be used to explain away the delay in the alumbrados' persecution is uncertain, as the Inquisitors found time to hear other cases during the period of the revolt. By the time of the final arrests of Alcaraz and Isabel in 1524, however, the *comunero* revolt had set the tone of the Inquisitors' approach to alumbradismo. The *comunero* revolt had ushered in "a major religious change in the Holy Roman Empire...Charles's northern territories were threatened by the spread of Lutheranism, and the Spaniards were taking precautions not to be affected by it."⁹ In any case, the two groups were to make contact in the intervening time between 1519 and the appearance of the Edict against the alumbrados in 1525.

⁷ See Hamilton, 55 for speculation on this episode.

⁸ For more detailed information on the revolt see Hamilton, 53-55. See also Antonio Márquez, *Los Alumbrados: Orígenes y Filosofía, 1525-1559* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1972), 64 and 170.

⁹ Hamilton, 55.

Proselytizing throughout Castile

During the five years before the first alumbrado arrests in 1519 Isabel de la Cruz and María de Cazalla, who by now had become a *beata* in her own right, proselytized in the towns around their home base of Guadalajara and the University of Alcalá. Pedro Alcaraz played a significant role in this process. As a lawyer he had to travel frequently, usually busying himself with administering his employers' estates. The preeminent alumbrado historian, Antonio Márquez, while recognizing the central role played by Cruz as the “mother” of alumbradismo, characterizes Alcaraz as Cruz's “spokesman and systematizer” (*el portavoz y sistematizador*).¹⁰ It is on one of his travels to Valladolid that Alcaraz encountered Francisca Hernández and her devoted disciple, Fray Francisco Ortiz. For reasons not fully known Hernandez refused to grant Alcaraz an audience. On the other hand, Francisca's devoted follower Ortiz met with Alcaraz, as the fray seems to “have been favorably impressed” by his encounter with Pedro.¹¹ Alcaraz's opinions of Hernández and her followers, however, were less than favorable; when the time came Alcaraz was one of the first to denounce Ortiz. Alcaraz also never forgave Hernández for refusing to meet with him.¹² For his part, Alcaraz appears to have been a fiery and opinionated figure, someone who easily became embroiled in quarrels and disagreements with others especially over religious matters.¹³

From 1519-1524 the alumbrados continued to grow in number throughout Castile under the influence of the “Big Three” beatas: Isabel de la Cruz, María de Cazalla and Francisca Hernández. Gaining members in Pastrana, Cifuentes, Toledo, Guadalajara, and Valladolid and, with Hernández's eventual relocation, Salamanca. Their successes in those cities point to a

¹⁰ Márquez, 109-110. My translation.

¹¹ Hamilton, 56-57.

¹² Hamilton, 56-57.

¹³ Hamilton, 55-63. Márquez, 57-70.

correlation between where the alumbrados proselytized and who their audience was. The doctrines of the alumbrados primarily attracted clergymen, especially Franciscans, university educated laity, and women.¹⁴ There was also a significant number of “semi-educated laymen” who became involved in alumbrado activities. These were likely individuals who had no formal university education but may have received tutoring or schooling from Franciscans, other religious orders or learned individuals. Good portions of those who joined or at least participated in activities with the alumbrados were of *converso* background.¹⁵ In fact some of the individuals who are considered to be key members in the groups, such as Isabel de la Cruz, María de Cazalla Francisco Ortiz and Pedro Alcaraz were also of *converso* background.¹⁶ The converso alumbrados were a part of the second generation of Castilian New Christians.

While many of the alumbrados were conversos, there is no evidence of crypto-Judaism among their number. Several alumbrado historians, including Alastair Hamilton, Antonio Márquez and J.C. Nieto, have emphatically stated that the alumbrados were not crypto-Jews.¹⁷ This does not, however, exclude the influence of their Jewish cultural roots on the alumbrados’ ideas, nor does their converso status signify that they could not be devoted Christians. In fact, Hamilton tends to view the alumbrados as victims of their own overzealousness for

¹⁴ Hamilton, 56. It seems likely that the environment of learning and liberal arts afforded by great institutions like the Universities of Alcalá and Salamanca contributed much to alumbrado thought and success. Surprisingly, however, the alumbrado movement’s frequent proximity to university environments is oft mentioned, but does not seem to have been treated in any academic study. The full extent of the movement’s spread is also not known, although other groups calling themselves *alumbrado* would later pop up in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Extremadura and Andalusia and even the Americas.

¹⁵ To what degree they drew in the common folk of Castile remains uncertain. Other than the documents pertaining to the earliest members and leaders, we unfortunately do not have any records for the number or backgrounds of the regular, rank and file members of the movement. For a discussion of available alumbrado sources see Márquez, 23-36 and J. Ignacio Tellechea Idigoras, *Textos inéditos sobre el fenómeno de los alumbrados* (Rome: Ephemerides Carmeliticae, 1962).

¹⁶ Francisca Hernández was not of a *converso* family.

¹⁷ Hamilton, 69-71. Márquez, 86-94. J.C. Nieto, “The Heretical Alumbrados Dexados: Isabel de la Cruz and Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 52, no. 4 (1978): 293-313.

Christianity.¹⁸ Such a characterization, however, while certainly probable must not be the only means of understanding the alumbrados as it oversimplifies their socio-cultural situation. Chapter 4, addresses the alumbrados' converso status and the role that status played in the Inquisitors' attitudes towards alumbrado ideas.

In hindsight the alumbrados' successes with the upper echelons of sixteenth-century Castilian society was a blessing and a curse. The patronage that many of them enjoyed either from members of the nobility, as in the case of Alcaraz and Cruz, or the support that came from their loyal followers, such as in the case of Hernández and her Franciscan fanbase, served to fuel the spread of their movement throughout the countryside and cities. It is also what led to our document of interest, the Edict of 1525. In persecuting the alumbrados, the Inquisition and the alumbrados' rivals used the very same network of patronage, friendships and acquaintances that allowed the alumbrados to proselytize and practice their doctrines to denounce and try them. All of the denunciations that were delivered to the Inquisition were from individuals who personally knew and had had dealings with one member of the alumbrado movement or another. Similarly, it was Alcaraz's proselytizing activities and relationships with several Franciscans that led to the arrests and subsequent trials of him and Isabel de la Cruz in 1524.

Arrest and Sentencing

The proselytizing activities and successes of the alumbrados received its first serious blows in the spring of 1524. These blows came in spite of initial Inquisitorial misgivings that had given Alcaraz the impression that the case of the Guadalajara group was closed and that he was thus allowed to continue in the movement.¹⁹ The previous environment of religious and cultural diversity, reform and renaissance under the sponsorship of Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros that

¹⁸ Hamilton, 129.

¹⁹ Hamilton, 55. See also corresponding endnote #14 on page 139.

saw the publishing of a polyglot Bible in Toledo and the opening up of professorships in Hebrew and Arabic in Alcalá did not do anything to lessen the fervor of Inquisitorial prosecution. Alcaraz and Isabel de la Cruz had once again come under investigation, this time it involved a messy and complicated affair between Alcaraz and men he viewed as either his opponents or deviants from his own interpretation of *alumbradismo*. It was during this messy affair that Alcaraz was under the service of Don Diego López Pacheco, the Marquess of Villena.²⁰

At the Marquess's estate in Escalona Alcaraz seems to have successfully proselytized and made alumbrados of the Marquess and his wife as well as a Mercederian fray. During this time Alcaraz met two men, Fray Juan de Olmillos and Fray Francisco de Ocaña who were, in J.C. Nieto's terminology, "apocalyptic Franciscans". Ocaña was wont to have prophetic visions and trances.²¹ Visions and trances were a point of contention for Alcaraz as it was for other alumbrados including Isabel de la Cruz. Alcaraz, however, had already had some disagreements for some time with Fray Francisco Ortiz and Francisco de Osuna concerning the value of these mystical endeavors. Alcaraz considered trances, visions and prophecy to be *ataduras* and thus undesirable. To engage in such activity would hinder one's *dejamiento* or abandonment to God by refocusing the mind on prophecies that concerned themselves with the material.

Alcaraz's fervor, which in the past had given him successes in his proselytizing activities, was once again causing trouble. Hamilton opines, "Alcaraz continued to engineer his own downfall. He made no secret of his disapproval of those numerous individuals who had fallen under the spell of Ocaña and Olmillos or who had been duped by Francisca Hernández."²² In his

²⁰ Alcaraz served the Marquess from roughly January 1523 through April 1524, his service to the Marquess ending of course with his arrest.

²¹ For more on the prophetic-apocalyptic visions of Ocaña and Olmillos, which culminated in a reform of the Church in Rome aided by a revised Bible edited by Francisca Hernández and the installation of a new pope at the hands of the Marquess de Villena, see Hamilton, 58-59 and J.C. Nieto, "The Franciscan Alumbrados and the Prophetic-Apocalyptic Tradition," in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (October, 1977): 3-16.

²² Hamilton, 60.

attempts to denounce Ocaña and Olmillos to the Franciscan provincial Alcaraz instead succeeded in calling attention to himself. In May of 1524 Francisco de Quiñones, the general of the Franciscan order, held the Inquisitorial chapter of Toledo in Escalona. On the 22nd of May a decree was issued that condemned the practices and activities of Isabel de la Cruz and Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz.²³

In spite of interventions by the Marquess of Villena on their behalf the pair were imprisoned, their trials and imprisonment lasting until 1529. Neither was put to death for his or her own heretical behavior. Both, however, suffered public humiliations including the wearing of the San Benito, the confiscation of their property and confinement in convents. By 1540 their confinements ended, their lives seemingly having returned to some normalcy.²⁴ When arrested in March of 1529 Francisca Hernández denounced a number of her former fellow alumbrados, including María de Cazalla, to the Inquisitors. Why she did this not entirely clear, but because she was not a typical *beata* it is postulated that she was simply trading favors with the Holy Office in order to ensure that her imprisonment remained “of the most comfortable kind” with a maid and other niceties.²⁵ When her time for sentencing came Francisca was “confined in a convent of beatas of St. Benedict...it was not long before she moved to the house of one Perez de Montalvo and effectively disappears from the pages of history.”²⁶ Even after having been

²³ Hamilton, 60. See also Márquez, 57-70.

²⁴ Hamilton, 61-62. Their movements, however, would be limited for the rest of their lives. Alcaraz was allowed to venture only within the precincts of Toledo while Cruz had to remain within Guadalajara.

²⁵ Hamilton, 83. Giles, 76 notes Francisca’s tastes, which were uncharacteristic for a *beata*: “Nor was austerity to her liking: her apostolate was in the world, and her critics would say, of the world as well. For comforts she had servants, excellent food, a soft bed with fine linen, and the company of men to whom she generously extended hospitality.” Most alumbrado historians, including Alastair Hamilton, J.C. Nieto and Antonio Márquez, steep Francisca Hernández in very harsh judgment. Mary Giles’s *Francisca Hernández and the Sexuality of Religious Dissent* is an excellent overview and refutation of this historiographic attitude towards Hernández. In short, Giles argues that we simply do not have enough details to pass judgment on Francisca and that she must be considered in light of her personal relationships with her closest followers, particularly Fray Francisco Ortiz, and the overall position of women in Castilian society during the sixteenth century. Giles’s thesis will be briefly addressed in the next chapter.

²⁶ Giles, 94.

denounced by Francisca, María de Cazalla was arrested rather late in 1532. María's late arrest was likely due to her "higher social standing" and the ties she enjoyed to the elite of Castile.²⁷ It is this higher social standing that probably also afforded María one of the lightest sentences: she was simply abjured *de levi* and fined one hundred ducats.²⁸

While the Inquisition essentially squashed the alumbrado movement in Toledo, the ideas and spirit of alumbradismo were not. "Alumbrado" entered the Inquisitors' vocabulary of heresy and would remain in use as a category of heretical behavior into the seventeenth century. By the late sixteenth century in Extremadura and Seville other groups of individuals calling themselves alumbrados arose. While bearing some similarities, these groups were not exactly the same as the original Castilian iteration of alumbradismo. The scholarship on the groups in southern Spain has grown much in the last two decades, but these groups are even more problematic than their Castilian antecedents. On good grounds historians of the Castilian alumbrados question the sincerity of belief of the Llerena and Seville groups as well as the exact nature of their ties to the Castilian group(s).²⁹ The focus of this thesis will remain the alumbrados of early sixteenth century Castile up until the arrest of Francisca Hernández in 1529.

The Edict

On the 23rd of September 1525 the Inquisitor General Alonso Manrique issued *El Edicto de Los Alumbrados de Toledo*. The Edict is a "list of forty-eight Propositions, which gives a valuable summary of [alumbrado] doctrine and leaves little doubt that their beliefs were indeed

²⁷ María's brother was a Franciscan and had been a chaplain to Cardinal Cisneros before becoming a "titular bishop of Verissa in Thrace, visitor of the archbishopric of Toledo and coadjutor of the bishop of Avila". María herself married Lope de Rueda a wealthy merchant from Guadalajara. She also enjoined the friendship of the Duke of Infantado's family, which afforded her connections to the "most distinguished scholars at the nearby university of Alcalá." See Hamilton, 27-28.

²⁸ Hamilton, 88.

²⁹ Hamilton, 115-128. See especially page 132 where he writes about the groups in southern Spain as having "played into the hands of the enemies of mysticism who used them, in more or less good faith, to discredit the teaching [of *alumbradismo*] in all its forms."

heretical” from the Inquisition’s perspective.³⁰ The Edict is perhaps the most important document on the alumbrados because it is sourced from Inquisitorial testimony. The forty-eight propositions are laid out in a statement-response format with an alumbrado statement on doctrine followed by the official Inquisitorial reaction and judgment. The Edict was designed to be a primer on alumbrados, a spotter’s guide to the movement’s doctrines.³¹ Essentially, it is *the* central document both in the history of the movement and in alumbrado historiography.³² J.C. Nieto has quite astutely observed that scholars cannot agree on the “proper interpretation of this important Edict”, a document that is quite frequently the starting point of works on the alumbrado phenomenon.³³

Another significant aspect of the Edict is the presence of “Luther’s ghost”. The Edict of 1525 denounces some alumbrado propositions as being “Lutheran” (*luterano*). The presence of “Luther’s ghost” is demonstrative of the tumultuous times in which the alumbrados lived. In the years before the Edict was issued Charles V had to contend with the *comunero* revolt. The Americas were being developed as colonies and what we have come to call the Reformation was beginning to take shape. The religious climate certainly mirrored what John van Engen has

³⁰ Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 86. Lu Ann Homza, *The Spanish Inquisition 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), 81 states that there is no reason to doubt their status as a representation of alumbrado beliefs since “the errors it enumerates stem from Isabel’s and Pedro’s trials.” Homza derives this information from Márquez who enumerates the source of each of the edict’s propositions. See Márquez, 103-112 but especially footnote 3 on p. 105. The Edict itself can be found in three manuscript copies in the Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid. Marcel Bataillon, Angela Selke, and P. Vicente Beltrán all have edited copies, labeled A and B by Márquez, of the Edict, however, Antonio Márquez’s edition currently remains the authoritative critical presentation of the document. On pages 26-39 Márquez states that the third manuscript he discovered, C, is the earliest dating it to the first half of the sixteenth century while A and B are said to date to the first three decades of the seventeenth century.

³¹ Movement is the term I prefer for the alumbrados since calling them by what the Inquisition would have wished us to, heresy, is far too loaded and overburdened with centuries of academic analysis and opinion. Thus I will use terms like ‘movement’ or ‘group’ to denote the alumbrados. I will also refer to the alumbrados in the lower case since there is no set system of beliefs that could indicate an Alumbradismo, with a capital “A” as a specific and identifiable religious movement.

³² Selke, Márquez, Nieto, Homza, Hamilton, and Bataillon among others all heavily use and refer to the document in their works.

³³ Nieto, “The Heretical Alumbrados”, 296.

called “the long fifteenth century”, a time in which “everyone belonged to religion and yet no less to the world.”³⁴ It is this “world busy with religious questing, with multiple options” that the alumbrados lived in and belonged to.³⁵ In approaching the alumbrados we must remember to be unlike the Inquisitors who drafted the Edict, and unlike historians who have sought to label them and classify the alumbrados as being made up of bits and pieces of one heresy or another. Rather we must try to see it from the perspective of the alumbrados, as van Engen puts it “from the inside and in context”.³⁶

The Appeal of Alumbrado Ideas

So what is it about the alumbrados that attracted so much attention? In one word it is called *dejamiento*. *Dejamiento* loosely translated means “abandonment”. It was a form of pseudo-mystical meditation that rested at the core of alumbrado thought and basically required one to let oneself go towards God.³⁷ The exact mechanics and methods behind *dejamiento* are not really known to us. What we do know is that if one abandoned oneself to God one would ultimately either join with God or fully live within His grace. *Dejamiento* was likely based on a Franciscan practice called *recogimiento* or “gathering up” that entailed a process of bringing oneself to God. *Dejamiento*, however, was the taking of the *recogimiento* concept to the extreme. While *recogimiento* concerned itself with “the active seclusion of the mind in order to achieve union with God”, *dejamiento* “called for the passive submission of the soul to God’s will.”³⁸ *Dejamiento* was perhaps the sole religious practice/ritual of the alumbrado movement, while

³⁴ John Van Engen, “Multiple Options: The World of the Fifteenth-Century Church,” *Church History*, 77:2 (June 2008): 265.

³⁵ Van Engen, 283.

³⁶ Van Engen, 283.

³⁷ My usage of “pseudo-mystical” to describe the *alumbrado* mystical experience is derived from Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo’s writings on *alumbradismo*.

³⁸ Nora E. Jaffary, *False Mystics: Deviant Orthodoxy in Colonial Mexico*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 29.

recogimiento was meant to function alongside other traditional Catholic practices such as the taking of the host and confession; practices which the alumbrados rejected.³⁹

The Edict provides us with a good example of the benefits of *dejamiento*: “the love of man God in man is God. And they could abandon themselves to this love of God, which directs people in such a way that they cannot sin mortally or venially...and once someone reaches this state, there is nothing more to merit.”⁴⁰ The degree to which *dejamiento* and alumbradismo in general was a mystical experience is a highly debated aspect of alumbrado historiography, and one which is overviewed in Chapter 2. Suffice it to say for now that “pseudo-mysticism”, an idea originally proposed by Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo and elaborated upon by Angela Selke, seems the most practicable and beneficial stance to take in approaching this issue.⁴¹ The decision to think of *dejamiento* as a pseudo-mystical experience is also partly inspired by the similarities that their ideas bare to those of the heresy of the Free Spirit.⁴²

The ideas present in alumbradismo can be placed as part of a long tradition of medieval Christian piety. Doctrinally speaking the fourteenth century heresy of the Free Spirit has much in common with the Castilian alumbrados of the sixteenth century.⁴³ The Free Spirits held a similar doctrine of passive surrender to the will of God, they also expressed contempt and disinterest in external works and ceremonies, and they also emphasized the capacity of each individual to

³⁹ Márquez, 108, refers to *dejamiento* as “the central nucleus of Castilian illuminism”. My translation.

⁴⁰ *Edict of the Alumbrados of Toledo*, Proposition 9. For the full text in English and Spanish see, respectively: Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 84 or Márquez, 276.

⁴¹ Angela Selke, “Algunos datos nuevos sobre los primeros alumbrados: el edicto de 1525 y su relación con el proceso de Alcaraz,” *Bulletin Hispanique*, Vol. LIV, No. 1, (1952): 128-129. Selke cites Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, likely his *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* but does not give pagination, see footnote #3 on page 128 of Selke’s “Algunos datos”.

⁴² I do not intend to offer a direct comparison to the Free Spirit heresy but rather intend to use it as a tool to think with in speculations about the nature of alumbradismo. Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 112. notes, “focusing on internal spiritual truth, they [the alumbrados] steered perilously close to the centuries-old heresy of the Free Spirit, which taught that humans could attain a state of perfection placing them above all human authority,”

⁴³ For more on the Free Spirits see: Robert E. Lerner *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.)

interpret the Bible without any religious intermediaries.⁴⁴ While it is not possible to ascribe the direct influence of the ideas of the Free Spirits to the alumbrados, one can trace the spread of these ideas through time. Almost simultaneous to the Free Spirits the conventual Franciscan “sect of the Spirit of Freedom” arose in central Italy and Provence. Like the alumbrados the sect of the Spirit of Freedom proclaimed the non-existence of hell, supporting the notion of “the freedom of the will...when a certain state of grace has been reached, man can do whatever he likes and whatever he does is perfect.”⁴⁵

Closer to home the alumbrados shared some ideas with a movement known simply as “the heretics of Durango”. This heresy came about in the 1440s under the leadership of the Franciscan Fray Alfonso de Mella in the eponymous town of Durango, located near Bilbao in the Basque country. Alfonso expressed himself in terms that implied his own illumination by the Holy Spirit stating that God “declare[d] in my heart that His holy law and Gospels have never hitherto been explained satisfactorily by experts, according to the authentic truth which they contain, and therefore require a new and urgent exposition.”⁴⁶ Hamilton notes that like in the alumbrados’ doctrines there is also “a discernible antinomianism in [Alfonso’s] beliefs.”⁴⁷

Alumbradismo also has some ideological ties to Pedro de Osma, a distinguished scholar and professor of theology who wrote *De confessione*, a work that the Inquisition of Aragon condemned as heretical and subsequently destroyed. Osma questioned the powers of clergy to grant absolution, the Church’s ability to punish individuals with “the pains of purgatory” and above all the notion that confession was not divine but rather canon law.⁴⁸ As a result of having

⁴⁴ Hamilton, 43. Such were the similarities that the Inquisitors’ responses to Proposition 34 and 43 note that those are propositions “condemned by the Church against the Beghards.” See Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 89. Márquez, 281.

⁴⁵ Hamilton, 44.

⁴⁶ Hamilton, 45.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hamilton, 45-46.

his ideas declared a heresy Osma abjured and retired to a convent in Alcalá where he spent the rest of his days. In spite of censure Osma's ideas did not die with him. While no direct influence can be attributed, the alumbrados, like Osma, denied the existence of hell and also questioned the necessity of auricular confession, saying that it was "not divine but positive law".⁴⁹

We cannot firmly establish any direct links to the Free Spirits, the heretics of Durango or any of the many quasi-heretical ideas prevalent during this time. Based on the ties enjoyed by the alumbrados to Franciscans and other learned individuals, however, it is likely that the alumbrados picked up these ideas from the general "theological ether" of sixteenth century Castile. They are ideas that questioned some of the most basic tenets of Catholic doctrine and which had already been floating around for centuries before the time of Erasmus and Luther. They are also ideas and interpretations that by the 1510s were part and parcel of the Castilian religious and theological climate.

Thus, as a whole, the appeal of alumbradismo stems from its focus on the individual and personal liberty. It is a movement that encourages "the participation of all the faithful in Biblical hermeneutics" without ecclesiastical intermediaries.⁵⁰ Alumbradismo calls upon its followers to love God, to love themselves and to love their fellows. Alumbradismo is "loving God without a why".⁵¹ The alumbrados, as such, ran in the currents and in the traditions of Christian interiority.⁵² It was a movement that focused on direct Scriptural interpretation and *personal* interaction with God without the need for saints, officials, or complex theological interpretations.

⁴⁹ Alumbrado Proposition 8, see Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 84 and Márquez, 276.

⁵⁰ Angela Muñoz Fernandez, "Madre y Maestra, Autora de Doctrina. Isabel de la Cruz y el Alumbradismo Toledano del Primer Tercio del Siglo XVI," *De Leer a Escribir I: La educación de las mujeres: ¿libertad o subordinación?* ed. Cristina Segura Graiño (Madrid: A.C. Al-Mudayna, 1996), 103.

⁵¹ John van Engen, "Free Spirits, Lay Religion, and Clerical Suspicion: Inside the Late Medieval Church", University of Florida, Gainesville, 3 September 2009.

⁵² Melquíades Andrés, "Common Denominator of Alumbrados, Erasmians, 'Lutherans,' and Mystics: The Risk of a More 'Intimate' Spirituality," *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 457-494.

Most importantly it was a movement that sought to fulfill the promise made by 2 Corinthians 3:17, “And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”.⁵³ The alumbrados “do not represent a solution [to problems of] continuity, but rather on the contrary: [they are] a new state of doctrinal evolution within European Christian heterodoxy. Their tradition is as certain as their novelty or originality.”⁵⁴ It is difficult, however, to fully appreciate alumbradismo’s appeal without first understanding the complexities of its historiography. To this we now turn.

⁵³ Hamilton, 45. Hamilton points out that Alfonso de Mella, like the Beghards, cited this passage in defense of his ideas. It seems to me that this same Biblical passage can be applied to the alumbrados.

⁵⁴ Márquez, 117. My translation.

CHAPTER 2 ALUMBRADO HISTORIOGRAPHY

Unfortunately for historians the *procesos* of Isabel de la Cruz and Francisca Hernández do not survive.¹ For those two out of the “Big Three” the only available trial material is what was said about them in the trials of other individuals, such as María de Cazalla and Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz, whose *procesos* do survive. As such, the two trials of Cazalla and Alcaraz are valuable sources for reconstructing the narrative of the alumbrados as well as some general alumbrado ideas and attitudes. Another important source is Francisco Ortiz’s letters to the Inquisitor General Manrique written while Ortiz was imprisoned at the Toledo tribunal. Ortiz’s letters number four, the first of which was published by Lu Ann Homza in English translation while the rest remain unpublished in English translation.² As of yet all four letters also remain unpublished in Spanish. Ortiz’s *proceso* survives as well and was the subject of a 1968 study by Angela Selke.³ What is particularly interesting about Ortiz’s letters is that they were written as a personal defense against Inquisitorial charges and as a sort of polemic aimed at those who did not believe in the sanctity and holiness of his most beloved teacher Francisca Hernández. Ortiz’s letters offers us a glimpse into the personal dynamic between *beata* and follower.⁴ Thus, most of the details we have on the activities and personal lives of the alumbrados come from trial testimonies, letters or sources that, like the Edict of 1525 itself, are either direct products of the Inquisition or forever in its shadow.

¹ Excerpts and references to Isabel’s *proceso* extracted from the trials of her comrades can be found in John E. Longhurst, “La Beata Isabel de la Cruz Ante la Inquisición: 1524-1529,” *Cuadernos de Historia de España*, Vol. XXV-XXVI, (1957): 279-303.

² Homza’s translation of the first of the letters can be found in Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 93-102.

³ Angela Selke, *El Santo Oficio de la Inquisición: proceso de Fr. Francisco Ortiz, 1529-1532*. (Madrid: Ediciones Guadarrama, 1968).

⁴ For more on Ortiz and his letters see Lu Ann Homza, “How to Harass an Inquisitor General: The Polyphonic Law of Friar Francisco Ortiz,” in *A Renaissance of Conflicts: Visions and Revisions of Law and Society in Italy and Spain*, eds. John A. Marino and Thomas Kuehn. (Toronto: Center for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2004).

Alumbrado historiography, like the alumbrados themselves, is a complicated affair. While the number of works written about the alumbrados is vast, the majority of available secondary source material is in Spanish, a bulk of which dates to the 1960s and 1970s. These two decades seem to have been a high point in alumbrado scholarship, having witnessed the publication of numerous monographs and articles, including the most eminent works by Márquez, Nieto, and Selke. Since then there have been a dozen or so works and articles published including material in English. The English language literature on the alumbrados is sparse, consisting of articles (most of them written by J.C. Nieto) and books by the likes of Lu Ann Homza and Alastair Hamilton.⁵ Homza's works represent the most recent English scholarship on the alumbrados, including a magnificent translation of the Edict of 1525 and a thorough article on the "The Polyphonic Law of Friar Francisco Ortiz" that analyzes the four letters written by the Franciscan. To date alumbrado historiography in English and Spanish has focused on certain core problems. These include determining the origins of the movement, the mystical (or not) nature of their doctrines, and laying out the basics of alumbrado doctrine and belief. A significant obstacle is the paucity of primary source material in the alumbrados' own words. Letters written by Francisco Ortiz and Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz survive, but no writings whatsoever by the hand of the three beatas, who were so central to the movement. In short, the principal primary sources that are available come from the Inquisition, be they *procesos* or the edicts.⁶

This has heavily influenced, for better or worse, the approach taken by historians in dealing with the alumbrados. The alumbrado movement and its members are frequently

⁵ Hamilton's is the only English language survey on the alumbrados of Castile and southern Spain.

⁶ The Inquisition would issue other edicts in southern Spain and later on in the Americas when alumbradismo resurfaced in those areas, albeit in mutated forms. Interestingly enough the subsequent edicts were all based on the original Edict of 1525 see Jaffary, 29.

presented using the language and terminology established by the Inquisitors. Thus, there is a tendency to look at and analyze the alumbrados as heretics linking them to other heresies or movements like Lutheranism, in a sincere attempt to better understand the movement. What happens, of course, is that historians remain trapped in the vocabulary established by the Inquisitors. The Inquisition's approach is simply taken for granted, since the majority of our sources on the alumbrados are either a product of the Inquisition or heavily influenced by it, and it is this Inquisitorial perspective that forms the basis and starting point of most historical analyses. Usually, when this perspective is taken, the alumbrados are looked upon as heresy either derisively or affectionately.

Alastair Hamilton's *Heresy and Mysticism in Sixteenth Century Spain* published in 1992 serves as an example of this latter phenomenon. In the conclusion to his survey Hamilton writes "there has been a tendency in Spanish historiography...to look at the *Alumbrados* with a certain sense of affection; they were indeed heretics, but they were Spanish heretics; their heterodoxy was the outcome of excessive zeal rather than of any deep hostility to Catholicism."⁷ Such a simple sentence is in itself a source of much argument in alumbrado historiography. Angela Selke, for example, would likely argue that there was a certain amount of resentment towards the Church among the members of the movement.⁸ In any case, Hamilton ends his work by depicting the alumbrados in this affectionate vein; their "evangelism...was attended by a genuine desire to reform the Church".⁹ Thus, while Hamilton recognizes the need to be distanced from the influence of Inquisitorial prejudices he does not let the alumbrados stand on their own terms either. They may not be heretics but rather they are zealous, although failed, reformers.

⁷ Hamilton, 129.

⁸ See Angela Selke, "El Iluminismo de los conversos y La Inquisición. Cristianismo interior de los alumbrados: resentimiento y sublimación," in *La Inquisición Española: Nueva Visión, Nuevos Horizontes*, ed. Joaquín Pérez Villanueva. (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España Editores, 1980), 617-636.

⁹ Hamilton, 132.

Similarly, Antonio Márquez's quintessential 1972 study *Los Alumbrados: Origenes y Filosofía* obsessively classifies and labels the alumbrados. By the book's conclusion Márquez posits, "Castilian illuminism (*iluminismo*) is one out of the many Protestant sects or if one desires a conventicle (*conventículo*) or ecclesiola, whose formal act constitutes a traditional Occidental mysticism, that is a Neoplatonic gnosticism revived by the Renaissance."¹⁰ Márquez asserts, "our conclusion is that illuminism in Castile is something that is both specific and restricted in sociological, historical and doctrinal terms."¹¹ One could say that inevitably any and all historical movements, events, and peoples are classed in specific and restricted terms; if not history would be impossible to manage as a discipline of inquiry. In general, the issue is that alumbrado historians have not left their preconceptions and prejudices "at the door" when dealing with the movement. Márquez clearly was convinced that they needed to be classed with Protestants and extinct Neoplatonists while Hamilton would rather have them be zealous reformers.

Lu Ann Homza wrote of Hamilton's work "in sum...[he] has made a valiant effort to introduce the Spanish *alumbrados* to an English-speaking audience, but a more successful one will grapple with the contradictions and relative emphases of their ideas and address the extent to which their doctrine was based on a dialogue between accused and inquisitor."¹² In one sentence Homza has managed to point to what can be called the core problem of alumbrado historiography. For the most part scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the basic makeup of the movement because of this. Therefore, before beginning this analysis two issues of alumbrado

¹⁰ Márquez, 266. My translation. See also page 175 where he similarly states: "As long as there is no evidence to the contrary, we shall maintain that Castilian illuminism generically belongs to the Protestant Reformation; and within that to the radical sects of a mystical character." My translation.

¹¹ Márquez, 263. My translation.

¹² Lu Ann Homza, review of *Hersey and Mysticism in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alumbrados*, by Alastair Hamilton, *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 67, No. 1 (March 1995): 199.

historiography need to be elaborated. The first is chronology, specifically the dating of the movement's origins, and the second concerns the debates over the mystical nature of alumbradismo. The debates on mysticism serve as a convenient way in which to survey a few of the other major works on the Castilian alumbrados. This will then form the foundation of our larger focus, which is in essence an attempt to heed Homza's advice, albeit in a tightly focused analysis rather than in a broader survey.

Dating the Alumbrados

The dating of alumbradismo, like its origins, is also another subject of debate. Although a general consensus exists that roughly places the alumbrados' beginnings to the first two decades of the sixteenth century, there are some variations in dating that are noteworthy. The majority of alumbrado historians adopt Isabel de la Cruz as a chronological point of origin for the movement since she was its primary teacher.¹³ Overall, historians agree that Isabel began her proselytizing activities in the region of Guadalajara around 1510-1512.¹⁴ J.C. Nieto states that it could have been "somewhat earlier" than 1510, since "it seems probable that it was about this time, although we do not know the exact date, that she became an ordained Sister of the Tertiarian Order of the Franciscans".¹⁵ Márquez, on the other hand, prefers 1524 as the "only certain date" for alumbradismo's origins.¹⁶ Márquez maintains this date because it is the year in which a text appears where the term "alumbrado" has "the qualities of a noun, designating a new sect or heresy".¹⁷ Nieto, however, disagrees characterizing Márquez's approach to the dating of the alumbrado movement's origins as "historic-grammatical" (*historico-gramatical*) in contrast to

¹³ Márquez, 110-111.

¹⁴ Hamilton, 1. Longhurst, "La Beata Isabel", 280.

¹⁵ Nieto, "The Heretical Alumbrados", 294-295. See also Nieto, "En torno al problema de los alumbrados de Toledo," *Revista Española de Teología*, vol. XXV, nos. 1-4 (1975): 89.

¹⁶ Márquez, 71-78. See also Nieto, "En torno al", 87-89, for a full discussion of Márquez's dating and a counterargument.

¹⁷ Márquez, 73. My translation.

his “historic-genetic” (*histórico-genética*) approach, which emphasizes the flow of ideas, concepts and people.¹⁸ Nieto says of Márquez approach, “this does not have genetic value, but rather only grammatical [value], and it is interesting for a history of the term ‘alumbrados’, but not useful (*interesante*) for [determining] the historical origins of the sect.”¹⁹ As an example of the problems with Márquez’ approach Nieto refers to the origins of the designation “Christian” as having occurred after the movement had already formed and coalesced. While Nieto’s arguments are compelling they are not necessarily better than Márquez’s. What Nieto’s arguments do highlight is the importance of considering, as he calls it, the genetic as well as the grammatical. At the same time Nieto and Márquez’s dating schemes serve as excellent examples of the alumbrado historian’s forced overdependence upon the testimonies and letters of Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz, a dependence that is addressed in Chapter 5.

Angela Selke, on the other hand, dates the origins of the movement to the end of the fifteenth century “fomented without doubt by the reforms of [Cardinal] Cisneros, under the benevolent gaze of the Church and even the recently established Inquisition.”²⁰ She places the alumbrados’ flourishing to the first two decades of the sixteenth century, but qualifies all her dates by saying “we are still in the dark as to its [alumbradismo’s] origins, although there are at this point a series of different theories.”²¹ In fact, the origins of alumbradismo, at one time or another, have been tied to: Spanish troubadour poets (by Charles F. Fraker Jr.), autochthony, Jewish-converso traditions, Judeo-converso resentment of Christianity (by Angela Selke), Sufi mysticism, Nordic mysticism, Devotio Moderna, Erasmianism, Lutheranism, the Waldensians (by Antonio Márquez), the Fraticelli, Spiritual or Observant Franciscans, the Albigensians,

¹⁸ Nieto, “En torno al”, 88.

¹⁹ Nieto, “En torno al”, 88.

²⁰ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 617.

²¹ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 617.

orthodox Christian mystics, the Free Spirits/Beghards, and a proto-feminist anti-patriarchal primitive Christian revivalism sheathed by necessity in a spiritual doctrine of gender neutrality (by Angela Muñoz Fernandez).²² The diversity of these origin theories is testament both to the variety of concepts and ideas touted by the alumbrados, but also to the lack of detailed, specific information available to historians about those ideas. While some of the alumbrados, like Alcaraz and María de Cazalla, were well read they never tied alumbradismo's ideas to any particular source or inspiration beyond God and the Holy Spirit. Thus, the reason for such a menagerie of origin theories is mostly because the alumbrados never specified their inspirations and influences and as such we are left to speculate.²³

Perhaps the most interesting date of origin for the alumbrados is provided by Charles F. Fraker Jr. in his 1965 piece "The 'Dejados' and the Cancionero de Baena". This article proposes a far earlier origin for the alumbrados, tying them to the *Cancionero de Baena* poets. Fraker proposes that alumbradismo has its roots in the fifteenth century, having arisen some time during the 1410s.²⁴ He points to the lack of an Inquisition in Castile during the fifteenth century as the reason why the alumbrados were not tried until the 1520s.²⁵ After a careful analysis Fraker maintains, "we find a group of poets with an odd penchant for autobiography, men in whom we can find religious ideas not at all dissimilar to those of *alumbrados* of a later day...it seems very likely that there is some historical continuity between the two manifestations we have dealt with,

²² For a good overview of some of the alumbrado origin theories see Márquez, 71-100 and Augusta E. Foley, "El alumbradismo y sus posibles orígenes," in *Actas del VIII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas (22-27 agosto 1983)*, ed. A. David Kossoff, (Madrid: Istmo, 1986, I), 526-532 and Alvaro Huerga, *Historia de los Alumbrados (1570-1630): Tomo V- Temas y Personajes* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1994), 23-44.

²³ Not to mention the overall lack of detailed information about Francisca and Isabel's lives.

²⁴ Charles F. Fraker Jr., "The 'Dejados' and the Cancionero de Baena," *Hispanic Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1965): 117. Hamilton also speculates into the influence of troubadour poets upon alumbradismo, but only briefly see 48-50.

²⁵ Fraker, 115.

and that roots of more than one brand of Illuminism lie deep in the Middle Ages.”²⁶ Fraker’s argument is plausible, but its one flaw is that it does not consider the *converso* factor and the affects of that heritage upon the sixteenth century alumbrados. As in other works Fraker’s maintains the focus on Lutheranism and the classification of alumbradismo as a heresy. Fraker’s views are useful, however, particularly his insights into *dejamiento* and the acknowledgement of the multiplicity of doctrinal ideas and opinion within alumbradismo or “the religious movements which we lump together under the name Illuminism.”²⁷

The single biggest issue at stake when dating the beginnings of the alumbrados revolves around determining the influences upon the movement. Earlier dates mean that more weight can be given to Protestant whispers, Erasmian writings and a variety of other ideas. In the writing of this thesis no particular origin theory has been adhered to, in fact comparison to other movements, heresies, and ideas has been held to a minimum. Instead, the focus has been on what can be said with certainty as pertains to the Inquisitors’ characterization of the alumbrados in the Edict of 1525. All the while keeping in mind that alumbradismo’s origins are likely a combination of factors: social, historical, religious, cultural and political that cannot simply find attribution in one cause, person or thing. As Angela Selke has observed, “it is most likely that alumbradismo had diverse roots.”²⁸ Thus, the focus has remained on the historical “now” as present in the Edict. If they were anything, the alumbrados were a prime example of the cultural, religious, and social hybridity that is frequently mentioned as *the* unique characteristic of medieval Spanish history.

²⁶ Fraker, 117.

²⁷ Fraker, 117.

²⁸ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 617.

The Alumbrados and Mysticism

One of the most debated aspects of alumbrado historiography is the characterization of the alumbrados as mystics. As previously noted there simply is not enough information on the details, processes and mechanics involved in the practice of *dejamiento* to make a definitive statement about its mystical nature. Nonetheless scholars have tried time and again, and like any historical exercise the results have been fruitful in furthering discussion as well as providing useful material with which to “think with” when talking about alumbradismo. The biggest supporter of alumbradismo as a mystical experience remains Antonio Márquez, while José C. Nieto has consistently expressed his non-mystical interpretation of alumbrado ideas and *dejamiento*.

First, a brief definition of Christian mysticism as it might have applied to the alumbrados. Mysticism is focused on the union of the soul with the divine or God. It is a “non-conceptual, non-sensuous, non-verbal” encounter, which “is experienced in the void of the senses”; “it is a meta-experience which transcends the normal levels of communication.”²⁹ The end goal being “the achievement of a state of intensive spiritual bonding...between the mystic’s soul and God.”³⁰ The attainment of a mystical state is a difficult and lengthy process, and once union is attained it usually only lasts for a few moments or, in exceptional cases, hours.³¹ It does, however, come with some handy outward signs: trances, levitations, catatonic seizures, bodily rigidity, miraculous elongation or enlargement of body parts even “swellings of wet mucus in the throat...and ecstatic nosebleeds”.³² Saint Teresa of Avila is perhaps the best example of female

²⁹ J.C. Nieto, “The Franciscan Alumbrados and the Prophetic-Apocalyptic Tradition,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (October, 1977): 11-12.

³⁰ Jaffary, 39-40.

³¹ José C. Nieto, “The Nonmystical Nature of the Sixteenth-Century Alumbrados of Toledo,” in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 433-434.

³² Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*. (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 186. See also, Jaffary, 39-40.

mystical piety and her case will serve as a useful point of comparison to Isabel de la Cruz in Chapter 5.³³

José C. Nieto's arguments for the "non-mystical nature" of the alumbrados can be found in all of his writings; however, they are fairly simple to summarize. Nieto believes that Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz and Isabel de la Cruz did not interpret the Gospels of Paul and Matthew as mystical. He also adds that there is no evidence for either Isabel or Alcaraz as having had any knowledge of Pseudo-Dionysian writings. Nieto maintains that the alumbrados' "psychology is Hebraic, not Hellenic; thus, it is *man* and not the *soul* that is at the center of [their] religious ideas."³⁴ Nieto's contentions are backed up in part by the fact that the Inquisition did not label the alumbrados as mystics. He cinches his argument by referring to the famous alumbrado axiom "the love of God in man is God [himself]", stating "both scholars and Inquisitors missed Alcaraz's paradox; the former made of him a mystic and the latter a perfectionist." Nieto continues, "in fact, he was expressing the paradox of faith that in God we are without sin, but we are sinners in ourselves, which expresses the same ideas as Luther's famous formula, 'Simulustus et peccator.'³⁵

Nieto's arguments when read in full provide an interesting proposal, placing the alumbrados with their contemporary Protestant "co-heretics" rather than labeling them as a product of the Spanish cultural milieu. There are some problems, however, with his arguments for the non-mystical nature of *dejamiento*. First, Nieto takes Alcaraz to be the voice of all of the Castilian alumbrados, in a way assuming that they can be portrayed as a unified and hierarchically ordered group. This, using only Nieto's own works, is rather problematic since he

³³ For more on Teresa see Alison Weber, "Little Women: Counter-Reformation Misogyny," in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David M. Luebke (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 143-162 and Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the politics of sanctity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

³⁴ Nieto, "Non-mystical nature", 447.

³⁵ Nieto, "Non-mystical nature", 447.

attributes the Franciscan friars Ocaña and Olmillos to a separate group of “Franciscan alumbrados” distinct from the “alumbrado *dexados*” of Cruz and Alcaraz, meaning that Alcaraz cannot represent “the alumbrados of Castile” in toto.³⁶ Secondly, because of the presence of mystical elements in the Edicts and in the *procesos* it seems a safer road to assume that the alumbrados have within them a variety of opinions. As we know, Alcaraz was a polarizing figure who, while certainly representative of Isabel’s ideas, clearly had his own interpretations of them, which was only in keeping with alumbradismo’s ideals of individual interpretation through the Holy Spirit.³⁷

Angela Selke, while supporting a non-mystical understanding of *dejamiento*, takes a slightly different approach in her interpretation. Selke uses Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo’s estimation of alumbradismo’s “enervating and sickly pseudo-mysticism” (*pseudo-misticismo enervador y enfermizo*), which has “nothing to do with the true mysticism of a Saint Teresa or a Saint John of the Cross”.³⁸ Selke notes that there is no evidence in any of the documents or testimonies to point to “the alumbrados of Toledo, either as a group or individually, as having had some kind of a mystical experience”.³⁹ She continues, “[there is a lack of evidence] that they tried to reach one of those extraordinary states of consciousness that the experts on mystics consider to be a condition *sine qua non* of all authentic mystical [experience], orthodox or heterodox.”⁴⁰ Selke, however, fails to consider her own observations, specifically her assertion that we should not expect *reos* to bare their souls before the Tribunal. The lack of data on *dejamiento* is evidence itself of this observation. More detailed information about *dejamiento* would surely have come up in the *procesos* and in the Edict of 1525 had the alumbrados been

³⁶ Nieto, “The Franciscan Alumbrados and the Prophetic-Apocalyptic Tradition”.

³⁷ Márquez, 206.

³⁸ Selke, “Algunos Datos”, 128 footnote #3. My translation.

³⁹ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 628. My translation.

⁴⁰ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 628. My translation.

willing to share such information. That the Edict does not label the alumbrados as mystics is only circumstantial, as the document is more focused on matters of doctrine rather than religious practice.⁴¹

How then does the non-mystical camp understand *dejamiento*? Nieto sums it up rather nicely: “mysticism as a method and world view was abandoned in favor of the search for the light of the Divine Spirit in the human conscience- the experience of God and the soul not in the union of substances characteristic of mysticism but rather in an act of freedom of the individual conscience.”⁴² What is being proposed is a view of *dejamiento* more as a way of living and being in the presence and light of God rather than as a method aimed at reaching an objective of spiritual union.⁴³ As much as the arguments for a non-mystical understanding of *dejamiento* extol their own correctness, as Nieto notes, “few scholars, perhaps with the exception of [Angela] Selke and myself, see them as nonmystical and very close to Reformation ideas.”⁴⁴

Indeed, the prevailing historiographic view holds that the alumbrados were mystical in their understanding of *dejamiento*. This viewpoint is held by, among others, Antonio Márquez, Alastair Hamilton, John E. Longhurst, and Angela Muñoz Fernandez. The arguments that favor the mystical nature of alumbradismo and *dejamiento* usually point to the role of *ata duras* in alumbrado belief. Longhurst points out that the alumbrados advised “their clerical proselytes to abandon their disciplines, vigils, fasts and private prayers since such practices could not be found on the path to perfection.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ It may also be due to the interpretative difficulties the Inquisitors faced when dealing with alumbrado doctrines; more on this in chapter three.

⁴² Nieto, “The Non-mystical”, 439.

⁴³ Nieto, “The Alumbrados Dexados”, 298. Nieto thinks of *dejamiento* “not [as] an ecstatic experience but a way of behavior and thinking in the concrete situations of...daily life. It points toward a dynamic conception of “union” in the sense of personal dependence on God.”

⁴⁴ Nieto, “Non-mystical nature”, 438.

⁴⁵ Longhurst, “La Beata Isabel”, 280. My translation. Longhurst like our non-mystic camp cites the *procesos* of Alcaraz and another alumbrado, Rodrigo de Bivar, as evidence of their mystical inclinations.

Antonio Márquez's arguments are a bit more complicated, generally placing the alumbrados within the Protestant Reformation by grouping them with "the radical sects of a mystical character."⁴⁶ He explains that from Erasmianism the alumbrados derived an interiorized Christianity while from Luther they derived the importance placed on the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ Márquez points to "a mystical return to God" as the source of the alumbrados' doctrinal justification, which in turn was based on the doctrines of Pseudo-Dionysus.⁴⁸ What forms the crux of his argument is the theory that mysticism equals philosophy. For Márquez mysticism is "not faith, but rather experience; and on the theoretical plane, it is not Revelation nor a science of Revelation (Theology), but rather pure speculation, that is to say, Philosophy."⁴⁹ Thus, he contends that when alumbradismo "is examined under a microscope its cellular tissues are all philosophical: experience replacing faith and speculation [replacing] revelation."⁵⁰

Alastair Hamilton's approach ties the alumbrados' *dejamiento*, as Márquez and others have done, to the Franciscan's *recogimiento*, specifically Francisco de Osuna and his *Third Spiritual Alphabet*, which Hamilton defines as consisting of three stages of prayer. The first stage, Hamilton asserts, is "vocal, the best being the Lord's Prayer", the second "is in our hearts and consists of meditating on the life and passion of Christ".⁵¹ The third, and "most perfect type of prayer... corresponds to the last mystical stage, the *via unitiva*, [which] is 'mental or spiritual'".⁵² The alumbrados were known to have ties, amicable or otherwise, with many

⁴⁶ Márquez, 175. My translation.

⁴⁷ Márquez, 175. My translation.

⁴⁸ Márquez, 175. My translation.

⁴⁹ Márquez, 191. My translation.

⁵⁰ Márquez, 192-193. My translation. For more on Márquez's take on the alumbrados' mysticism see pp.184-193.

⁵¹ Hamilton, 15.

⁵² Hamilton, 15.

Franciscans and Hamilton maintains that this is the origin for the alumbrados' mysticism, their *dejamiento* simply being a derivation of the Franciscan *recogimiento*.⁵³

The ties to Franciscan *recogimiento* led Melquiades Andrés to postulate that *dejamiento* could be seen as a “misunderstanding” (*mal entendimiento*) of *recogimiento*, a misunderstanding that nonetheless maintained a mystical character.⁵⁴ Angela Muñoz Fernandez uses Andrés's approach, which draws attention to the “thematic and terminological parallels that are detectable between the mysticism of *recogimiento* and *dejamiento* as postulated by Isabel de la Cruz”, as the basis for her own feminist characterizations.⁵⁵ Muñoz maintains that while Isabel was influenced by *recogimiento* and the “same spiritual road that...produced our greatest mystics, among them Saint Teresa”, she nonetheless separated herself from these very same ideas by “reinterpreting its content in order to produce a doctrine that she desired more greatly, with signs and consequences far more radical and liberating for people”.⁵⁶ According to Muñoz, however, Isabel recognized the power of “the mystical way” (*vía mística*) as “an aid in self-affirmation for many women” and as such interprets *dejamiento* as “another system of significance”, marking out *dejamiento* as a path to freedom from the patriarchy.⁵⁷

Overall, the pro-mystical interpretation of *dejamiento* dominates alumbrado historiography and popular portrayals of them. Works that do not deal exclusively with the alumbrados tend to characterize them as mystics. Alison Weber's work presents the alumbrados as the precursors to mystics like Teresa de Avila.⁵⁸ Similarly, Mary Elizabeth Perry's *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* speaks of the alumbrados as being in the tradition of

⁵³ Hamilton, 21.

⁵⁴ Muñoz, 116. My translation. Muñoz is citing: Melquiades Andrés, *La Teología española en el siglo XVI*, 2 vol. (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1976). I unfortunately was not able to locate a copy of this work.

⁵⁵ Muñoz, 116. My translation.

⁵⁶ Muñoz, 116-117. My translation.

⁵⁷ Muñoz, 116, 120, and 104 respectively. My translation.

⁵⁸ Weber, 143-162.

mystical beatas emphasizing the importance of mysticism as an escape for women.⁵⁹ Lastly, Nora E. Jaffary in her 2004 survey of colonial Mexican heretics accused of alumbradismo refers to the Castilian alumbrados as antinomians, who held “the notion that upon reaching a certain degree of spiritual union with God, the mystic was released from any possible sinful ramifications of bodily practices.”⁶⁰

Perhaps the most important question to ask in relation to alumbrado mysticism is what is at stake historically and historiographically when we label them as mystics? Historically speaking a mystical *dejamiento* would imply nothing less than the total irrelevance of the Church in matters doctrinal, theological and spiritual. It thus constituted a threat to the very foundations of the Catholic Church and its religious bureaucracy, not to mention that it would have completely challenged and underscored its authority. Historiographically it would situate the alumbrados in a mystical tradition that includes the *Third Spiritual Alphabet*, the heresy of the Free Spirit, and the writings of figures such as St. John Climacus and of course Pseudo-Dionysus.⁶¹ A mystical classification would aid historians in establishing the role that Spanish mysticism played during the Reformation. Nieto elaborates, “the alumbrados adumbrated some of the religious ideas that were to become commonplace in the years following the Reformation. While their thoughts were still shaped by medieval religious language, their ideas were pointing in the direction of modern man confronting the old ecclesiastical doctrines and institutions in the light of critical awareness of himself as a believer and as a doubter of both doctrines and

⁵⁹ Perry, 97-117.

⁶⁰ Jaffary, 29-30. These Mexican alumbrados of course came after their Castilian antecedents and were active from the late sixteenth century through to the early nineteenth. Interestingly enough while other historians have noted the antinomian characteristics of alumbrado attitudes towards sin the Edict of 1525 does not accuse the alumbrados of being antinomians.

⁶¹ For a good overview of the mystical traditions in which the alumbrados would have found themselves see Hamilton, 12-16.

institutions.”⁶² Labeling the alumbrados as mystics or not serves as a tool for historians, one that allows us to measure their “contribution to the modern world of the Renaissance-Reformation” and one that aids us in hypothesizing about their origins.⁶³

While mysticism is not an issue of focus in this thesis it cannot be avoided in any discussion of alumbradismo. There simply is not enough evidence to definitively present the alumbrados as mystics or non-mystics. However, the ideas on the human-Divine relationship as presented in the Edict of 1525 hint at and have the flavor of mystically inspired beliefs.⁶⁴ Therefore, loosely interpreting Menéndez Pelayo’s “pseudo-mysticism”, I prefer to look at the alumbrados as elaborating ideas that, using the Inquisitors’ own terminology, had the *taste* of mysticism. Since the alumbrado movement was far from centralized when its leaders came before the Inquisitors it is reasonable to presume that within the movement and perhaps *dejamiento* there was room for differing, individualized interpretations. Alcaraz is a good example of this possibility, his cavalier attitude and take on alumbrado ideas in his interactions with Hernández, Ortiz and Olmillos was clearly a product of his *own* thought. In coming close to God through *dejamiento* some individuals perhaps took a more traditional, mystical path feeling that they united with God while others may have taken the path described by Nieto, using *dejamiento* in a more pragmatic fashion as a way of living, acting and thinking. In any case, to think of the alumbrados as “pseudo-mystics” is interpretively useful as it gives us “wobble room” in coming to an understanding of their doctrines, and the Inquisitors’ reactions to them, as presented in the Edict of 1525.

⁶² Nieto, “The Non-mystical”, 439.

⁶³ Nieto, “The Non-mystical”, 439.

⁶⁴ For example see Propositions 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 43, 44 in Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 83-91 and Márquez, 275-282.

In light of the debates and trends of alumbrado historiography the goal of this thesis is to present the alumbrados neither as heretics, revolutionaries or revivals of ancient ideas. Rather their beliefs as we have them are to be considered *in situ*. Parallels will be sought and drawn but, by the end, the alumbrados are to be seen as a logical product of their times, and as a movement that sought to carve a place for itself. As such, this thesis will look at three main factors in relation to the Edict of 1525: the converso status of the movement's members, the role of women and education, and the Inquisition's reaction to alumbrado ideas in the Edict, particularly the usage of the terms *loca* and *locura*. To craziness we now turn.

CHAPTER 3 THE EDICT: “CRAZY” & THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALUMBRADOS

A few months before September of 1525 the Inquisitor General Alonso Manrique called a conference of Inquisitors and theological consultants in Toledo. Held under the auspices of the Emperor Charles V, the conference was of great and immediate importance. The gathered Church officials and consultants were meant to come up with a resolution on the testimonies of several individuals, called by some *alumbrados*, who were being tried for heresy. The heresy was originally discovered when the Inquisitor General was “informed by various people that in certain places in this archbishopric of Toledo, many people spoke and proclaimed certain words that appeared to deviate from our Holy Catholic Faith.”¹

In response Manrique sent out two agents to investigate, the Bishop of Guadix Gaspar de Avalos and Abbot of Saint Vincent Alonso de Mariana. The Inquisitorial agents, seeking information from the public at large, “gave a period of grace to such people, during which they might come to declare their faults and errors about this matter” of alumbradismo.² At the same time, in 1524-1525, two of the leaders of the alumbrado movement Isabel de la Cruz and Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz underwent their trials producing the bulk of the testimony which the gathered Inquisitors and consultants would use in their conferences. After meeting “for many days in various meetings, during which they heard and read the confessions and proofs received by the inquisitors...they conferred and voted separately in other sessions, each according to his order and expertise.”³ Voting unanimously “in their evaluation of the propositions on account of scriptural and canonical authorities” the Inquisitors had in their hands the very first draft of the

¹ Preface to the Edict of 1525, Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 82-83. Márquez, 274-275.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Edict of 1525. A document that in 48 brief propositions addresses, responds to, and lays out a description of one of the most significant of Spanish heresies.

The present Chapter deals with establishing and analyzing the Inquisitorial perspective on the alumbrados vis-à-vis the Edict of 1525. Particular attention is given to the Edict's (and by association the Inquisitors') reactions to some of the alumbrado propositions, referring to them as "crazy". It will also serve as the jumping off point for further discussion of the alumbrados' converso background and the role of women and education within the movement. *El Edicto de Los Alumbrados de Toledo* is the best and most concise summary of Castilian alumbrado doctrines available to historians.⁴ Consisting of forty-eight propositions sourced from alumbrado trials and testimonies, the Edict reveals as much about the alumbrados' ideas and beliefs as it does about the Inquisitors' difficulties in interpreting and classifying the movement. This difficulty is evidenced by the Inquisitors' response to the alumbrado propositions; responses that just as often gave detailed theological defenses of Catholic doctrines as they did concise, unelaborate declarations of "heretical", "false", or "erroneous". The analysis of the Edict's responses to the "crazy" alumbrado propositions reveals both the interpretative troubles that the alumbrados presented the Inquisitors and the need to create a space for this movement within the Inquisitors' "world map" of heresies.

Alumbrado historians have frequently noted the lack of agreement among scholars about nearly every aspect of the movement.⁵ It is precisely because the alumbrado movement was still in a stage of development when the Inquisition began to prosecute them that historians and Inquisitors have had such problems identifying and classifying the alumbrados. Márquez in

⁴ Selke, "Algunos datos", 125-129. Kamen, 86. Márquez, 21.

⁵ Nieto, "The Heretical Alumbrados", 296. Selke, "Algunos datos", 125. Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 80-81. Lu Ann Homza, *Religious Authority in the Spanish Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 6-7.

describing “the Illuminist experience” is careful to point that it “is not anything objective, and as such, something that is not capable of being recognized easily”.⁶ The difficulties in describing the alumbrados is due to the circumstance that the available sources on the movement either come directly from the Inquisition e.g. *procesos* or are written in moments of storm and stress, usually in defense against the Inquisitors’ accusations. They are sources drafted in environments where particular responses were expected. Thus, we cannot expect that the *reos* under investigation were ready and willing to reveal every aspect of the movement to the Inquisitors, as the lack of detailed information on the processes behind *dejamiento* attest.

As noted in the Chapter’s introduction, the Edict of 1525 is itself the product of a conference of Inquisitors and “theological consultants” called in 1525 by Inquisitor-General Manrique. The Edict itself enumerates forty-eight propositions each of which is preceded by the response or reaction of the board of consultants and Inquisitors. Each of the propositions brings up a particular doctrine, practice or belief of the alumbrados that are of course contrary to the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church. Not all Propositions are weighed the same in the Inquisitors’ considerations. In other words, the Inquisitors considered some of the alumbrado propositions to be more heretically loaded than others. As an example, Proposition 5 states, “although the words of the consecration of the Eucharist were not spoken with the mouth, it was enough to utter them internally.” The Inquisitors’ response to this was simply to call it “false and erroneous” (*falsa e erronea*).⁷ While Proposition 25 asserted “that married people were more united to God while making love than if they had been praying.” To this the Inquisitors gave a flabbergasted response, “this proposition is false and erroneous, has the taste of heresy, and must be judged heretical, because it is against the apostle St. Paul and the common spiritual counsel of the Holy

⁶ Márquez, 206. My translation.

⁷ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 84. Márquez, 275.

Church”.⁸ The Inquisitors continued with an almost satirical admonishment, “that at certain times married people should abstain from sexual intercourse in order to more freely and piously devote themselves to prayer.”⁹ Thus the Inquisitors’ responses tend to be in kind with the level of heresy exhibited by the alumbrados’ Propositions.

The Edict closes off its expositions upon the forty-eight propositions by noting that errors are a natural product of Christian existence propagated by the devil, who “feels pain at the unity and peace of Christianity”.¹⁰ This does not exonerate “those who consented to such diabolical cogitations”; rather the Edict points out that they “are not without fault”. The Edict ends with an exhortation to “learned preachers of authority and good example” to “read the propositions and their condemnation.... on Sundays and obligatory feast days”.¹¹ What is particularly interesting about the Edict’s closing paragraphs is that it is addressed to “you” (*vos*) the Christian layperson. The Edict affirms that the preachers it is sending out with the propositions for public recitation “shall teach you the Catholic things that you must believe in order to save your souls, and the things you must avoid in order not to lose the glory for which you were created.”¹² Such direct address to the unnamed masses means that the Inquisitors expected this Edict to circulate publicly and as such become a known piece of information. It finishes by giving a plea and a warning to “withdraw from all the said errors and novelties, not to believe or uphold them, and not to be swayed into them by other people”. If not, the Inquisition “will proceed against each and everyone of you” who “do the opposite...of what God desires or permits”, threatening “imprisonment, confiscation of property, and other lawfully established penalties”. Lastly, the Edict’s conclusion notes that there is no difference in the procedures for prosecuting those who

⁸ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 87. Márquez, 278-279.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 91-92. Márquez, 282-283.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 91-92. Márquez, 282-283..

are “heretics or transgressors of...[the] Holy Mother Church” and “people who do not believe, and who deviate and withdraw from the common doctrine and instruction of our Holy Catholic Faith and of the Universal Church”.¹³ The Edict of 1525 in tone and content thus effectively represents the alumbrados as a serious threat to orthodoxy, one that the Inquisitors are completely invested in combating.

What is most striking upon reading the Edict of 1525 is that that very aspect of the movement that Alastair Hamilton struck upon, its nebulousness, is ever-present. Henry Kamen asserts that the document leaves one with little doubt that alumbradismo was indeed a heresy in the Inquisition’s mind; yet the Edict’s closing paragraphs fail to definitively denounce *the movement* as heretical or even to assign it the label “Alumbradismo”. Certainly, heresy is made explicit by the frequent use of terms such as “heretical” and “error” to refute the forty-eight propositions. Heresy is also implied by the simple fact that the document exists to begin with. Alumbradismo is delineated as heresy, but there are no specifications beyond the propositions and refutations to explain what *constitutes* alumbradismo as a separate movement. In other words, the Edict does not serve up a neat definition of alumbradismo rather it is more like a diagnostic manual showcasing the symptoms and characteristics that could be identified as alumbrado or be used to identify someone as such. Moreover, these were symptoms, from an Inquisitorial standpoint, that were quite frequently shared with other heresies and movements. This is particularly interesting when one considers that the propositions are often redundant and repetitive.¹⁴ It is not that the Inquisitors did not have an inkling, a “feeling” for the alumbrados

¹³ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 91-92. Márquez, 282-283. For a more detailed overview of the Edict see Angela Selke, “Algunos datos nuevos sobre los primeros alumbrados: el edicto de 1525 y su relación con el proceso de Alcaraz,” in *Bulletin Hispanique*, Vol. LIV, No. 1, (1952): 125-152. See also, Márquez, 26-29.

¹⁴ Márquez, 107-108. He notes that it is possible that when it comes to the repetitive propositions that cannot be traced back to one of the alumbrados like de la Cruz or Bedoya that the authors of those repetitive propositions may be clerics who sympathize with Erasmus or Luther *and* the Alumbrados, whose own *procesos* may have been lost.

as being heretical, but that they did not know *exactly* what that heresy was. This characteristic of alumbradismo is what Hamilton referred to as their “inchoate” religious ideas. Likewise, Homza has referred to alumbradismo as “an amorphous spiritual movement”.¹⁵ It is a problem of definition, of classification, one that seems to stem back to the Inquisition itself. Antonio Márquez has taken care to point out that “alumbrado” is an externally applied label, not ever used by any of the alumbrados in either their *procesos* or any of their letters.¹⁶ Thus, it must be kept in mind, that the alumbrados and their movement are not easily defined mostly due to a lack of surviving sources. They are also difficult to define because the movement was growing at the time of its prosecution by the Inquisition and as such was still in the stages of defining itself and subject to a variety of opinions as to what its ideas exactly were.

The alumbrados, then, are a product of their own ideas as much as they are a product of the Inquisition that prosecuted them. This is a serious problem of historical interpretation that finds its parallels in other studies on heresy in the Middle Ages such as those concerning the Cathars and Albigensians, the Beghards or even the heresy of the Free Spirit.¹⁷ It also finds a parallel in the study of Late Antique barbarian groups. Michael Kulikowski in his excellent essay “Nation versus Army: A Necessary Contrast?” has addressed the problems related to linguistics and cognition when it comes to the language used by historians in their attempts “to get behind the *interpretatio romana* of our sources to the barbarian reality within.”¹⁸ Kulikowski notes that

¹⁵ Homza, Lu Ann . *The Spanish Inquisition 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources*, 80.

¹⁶ Márquez, 84. See also Nieto, “The Heretical Alumbrados”, 304.

¹⁷ For general overviews on interpretative problems in relation to Inquisitorial sources see: Carlo Ginzburg, “The Inquisitor as Anthropologist,” in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*. Translated by John and Anne C. Tedeschi. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). See also: John H Arnold, “The Historian as Inquisitor: The ethics of interrogating subaltern voices,” *Rethinking History*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1998): 379-386. and Arthur Stephen McGrade, “The Medieval Idea of Heresy: What Are We To Make Of It?”, in *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life*, eds. Peter Biller and Barrie Dobson. (Rochester, New York: The Boydell Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Michael Kulikowski, “Nation versus Army: A Necessary Contrast?” in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillet (Turnhout,

“we have access to the barbarians only at those times of stress and violence when our Graeco-Roman sources felt barbarians needed mention, while even then we are condemned to see only what classical writers thought worthy of notice.”¹⁹ For Kulikowski, the essential problem is finding “language plastic enough to describe all the variables of real world phenomena while still giving our discourse meaningful structure”.²⁰ He concludes that it is not possible “in the case of barbarian ethnicity... because we lack a coherent sample of barbarian social phenomena... we must instead try to find the language adequate to describe and explain individual barbarians, specific barbarian groups, and their actions and interactions with the world around them.”²¹

To a degree, the historians of alumbadismo have already found the language to describe and explain individual alumbados. Lu Ann Homza and Mary E. Giles are both aware of the obstacles and shortcomings under which other historians have worked. In particular, they recognize the tendency of some historians to take the Inquisitorial documents at face value due to their status as legal documents. Giles and Homza are also especially mindful of the prejudices towards women and thus question some of the basic assumptions about the characters of certain of the alumbados. In her essay on Francisca Hernández, for example, Giles treats her subject not as a mere “slut,” as many sources, primary and secondary have, but rather as a person and an historical problem. Giles asserts “a judgment of her as either slut or saint is dubious, especially when the problematic of her character intensifies in light of her relationship with... Francisco Ortiz.”²² Giles, like Homza, approaches the sources by asking questions similar to those asked by other historians. In the case of Francisca such a question is: “What is the nature of the

Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002), 82.

¹⁹ Kulikowski, 82.

²⁰ Kulikowski, 84.

²¹ Kulikowski, 84.

²² Mary E. Giles, “Francisca Hernández and the Sexuality of Religious Dissent”, in *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World*, ed. Mary E. Giles (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 85.

relationship between Francisca Hernández and her followers? Is there an element of sexual activity?” Instead of taking at face value the testimonies that referred to Francisca as an unchaste woman of the world Giles takes on a nuanced and dynamic analysis of the *beata*, looking at several factors including the historiographical problems of Inquisitorial testimony, the emotions and attitudes of her closest followers, and the concomitant factors of social position and gender. In essence what Homza and Giles both do is to take a more holistic and metahistorical perspective, one not all that dissimilar from Kulikowski’s suggestion. This metahistorical approach is not entirely new in alumbrado historiography, Antonio Márquez suggested such a strategy as necessary in 1972, but it seems that now is the time that this approach is being widely used by alumbrado historians.²³

Continuing with Kulikowski’s paradigm, the language has yet to be found that could describe “all the variables of real world phenomena”; this of course can be considered to be a problem of historiography in general and not solely limited to barbarian or alumbrado. Histories often strive for an omniscient, totalizing approach. The historians of alumbradismo are no less guilty of this than others, but this approach has come at the price of ignoring or overlooking the alumbrado voice. Many monographs and articles on the alumbrados have echoed this impulse, addressing the Erasmian and Lutheran origin questions, while also looking at other factors such as the relation to past heresies and the social circumstances of early sixteenth-century Spain. Carlo Ginzburg in his essay “The Inquisitor as Anthropologist” poses this problem of representation as a useful interpretive question: “does this continuity between evidence and early interpretations imply that we are inevitably caught up in the web of categories used by those

²³ On pp. 35 Márquez suggests “the nature of these testimonies obligate the investigator, above all the investigator of meanings, to adopt a peculiar semantic philosophy that is in a certain sense metahistorical (*metahistórica*).” My translation.

remote anthropologists- preachers and inquisitors?”²⁴ The problem is that in the process of trying to lay out all the parallels and connections the alumbrados are lost, their voice gets muddled, filtered and ultimately is unable to speak on its own.

Kulikowski’s observation that access is granted to voiceless groups only during “times of stress and violence” is also extremely helpful. All of the documents available to us concerning the alumbrados were penned in times of stress. Ortíz’s letters were written in frantic, desperate and vehement defense of himself and Francisca. The *procesos* of course were all recorded in that theatrical atmosphere of the Inquisitorial tribunal where *reos* are expected to say and act according to the information demanded of them by the Inquisitors.²⁵ We must still contend with the effects of a dialogue very much established and controlled by the Inquisition, for the most part we still only see the alumbrados in times of stress and strife.²⁶ The filter placed by the Inquisition can be compensated for, but first it must be understood. Perhaps, then we can get a better grasp of what we know to be alumbrado doctrines, free of the labels that were forced upon them.

The Edict of 1525 itself has been extensively analyzed by a variety of alumbrado scholars. Selke, Márquez, Nieto and others have worked over almost every aspect of the text, from the origins of each of the propositions to questions of style, composition and language. Yet none have looked at the usage of one very peculiar word in the Inquisition’s vocabulary: *locura*. Eight out of the forty-eight propositions in the Edict make use of the word *locura* or its stem *loca* in response to what it presents as an alumbrado point of doctrine. While it forms a small part of the Edict’s lexicon it is nonetheless employed in significant moments; moreover the word is

²⁴ Ginzburg, 164.

²⁵ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 621.

²⁶ Alcaraz has perhaps the most fully developed history but his case only accounts for part of the movement and the groups involved in it. For the most part we only get access to the alumbrado women, the most central figures, in times of strife.

consistently used in a manner that assumes the reason for its usage to be self-evident. The usage of *locura* in light of the document's mood and tone enhances the characterization of the alumbrados that the Inquisition is trying to create. When the Edict applies the label of *loca* to the alumbrado propositions it is doing so in order to create a space for alumbradismo within the Inquisition's world of heresy. Some basics about the Edict's, and by association the Inquisitors', tone and attitude shall be laid out before delving into an analysis of the eight "crazy" propositions.

Defining *Locura*: The Inquisitors' Interpretive Problems

Loosely translated the word *loca* means "crazy" or "mad." In general Spanish use, *loca* is the feminine form of the adjective *locura*, a noun that signifies "madness", "craziness" or "insanity". *Loca* was likely used in the sixteenth century Castile, as it is today, when referring to a person who has lost reason or rationality.²⁷ According to the 23rd edition of the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* the word *loca* also signifies someone who is possessed of "poor or little judgment, [who is] foolish/ridiculous and imprudent".²⁸ Likewise, the *Diccionario Crítico Etimológico Castellano e Hispánico* similarly asserts "*Loco* is a word in general use throughout all literary periods of the Middle Ages".²⁹ The *Diccionario Crítico* notes that *loco* has also been taken to mean "insane" or "unhealthy" (*insano*).³⁰ Thus, for the purposes of this thesis *locura* and its adjective *loca* are considered to imply loss of reason or judgment and, depending on the context, imprudent or foolish behavior i.e. "craziness" or "madness".

²⁷ Sara T. Nalle, *Mad for God: Bartolomé Sánchez, the secret Messiah of Cardenete*. (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 2001), 151.

²⁸ **2.** adj. De poco juicio, disparatado e imprudente. My translation. The dictionary notes that the word *loco* appears to be derived from the Classical Arabic word *lawqā'* which means "stupid" or "silly".

²⁹ Corminas, Joan and José A. Pascual eds. *Diccionario Crítico Etimológico Castellano e Hispánico, Vol. III* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1980), 683. My translation.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

How unique is the usage of this vocabulary in Inquisitorial proceedings? The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century edicts on alumbradismo from Extremadura, Seville, Madrid and México do not contain a usage of *loca* or *locura*.³¹ There seem to be no studies that have looked at the usage of madness as a qualifier, metaphorical or otherwise, in the Inquisitors' responses to the testimony of the accused. Most studies that do look at madness and the Inquisition concern themselves with individuals whose mental health was up for debate. In other words, the approach is overwhelmingly medical, focusing on individuals apparently suffering from some sort of physiological or psychological condition. These conditions were frequently difficult to define or verify, giving both Inquisitor and historian interpretive and diagnostic troubles. For example, Joseph Scalzo's "Campanella, Foucault, and Madness in Late-Sixteenth Century Italy" attempts to determine whether Tommaso Campanella, a contemporary of Giordano Bruno, was faking his insanity in a bid to exonerate himself from his treason and heresy trials.³² The evidence that Scalzo presents is the very same evidence available to Inquisitors, but whereas the Inquisition became convinced of Campanella's madness, or rather were unable to prove his sanity, Scalzo rather concludes "that Campanella had beaten them at their own game."³³

A more thorough study is Sara T. Nalle's *Mad for God*, which covers the trial proceedings of "failed farmer and wool carder" Bartolomé Sánchez and his "descent into religious madness."³⁴ In the case of Bartolomé the Inquisitors witnessed his growing madness right before their very eyes, and like his Italian counterpart Campanella, Bartolomé was

³¹ Huerga, *Historia*, 401-430. Huerga includes the Edict of 1525 in his appendix of primary sources, but his version only has the Inquisitors' responses and qualifications for the first nineteen propositions, why the rest are not there is not explained. Thus, it is possible that Inquisitorial qualifications for the other edicts of Seville, Extremadura and Mexico have been omitted as well.

³² Joseph Scalzo, "Campanella, Foucault, and Madness in Late-Sixteenth Century Italy," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 359-372.

³³ Scalzo, 371.

³⁴ Nalle, *Mad for God*, 1-2.

eventually deemed too mentally unfit to stand trial. Sánchez seems to have suffered from some kind of obsessive-compulsive disorder, which to the viewer made him seem normal save for when he began to discuss religion.³⁵ Nalle's study brings up some interesting points about the varieties of madness and how observers perceive them. She differentiates between cases accompanied by external signs such as fits or seizures and those "in which there were no physical symptoms at all, only irrational or delusional speech".³⁶ Nalle points out that if the Inquisitors could confirm a history of illness then usually the insanity defense would be invoked; however, in some cases if the behavior or opinions were grossly offensive the Inquisitors would have a harder time in deciding how to proceed.³⁷

Nalle concludes her book by stating that part of the problem lies with the extremely subjective nature of judging madness, *comuneros* were usually willing to tolerate offensive speech and acts if the person committing them was perceived to be physically and/or mentally ill or otherwise deficient. On the other hand, Inquisitors had laws and doctrines to uphold requiring of them a more objective approach, one that considered the *reos*'s supposed madness and how much weight to give to the content of the offensive statements and acts committed by that person.

In the case of the *alumbrados* there seem to be no accusations or investigations into the sanity of any of the *beatas* or their followers. Thus, it seems that when the Inquisitors employed "crazy" (*loca*) as a qualification of and response to the *alumbrado* Propositions they likely meant to present their *ideas* as crazy rather than the individuals. The *alumbrado* Propositions dubbed crazy were called so because they made no sense from the perspective of the Inquisitors, men

³⁵ Nalle, *Mad for God*, 144-152. Nalle notes that the popular understanding of madness usually expected insanity to be manifested primarily through outward behavioral symptoms and acts such as running naked through the streets.

³⁶ Nalle, *Mad for God*, 149.

³⁷ Nalle, *Mad for God*, 145-147.

who, above all, were fully enshrined and devoted to Catholic doctrine and theology as *the* way to perceive the world, God, and the universe. I am hesitant to assign the label of “unique” to the usage of crazy in the Edict of 1525, rather I will say that this seems to be an instance in which madness is used as an emotional, figurative and instinctual response on the part of the Inquisitors facing a challenge to their beloved Catholic cosmology. Simultaneously, however, in using madness as a qualifier the Inquisitors sought to create a public portrait of the alumbrados as a group divested of reason and as such heretical accomplices of the devil.³⁸ Thus, for the moment one can only say that the usage of *loca* in the Edict of 1525 is an extra-ordinary occurrence.

The Edict clearly shows that the Inquisitors struggled to make sense of the alumbrados’ beliefs and practices. As is common in the history of Christian heresy the Inquisitors attempted to link the alumbrados with older heresies or more easily identifiable contemporary heresies, like Lutheranism.³⁹ Of the forty-eight propositions in the Edict, number 8 is one of the briefer statements of alumbrado belief; nonetheless, it offers us much insight into the Inquisitors’ perspective. It reads:

Alumbrados’ Proposition: Confession is not divine but positive law.

Inquisitors’ response: This proposition is Lutheran and has the taste of heresy (*sabor de herejia*).⁴⁰

Alumbradismo, however, is not Lutheran. Indeed the denial of “confession and the sacrament of penance” as being mandated by Scripture is, as Homza points out, “a position [the alumbrados] *shared* with Martin Luther.”⁴¹ From the beginning the Inquisitors and the Edict seek to establish

³⁸ Conclusion to the Edict of 1525, Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 91-92 and Márquez, 282-283.

³⁹ R.I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent and The Formation of A Persecuting Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁴⁰ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 84. The usages of names for each of the statements are my addition, but they reflect the format of the Edict. When necessary the original Castilian text as found in Appendix I of Márquez will be used, otherwise all complete reproductions from the Edict are taken from Homza especially since hers is the more accessible copy. See Márquez, 273-283 for the original.

⁴¹ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 84. The italics are my emphasis.

a relationship between alumbradismo and Lutheranism, one that is at best coincidental. This association, however, has fueled many historical speculations into the origins of the alumbrados and their relation to Lutheranism. Alvaro Huerga's analysis of the relations between alumbrado and Lutheran seems to be one of the most helpful. Rather than trying to find a direct tie to the German heresy Huerga simply refers to the association with Lutheranism in another way: "Lutheran or Alumbrado, in errors they are very much neighbors."⁴²

Once again, we see that the incoherence of the alumbrado movement and its ideas presents the Inquisitors with interpretative difficulties. It is compared by analogy to Lutheranism because that is a far more visible, and easily perceived, threat.⁴³ It is also interesting that the Inquisitors who gathered to draft this Edict decided to label Proposition 8 as having "the taste of heresy" (*tiene sabor de herejía*). This seems to indicate uncertainty about how to classify or categorize what these potential heretics are claiming as their beliefs.⁴⁴ This uncertainty is likely due to the nature of the alumbrado propositions; they are ideas that straddle the lines between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The alumbrado propositions tend to be twists or reinterpretations of well-known tenets of Catholic doctrine and as such can be difficult to navigate. Thus, the Inquisitors sought parallels with Lutheranism and other movements like Erasmianism because they needed to classify the alumbrados.

In the Edict's introduction the Inquisitors state "we were informed by various people (who were fearful of God and zealous for our Catholic faith) that in certain places...people spoke

⁴² Huerga, *Historia de los Alumbrados*, 35. Bernardino Llorca in *Die Spanische Inquisition und Die "Alumbrados"*, states that alumbradismo is quite independent and different from Luther's ideas, see p.29f.

⁴³ On 103 Márquez points out, "the references to other previous or simultaneous phenomena (Beghards, Lutherans) are merely analogies." My translation.

⁴⁴ There are a few other instances of the usage of the phrase "taste of heresy" notably propositions 19 and 25. Such a reading is in line with Hamilton's assertion of a connection between Lutheranism and alumbradismo well past the movement's heyday as being a result of such unfamiliarity on the Inquisition's part.

and proclaimed certain words that appeared to deviate from our Holy Catholic Faith...”⁴⁵

Frequently, the Inquisition learned of heretical behavior from the denunciations of those who witnessed questionable activities. Denunciations could come from all manner of individuals, relatives, friends, neighbors, strangers, or enemies. It was not uncommon for people to use the threat of Inquisitorial investigation as a tool in social relations.⁴⁶ In the case of the alumbrados, Mari Nuñez and Francisca Hernández serve as the most famous examples of this phenomenon. Both Nuñez and Hernández denounced their fellow alumbrados to the Inquisition. In the case of Nuñez she used her denunciations as a means of destabilizing the influence of Isabel de la Cruz in alumbrado circles, while Hernández used it as a bargaining chip during her trial. The Holy Office actively cultivated a fear of itself and its Inquisitors as a means of ensuring orthodoxy if not a steady stream of potential heretics. This fear “became an instrument for producing unanimity of words, actions and thoughts and for ‘guaranteeing social immobility under the constraint of ideological hermeticism.’”⁴⁷

This, however, does not mean that the Inquisitors catered to personal vendettas. As Renée Levine Melammed notes, “the Inquisitors...made every attempt to exclude testimony that could be unreliable because of personal vendettas. Unfortunately, it was not always possible to prove the existence of malice...so this system was far from flawless.”⁴⁸ The Inquisition’s usage of fear as a means of checking heretical or unlawful behavior did not always work to the Holy Office’s advantage. Susan Taylor Snyder discusses a riot that occurred in Bologna in the 1290s over the burning of a group of people accused of being Cathars. In this case the fear of heretics

⁴⁵ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 82.

⁴⁶ Hamilton, 51-52. See also: Bartolomé Bennassar, “Patterns of the Inquisitorial Mind as the Basis for a Pedagogy of Fear,” in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 177-184. See also: Renée Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴⁷ Bennassar, 177.

⁴⁸ Melammed, 11.

propagated by the Inquisition clashed with popular notions of heresy. In the eye of the common mass, Snyder argues, heretics could only be people who engaged in immoral behavior. “The riot was a direct reaction to the disjuncture between the common view of a heretic as immoral and the reality that some of the most prominent citizens and best neighbors in Bologna were practicing Cathars.”⁴⁹ While there never were any mass public protests in Castile over the individuals denounced as alumbrados, the incident in Bologna does serve to highlight the troubles Inquisitors sometimes encountered in determining the truth behind the denunciations they received. What is particularly interesting about this case is that the Church in Bologna “considered it dangerous to announce heretical beliefs openly to the laity in fear that the act might actually spread heresy unintentionally”, yet in the case of the alumbrados and the Edict of 1525 the Spanish Inquisitors thought otherwise. Why was this the case? It seems likely that the Inquisitors were eager to root out the alumbrado movement in full, since in 1525 they only had a fraction of the movement’s members in custody.⁵⁰

In drafting the Edict the Inquisitors also needed to define what constituted orthodoxy. The Edict’s introduction also states: “People spoke and proclaimed certain words that appeared to deviate from our Holy Catholic Faith...”⁵¹ While its conclusion advises the layperson that the preachers who have read to them the Edict of 1525 will also “teach you (*vos*) the Catholic things that you must believe”.⁵² Homza notes, “by this point in time-1525- there was a distinction between the *Catholic* faith and the one espoused by Martin Luther.”⁵³ The assertion and reassertion of the *Catholic* nature of the Church in the document puts in stark relief the defensive

⁴⁹ Susan Taylor Snyder, “Orthodox Fears: Anti-Inquisitorial Violence and Defining Heresy,” in *Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002), 92-106. Quoted material is on page 104.

⁵⁰ Francisca Hernández would not be imprisoned until 1529 while María de Cazalla was not caught until the early 1530s.

⁵¹ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 82.

⁵² Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 91. Márquez, 283.

⁵³ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 82 footnote #7.

position of the Inquisition against alumbradismo, Lutheranism, and other heresies, while also delimiting the Inquisition's domain. This emphasis on "Catholic" is a product of Pope Leo X's 1521 decree of excommunication against Luther.

No longer is the Church just "Christian", but it is "Catholic"; it is *universal*. This purposefully established distinction is meant to outline the concept of the application of the Church's orthodoxy to the entire world. The importance of this distinction makes even more sense in light of Spain's overseas colonial proselytizing ventures that meant to ensure the transmission of *Catholicism*. In their labeling of alumbrado beliefs the Inquisitors characterize the alumbrados as ones who separate "men from the devout and holy customs of the Holy Mother Church."⁵⁴ Thus, the Edict functions as a delimiter of borders against a "heresy", however nebulously defined, that is nonetheless near and very real. That the Inquisitors were concerned with maintaining and enforcing the Catholic identity of the Christianity practiced in Spain is evident in the Edict itself. Proposition 19 reads:

Alumbrados: They should abandon themselves to the love of God and not pray, and what was prayer for? He could see the heart of a certain person like he saw his own hand. And what was the point of taking holy water? He never took it. And what was the point of striking oneself on the chest? And why kiss the earth at the *Incaratus est*, saying what was the point of it; people who did so were full of self-will and earthly shackles (*ataduras*). He reprimanded a certain person who moved from one place to another in order to see the Most Holy Sacrament. [And he said that] upon entering the church, one should not try to heal oneself by making the sign of the Cross or taking holy water, but by holding [God] in his heart.

Inquisitors: The things in this article have the taste of heresy; they are erroneous and scandalous because *they destroy (destruie) the holy ceremonies of the Church and the external acts by which faithful Christians are known and distinguished from infidels (infieles)*.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Homza, 85.

⁵⁵ Italics are my emphasis. Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 86. Márquez, 278.

Lutheranism, crypto-Judaism and other heresies were a constant threat in the Inquisitors' minds and to have to add alumbradismo to that list of heresies caused quite a stir among the draftees of the Edict of 1525. The impact was significant enough that the Inquisitors needed to make sure that the masses who would hear or read the document knew and understood that they belonged to the Catholic Christian faith, and not any of the other "multiple options" rearing their ugly heads all about Spain and Europe.

Las Propositiones Locas

Our main concern is to analyze each of the eight instances of *loca/locura* and to explain why the Inquisitors would have used such vocabulary in their response to alumbrado belief. When the Edict is looked at as a whole the usage of *locura* stands in contrast to other, more specific theological refutations. After all, *crazy* is a word with strong connotations in presumably every human language- not least of all Spanish. It assumes an objective norm of behavior that is compliant with, in this case, the orthodox doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church. The usage of *locura*, when taken with the frequent appearance of "scandalous" (*escandalo*), seems to evoke shock and fear in its audience. Above all, however, the Inquisitors' usage of *loca* in concert with the overall wording of the Edict was meant to delegitimize the alumbrados. In spite of the pieced together structure of the Edict, the Inquisition carefully chose the words it used in its responses to the alumbrados' assertions and carefully redacted the testimonies that made up those Propositions.

In qualifying the alumbrado propositions the charges of Lutheranism and Erasmianism were fairly common. Much less common was the usage of "infidel" (*infiel*), which occurred only twice.⁵⁶ What was used nearly as frequently as "heretical" and "Lutheran" are the words

⁵⁶ Propositions 18 and 26, see Homza 86 and 87 respectively. See also Márquez, 276 and 279. It is important to note that Homza, for reasons not explained, translates *infiel* as "pagan".

“madness” and “crazy” in two different forms respectively: *locura* and its stem *loca*. The usage of these words is meant not only to refute the alumbrado beliefs presented in the Edict but also above all to present the alumbrados as dangerous people who do not fit into Castilian society.⁵⁷ The Edict was rendered in Castilian and not in Latin since it was meant for public consumption. Milagros Ortega Costa de Emmart comments that if one considers the language of the Edict to be “barely academic” it is because the Inquisitors kept “the common tongue of the people in order for it to be better understood by them when they read the Edict...”⁵⁸ As Márquez points out, “even though the Edict’s propositions have been redacted with an incredible amount of crudeness...the work of developing it is evident and deserves to be considered.”⁵⁹ Ortega asserts that part of the reason for using simple language was to deflect the blow of the sophisticated theological ideas expressed by the alumbrados, but it was of course also meant to put on center stage the oft-used keywords of *heretica*, *escandalosa*, *herronea* and *Luterana*. When looked at as a whole the document screams “¡¡peligro!!” to anyone who may simply glance at it and even more so to those who read or listened to it in full.⁶⁰ This, of course, was in keeping with the Inquisition’s usage of fear as a weapon in rooting out heresy.⁶¹ The Edict functioned, like all good propaganda, as a source of information and as a motivator, in this case to inspire a sense of fear in those that read or listened to it. By publishing information on the practices that were deemed unorthodox the Church was in essence also publishing a checklist from which individuals could verify that the practices that they maintained were correct.

⁵⁷ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 627 refers to *dejamiento* and its practice as the most dangerous aspect of alumbradismo in the eyes of the Holy Office.

⁵⁸ Milagros Ortega Costa de Emmart, “Las proposiciones del edicto de los Alumbrados. Autores y calificadores,” *Cuadernos de investigación histórica* 1, no. 1 (1977): 24-25.

⁵⁹ Márquez, 102. My translation.

⁶⁰ The Edict’s conclusion bids priests to read the Edict to their congregations, see Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 91-92.

⁶¹ For more on the role of fear, and how it could be used against the Inquisition, see Susan Taylor Snyder “Orthodox fears: Anti-Inquisitorial Violence and Defining Heresy” in *Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 92-106.

The usage of *loca* seems to occur in instances where the Alumbrados' assertion goes against the Inquisition's conception of "common sense"; where the propositions are seemingly foolish or stupid, but also illogical. The first of the "crazy" Propositions we shall consider in detail is Proposition 17, which serves as an excellent example of the Inquisitors' perspective:

Alumbrados: Upon being asked why he had no statue of our Lady, the Virgin Mary, he replied he would recall the Virgin Mary by looking at a woman.

Inquisitors: This proposition is madness (*locura*) and wrong and heretical in origin, because it pre-supposes that the statues of the saints do not have to be honored.⁶²

In this instance the usage of "madness" (*locura*) makes perfect sense if one considers one of its possible meanings as a person who performs an inconsiderate action or makes a great mistake.⁶³ It also makes sense using its foremost meaning as someone who is deprived of the "usage of reason." Any individual who did not honor the statutes of the saints, especially the patron of one's city, would be viewed as inconsiderate. A person who neglected or ignored saintly adoration was neglecting the welfare of the city's Christian community, since patron saints were supposed to protect the city. The Inquisitors would of course constitute such neglect as unreasonable and hence "crazy". If one employs the "orthodox Catholic common sense" standpoint that the Inquisition seemed to use, then the recollection of the *Virgin Mary* "by looking at a woman" is indeed ludicrous. How could one know if such a woman was a true virgin and if so did she lead a pious life? Above all such conduct subverts the traditions of the Church; it breaks with orthodox practice. Instead of requiring an individual to attend a church for

⁶² Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 86. Márquez, 277.

⁶³ The partial entry from the Real Academia's dictionary follows:

locura.

(De *loco*).

1. f. Privación del juicio o del uso de la razón.

2. f. Acción inconsiderada o gran desacierto.

his/her religious devotion, the alumbrados proposed that any woman could serve as a substitute for a consecrated icon of the Virgin.

The keystone in maintaining Catholic orthodoxy was church attendance; while Spain at this time witnessed an eruption of printed texts most individuals still depended on priests for their religious knowledge.⁶⁴ In doing as the alumbrados suggest individuals would then be free of church services. In effect the alumbrados would be challenging the standard, orthodox interpretation/representation of what constitutes “the Virgin Mary”. A challenge to the orthodox interpretation of the Virgin results in nothing less than a questioning and replacing of the Church’s theological authority and structure. Such a substitution of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in favor of alumbrado ideas would also mean that an individual’s worldview shifted away from the dominant Catholic cosmology. It is because of this kind of threat to authority that the maintenance of orthodoxy and orthopraxy remained the Inquisition’s primary concern.⁶⁵

Not surprisingly, then, the Inquisitors cried “crazy” when faced with the alumbrados’ contradiction of such basic, taken-for-granted aspects of Catholicism. Proposition 24 serves as a further example of this. It concerns itself with the adoration of saints but adds the Cross to the mix:

Alumbrados: That a preacher reprimanded those who prayed to the saints and adored their images (*ymagenes*). Why did they adore the Cross, when it was a piece of wood they could burn?

Inquisitors: This proposition is heretical, crazy (*loca*) and scandalous in all its parts.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Sara T. Nalle, “Literacy and Culture in Early Modern Castile,” *Past & Present* no.125 (November 1989): 65-96. The Edict of 1525’s instructions to priests to read the decree to their congregations is proof enough that the local church and priest remained the center and custodian of orthodoxy.

⁶⁵ Márquez, 102-103.

⁶⁶ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 87. Márquez, 278.

The Inquisitors' reaction here is easily understood: it is simple and total madness to suggest that the Cross is not only an insignificant object but also that it should not be adored. One can only imagine the reactions that the Inquisitors who read this statement must have had. Neglect of the saints, from an Inquisitorial perspective, is madness, and neglect of the Cross is not only madness but also scandalous and heretical behavior. It further upsets the order established by the Church. For the alumbrados reverence for the Cross, along with devotion to the saints, was not a preferred method of devotion. They were, as Alcaraz liked to call them, *ataduras*; ties to the material world that pulled individuals away from the practice of *dejamiento* and thus abandonment to God.⁶⁷ To challenge such keystone Catholic doctrines was unthinkable, as it was something enculturated in every Catholic. In the Inquisitors' eyes for someone to contest such fundamental aspects of Catholic cosmology and practice was indeed *locura*.⁶⁸

A quick survey of the propositions deemed “crazy” reveals that many are concerned with matters of practice and behavior that by the Church's standards are normal, but that the alumbrados think to be unsavory. This is due to the notion that alumbradismo was above all a heresy of doctrine. Their exact theological stance, in particular the role of Christ, remains somewhat hazy.⁶⁹ An excellent example of the doctrinal nature of alumbrado thought, however, is Proposition 21:

Alumbrados: That one does not have to ask God for something in particular; that it was appropriate to say (*que era propiedad dezir*), “Pray to God for me”, [since] God took care of everyone. And [when] a confessor told a certain person that it was good to be specific in petitions, they [sic] said they believed it was better *not* to be so.

⁶⁷ Hamilton, 58.

⁶⁸ I think cosmology is an appropriate term here. The adoration of the Cross and the Saints was a significant practice in Catholicism that also to a degree ensured the balance of the Universe, it was both a means of worship of God as well as an ends in worldly affairs and thus part of every Catholic's worldview.

⁶⁹ For more on alumbrado theology and the role of Jesus Christ see Chapter Four of this thesis.

Inquisitors: The first part of this proposition is erroneous and heretical, [and] against the doctrine of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Church; and the second part is crazy (*loca*).⁷⁰

For the Church specificity in petitions to God was necessary. One had to voice one's needs to God. Prayer was typically an oral and aural exercise. Movements like the alumbrados and later Quietist iterations were problematic because of their advocacy of silent, internal prayer. Specificity and orality provided a means to ensure orthodoxy not just externally, e.g. rituals, but also internally, e.g. the way in which Christians were meant to express, communicate and understand their religion. J.C. Nieto notes the significance of silent prayer, "the speechless element of the mystical ecstasy...[leads] to a union which is the experience of the obliteration of the distance between the divine and the human."⁷¹ Of course, such obliteration would have threatened the purpose of the Church as a middle ground between human and divine.

Thus, specificity helped to insure orthodoxy in word and deed. At home, whether they realized it or not, families supervised each other's prayers and overall activity as Inquisitorial denunciations attest.⁷² When one brings in *dejamiento*, Proposition 21 makes perfect sense from the alumbrado perspective. If one let oneself go to God then one did not have any need for confession because whatever actions a person undertook were sanctioned by God; one was acting according to His plan. Proposition 37 likewise proved to be confusing nonsense for the Inquisition:

Alumbrados: By words and gesture, he denied [that] works done out of charity were performed for the love of God, but [rather] for one's own interest.

⁷⁰ Márquez, 278. See also Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 86. The translation quoted above is Homza's except for the phrase *que era propiedad*, which Homza translates "it was like property". This translation makes no sense in context and it could have simply been a mistranslation, opting for the literal and most popular meaning of the noun, which is of course "property".

⁷¹ J.C. Nieto, "The Franciscan Alumbrados", 11.

⁷² Hamilton, 68-69.

Inquisitors: This proposition is crazy (*loca*), false, erroneous and self-contradictory.⁷³

The fact that the Inquisitors found this statement to be self-contradictory, coupled with the usage of *loca*, is indicative of the huge doctrinal troubles the alumbrados were capable of creating for the Inquisitors. Cruz, Alcaraz and company spurned works of charity because they were seen as disingenuous acts that served the self rather than God. One did not profit from acts but rather faith, and giving oneself to God. The alumbrados' preference for silent, internal prayer is an issue that comes up a few times in the Edict. The alumbrados were also concerned with the *sincerity* of acts of religious devotion; their spurning of external works and oral prayer is in large part due to this concern. Proposition 22 addresses the worry the alumbrados had over religious acts engendered out of repetition or habit, seeing them as inauthentic and problematic:

Alumbrados: It was not good for a man to favor particular prayers, because men came to depend upon them out of sentiment, and wicked things were engendered as a result. It was a flaw to think about Jesus' Passion and to console oneself with it; and it bothered him because a woman cried over a certain image of the Passion. One woman whipped her servant because she cried over the Passion. On Holy Thursday he had as much joy and pleasure, as if it were Easter Sunday.

Inquisitors: This proposition is heretical in the first and second parts. And to affirm that on Good Friday a person does not have to cry over the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, but laugh and enjoy oneself, is a crazy, scandalous, and audacious thing, and against the common custom of the Holy Church.⁷⁴

The thought that a man should not "favor particular prayers" is another excellent example of the notion that religious practices more often than not served as *ataduras*, ties to this world that distracted the individual from God. That someone would continuously use the same prayer out of fondness but also out of habit was dangerous from an alumbrado perspective because it indicated complacency, which was a hindrance to the advancement of the soul towards God. This of course in turn meant that standardized and oft-used prayers, such as the Our Father, the Rosary,

⁷³ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 90. Márquez, 281.

⁷⁴ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 87. Márquez, 278.

and the Nicene Creed were seen as undesirable in alumbrado practice. Thus, the Inquisitors decried heresy. The issue of meditation on the image of the Passion will be examined in Chapter 4, which deals with the *converso* background of the alumbrados. Suffice it to say for now that the role of Jesus is problematic in alumbrado thought. Without any afterthought, the Inquisition would consider as heretics any who denied the importance of mediating on the Passion, especially in a post-Kempis world. Also, to ignore the sanctity of the *triduum sacrum* was also easily declared heretical, but that it is referred to as “going against the common customs of the Church” drives home the social and cultural dimensions of the doctrines espoused by the alumbrados and the complexities behind the Inquisition’s mission to ensure orthodoxy.

These propositions go against what the Inquisitors and the Church considered to be a basic aspect of the enculturation of all Catholics. They not only challenged doctrine but they also challenged what was understood to be cultural norms. The alumbrado propositions are ideas which threaten and challenge the Catholic worldview and thus, to a degree, the orthodox conception of reality. Any person who conceived of a way of thinking that denied the importance of those basic lynchpins of Catholic cosmology had to be crazy for they were seeking to dismantle the order of the universe, whether they realized it or not. As the previously noted, Proposition 19 shows that the Inquisitors were wary of the alumbrados’ ideas, especially those that questioned the necessity for nearly every Catholic religious practice, from cleansing with Holy Water to the taking of the Host. This sort behavior, as the Inquisitors themselves noted, threatened to destroy that which made individuals Catholic and thus threatened the longevity of the Church before the Protestant scourge. Proposition 7 furthers this idea:

Alumbrados: They call those people who lament their sins “penance-addicts”, “proprietors of themselves” and “weepers” (*penitenciaros de si mesmos y lloraduelos*).

Inquisitors: This proposition is crazy (*loca*) and contemptuous toward the sacrament of penance.⁷⁵

The alumbrado assertion that “those...who lament their sins” are in essence self-centered comes off as contradictory nonsense from the Inquisitors’ standpoint since it goes against the intrinsic purpose of confession, that is, the alleviation of one’s sins. It is, however, contemptuous of the practice of penance calling those who participate in it religious narcissists. Again, the Inquisitors see this as “crazy” because the logic behind such a statement seems questionable. If one brings in *dejamiento* then the proposition makes more sense. Using J.C. Nieto’s non-mystical conception of *dejamiento* as “a way of behavior and thinking in the concrete situations of...daily life” helps to clarify the diminished significance of confession in alumbrado thought. Alumbradismo seems to have incorporated sin into daily life, not as something that one must strive to remove, but as something that is normal or even desirable since it is a manifestation of God’s will.⁷⁶ Thus, from the alumbrados’ perspective to engage in the act of confession was akin to boasting about one’s accomplishments in coming closer to living in God’s will. It also meant that one was unable to let go, to break free from the *ataduras* that held one to the material world.

There remain two propositions that are somewhat puzzling, both to the Inquisitors and to historians. Proposition 31 reads:

Alumbrados: She took it to be as a mortal sin if she read some book in order to be consoled with the message of the Scriptures.

Inquisitors: This proposition, which says it is a sin to read some book to console the soul, is crazy (*loca*), erroneous, and even heretical.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 84. Márquez, 275.

⁷⁶ Nieto, J.C. “The Heretical Alumbrados”, p. 300.

⁷⁷ Márquez, 280. My own translation. Homza excludes the phrase “con la comunicación de la escriptura”, rather she translates the last half of the sentence as “he read some book to console his soul.” For the alternate English translation see Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 88.

From the Inquisitorial perspective this proposition is crazy because, once again, it negates the traditions of Catholicism. On the surface it seems to advocate a *sola scriptura* approach to reading the Bible. The alumbrados believe that individuals need to interpret the Bible free from the underpinnings of theological interpretations made by *letrados* and other learned men who do not attempt to abandon themselves to God and His will. Books on theology and doctrinal interpretation from the perspective of the alumbrados were just another type of *atadura*. What is also interesting is that the Inquisitors did not decry Proposition 31 as a *Lutheran* heresy, but rather as just “heretical” (*heretica*).

Proposition 26, however, is similar. Here, the Inquisitors flesh out the perceived ties to Lutheranism much more explicitly:

Alumbrados: That he had the sort of gift that the saints mentioned. Speaking of the saints’ teaching, he waved it off, saying, “This doctrine of the saints! I have to judge and act according to Holy Scripture.” And [while] speaking about the insights that God gave the saints and other prodigious spirits, he said, “What was the point of these wonders in the soul? He said that the sacred canons of the Church are good and holy, but whoever wished might observe them; what he wanted instead was to observe the Law of our Lord. They should not submit to learned men, because learned men did not preach the love of God, but only what He said.

Inquisitors: This proposition is pagan (*infiel*), heretical, and a Lutheran error (*herror Luterano*), because to reject the doctrine of the saints is Lutheran madness (*Locura luterana*) and a very arrogant error (*herror muy soberbio*), contrary to the doctrine of the saints. And to say that the holy canons don’t have to be observed is a heretical, impious, and Lutheran error because it separates the faithful from the observance of the Church’s commandments.⁷⁸

Here, the alumbrados are deriding the importance of canon law and instead exhorting individuals to follow only God’s will. They exhort one to ignore the *letrados*, who simply repeated what God said in the Bible but did not truly look for His love. In this Proposition the alumbrados reject the need for one to follow what they consider to be man’s interpretation of God’s law. The

⁷⁸ Homza *Spanish Inquisition*, 88. Márquez, 279.

love of God, as noted in Chapter 1, was a significant aspect of alumbradismo. In Proposition 26 one sees once again the alumbrados' emphasis on direct contact with the Divine via *dejamiento* and personal scriptural interpretation to such a degree that canon law and the cult of the saints were things to be circumscribed. From the Inquisitors' perspective one could assume that proposition 31 is meant to recall 26 since both treat related concepts, particularly alumbradismo's seemingly anti-intellectual stance.⁷⁹ That the Inquisitors' found Proposition 26 particularly upsetting is evident from the tone of their response. The Inquisitors are quick to label alumbradismo's take on canon law and the theological interpretations of the *letrados* as "a very arrogant error" and a clearly "pagan" one at that due to its denial of the cult of the saints and canon law. Once again, however, the Inquisitors tied alumbradismo to Lutheranism.

The Inquisitors sought out parallels with other more easily identifiable heresies as a means of interpreting the alumbrados.⁸⁰ Of more immediate interest is the phrase *locura luterana*. It appears as a reaction to the rejection of the doctrine of the saints, which as discussed previously in relation to Proposition 17, is complete madness as it neglects the significance of saintly patronage and protection in daily life. That which is madness is that which is contrary to the Inquisitors' and by extension the orthodox Catholic worldview, i.e. that which every Christian should take for granted as basic to human existence. This includes proper worship and reverence of the cult of the saints, reverence for the Holy Mother, the Cross and the recognition of the supreme and *undeniable* authority of the Holy Mother Church. That the alumbrados' denied these things equaled madness, but in this case a very specific *Lutheran* madness. The Castilian Inquisition thus thought of the Lutherans as potentially being as mad as the alumbrados

⁷⁹ The role of anti-intellectualism in alumbrado thought will be covered in the fifth chapter.

⁸⁰ For example, the alumbrado ideas expressed in propositions 34 and 43 led the Inquisitors to draw a parallel to the Beghards, see Homza, 89 and 90-91 and Márquez 280-281 and 282.

were. What matters is that the Inquisitors considered deviant doctrinal thought to be not only heresy, but also madness because it challenged or countermanded some of the most fundamental and foundational principles of the Catholic Church.

Lastly, the tenuous position of the Inquisitors in trying to detect the alumbrados is particularly evident in Propositions 26, 31 and 17. For example, in Proposition 26 if one ignores the misdirection of sorts brought about by the Inquisitors' more "emotional" statements it becomes apparent that the Inquisitorial refutation is based on circular reasoning. The Edict declares, "to reject the doctrine of the saints is... contrary to the doctrine of the saints." What is interesting in this statement is that it reveals the thorny position the Inquisitors were in. The Inquisitors were not exactly sure what it was they were dealing with and thus could not provide a concrete theological justification for rejecting Proposition 26 beyond saying that it is just wrong. This also points to the notion that the Inquisitors perhaps found themselves "stuck" interpreting alumbradismo from *within* the Catholic theological and doctrinal mentalité, making it difficult for them to provide counterarguments to Propositions that negated those doctrines on such a basic level.

A similar pattern is apparent in several other propositions in which the Inquisitors state that the alumbrado doctrines either have "the taste of heresy" or "may be heresy" or wherein they simply state that it is against "the common custom of the Holy Church".⁸¹ In the face of the "unknown", the usage of *locura* as a reaction and explanation to the unsuitability of alumbrado doctrine becomes more understandable. It is evidence of the Inquisitors' state of fear and ignorance, especially with the threat of Lutheranism and the uncertainties of Erasmianism

⁸¹ See propositions 8, 19, 25, 29, 42 in either Homza or Márquez.

hanging over their heads.⁸² The Inquisitors and consultants who gathered to draft the Edict of 1525 thus wanted to discredit any doctrinal validity behind alumbrado views by representing them as outside normality and *the* orthodox worldview. The Edict bears witness to the Inquisition's realization that what the alumbrados represented was above all a *novelty*, one that did not fully belong to either orthodoxy or known heterodoxies, but rather seemed to fit somewhere in between both.⁸³ The realization of the *novel* nature of alumbradismo speaks to their interpretative difficulties and the trouble that the Inquisitors appeared at times to have when arguing against alumbradismo.

The last proposition to use *locura* in its censure of alumbrado doctrine may not even be an alumbrado assertion at all. Like other aspects of alumbrado historiography it is also one open to debate. When looked at in light of the rest of the Edict, Proposition 46 seems out of character for purported alumbrado statements of doctrine and belief:

Alumbrados: That the end of the world will occur twelve years from now.

Inquisitors: This proposition is crazy (*loca*).⁸⁴

Márquez notes “the alumbrados are not involved in messianic millenarianist currents; in addition they mocked (*se burlan*) the fantasies that existed during this time in certain Franciscan circles with the same audacity that they mocked images.”⁸⁵ While Milagros Ortega Costa de Emmart states that the origin of this proposition is “unknown”.⁸⁶ Ortega and J.C. Nieto both respectively tie the proposition to the “Franciscan apocalyptic Alumbrados” with whom Alcaraz clashed, for

⁸² Fraker, 98. Fraker notes, “a close reading of the Edict of 1525 reveals another motive for the Inquisition's severity: the almost pathological fear of the spread of Lutheranism.” See also, Selke “Algunos datos”, 127-128.

⁸³ The nature of this novelty is further explored in the coming chapters on the alumbrados' converso status and the role of women within the movement.

⁸⁴ Márquez, 282. My translation. See Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 91, for an alternate English translation.

⁸⁵ Márquez, 108. See also, Márquez, 99-100.

⁸⁶ Ortega, 35.

example, Fray Juan Omillos and his lot.⁸⁷ It is difficult then to say what one should think of this proposition. Whether it is an alumbrado doctrine or not cannot be answered easily at present (it would perhaps merit its own study), but what can be said is that it only adds to the portrait of the alumbrados that the Edict sought to craft. What then is this image of the alumbrados that the Edict is seemingly trying to craft for its lay audience?

A Portrait of Madness

On the surface “crazy” is a label applied to those propositions that go against the doctrines that Catholicism takes for granted. However, if one looks at the Edict of 1525 as a whole it becomes clear that the Inquisitors cannot firmly place the alumbrados with either Luther or ‘the infidels’, but it *can* create a niche for them. Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* wrote “the man of madness communicates with society, only by the intermediary of an equally abstract reason which is order, physical and moral constraint, the anonymous pressure of the group, the requirements of conformity.”⁸⁸ Conformity is key in understanding the dynamic between alumbrados and Inquisition. As we have seen, the Inquisition expected all Catholics to conform to the mandates of the Holy Mother Church. In addition, the Inquisitors expected the alumbrados to conform not only to socio-cultural expectations but also to the pressures of the *proceso*.

Angela Selke notes this “anonymous pressure”, reminding us not to expect “the prisoners to bare their souls before the Tribunal of the Inquisition.”⁸⁹ She also observes, “the ultimate end of [their] revelations, like everything that the *reos* confess or allege in their defense, is to

⁸⁷ Nieto, “The Franciscan Alumbrados”, 8 footnote 21. Nieto’s labeling, however, does not seem to take into consideration Alcaraz’s disapproval of Omillos and his gang of “Franciscan apocalyptic Alumbrados”. Thus, in historical hindsight, we might include these Franciscans with the rest of the alumbrado movement, especially since they very much admired Francisca Hernández. It is difficult, however, to tell to what degree Hernández, Cruz or any other alumbrados included them. What we know of them, as J.C. Nieto points out, comes solely from “the Inquisition’s record of the trial of Alcaraz”, see Nieto, “The Franciscan Alumbrados”, 7 footnote 16.

⁸⁸ Foucault, *x*.

⁸⁹ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 621.

convince the Inquisitors that, at the bottom of their hearts, they are ‘good and faithful Catholic Christians.’”⁹⁰ While the Edict makes no attempt at convincing one of that idea, it does bear witness to the Inquisitorial investigational process and the Inquisitors’ mindset, and in doing so also reveals the mindset of the alumbrados. The Inquisition uses such strong, colorful language such as “crazy” (*loca*) in its refutations because it was meant to direct the mind away from the temptations of alumbrado doctrine and its inherent heresies.

As their choice of words suggests the Inquisitors were frequently appalled at the statements that the alumbrados made on doctrine and belief. In analyzing the instances of *loca/locura* as an Inquisitorial qualification and response to the alumbrado Propositions it has become apparent that the Inquisitors viewed those ideas as utter lunacy because they questioned the very foundations of Catholic theology, canon law, doctrine and belief. The Propositions challenged the socio-cultural norms of one of the central institutions of Castilian society, the Catholic Church. In doing so the alumbrados were no longer simply heretical, but “mad”, because in refuting the rules and norms that dictated the functioning and behavior of the Catholic worldview, the cosmology into which every Castilian was supposed to be enculturated, the alumbrados were negating the very fabric of reality and the universe.

The Edict presents us with the most concise source of alumbrado doctrines, the 48 Propositions, ideas that were informed by the background of the individuals in the movement, a spiritual movement predominantly made up of both *conversos* and women. It is to these factors that we will turn in the final Chapters. The usage of madness by the Inquisitors was meant to denote the idea that the alumbrados had erred on their path, that they had exited what constituted standard Catholic cosmology. In doing so the alumbrados, according to the Edict, seemingly lost all reason and were only capable of manufacturing heresies and *locuras*. In labeling the

⁹⁰ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 621.

alumbrados “crazy heretics” the Inquisitors were attempting to deflect and delegitimize the power of the movement’s ideas by creating a space for them outside of reason and orthodoxy. The converso background of the majority of the alumbrado movement’s members played a significantly role in the creation of this space, to this we now turn.

CHAPTER 4 THE CONVERSO FACTOR

Distrust and Dislike

The majority of the individuals involved in the alumbrado movement when it was denounced by the Edict of 1525 were second or third generation *conversos*.¹ This is a factor that has been considered in nearly every written history of the alumbrados since the days of Bernardino Llorca's *Die Spanische Inquisition und die Alumbrados*. However, there remain certain questions relating to the "converso factor" that must be looked at in relation to the Edict and the charges of *locura*. The first is the role that the social status of *converso* or *nuevo cristiano* played in the portrayal of the alumbrados in the Edict of 1525. The second factor is the role allotted to Jesus Christ within what we know to be alumbrado doctrine. The alumbrados, it seems, did not have a Christocentric set of beliefs; rather they emphasized God over the Son.

Angela Selke's 1978 article "El Iluminismo de los Conversos y la Inquisición. Cristianismo Interior de los Alumbrados: Resentimiento y Sublimación" traces the role of the alumbrados' converso status in relation to their "interiorized Christianity".² While initially admitting, "it is most probable that illuminism had diverse roots", Selke nonetheless goes on to assign a specific source for the alumbrados and alumbradismo's origins. The article concerns itself with the discrimination against conversos that was prevalent in early sixteenth century Castile. By its end Selke effectively declares the "*primum mobile*" of the alumbrados to be their Jewish root. This is not meant to say that they were crypto-Jews; most of the historians of alumbradismo do not uphold this idea, especially in light of the fact that the Inquisition never

¹ Selke, "El Iluminismo", 622. My translation.

² For more on the interiorized Christianity of the alumbrados see, Melquiades Andrés, "Common Denominator of Alumbrados, Erasmians, "Lutherans," and Mystics: The Risk of a More "Intimate" Spirituality," in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 457-494.

successfully charged any of the Castilian alumbrados with judaizing.³ Rather Selke points to “their status as conversos, the anguish (*angustia*), the insecurity (*inseguridad*), and the feeling of *resentment* (*resentimiento*) that they felt as part of a discriminated and oppressed minority”.⁴ A *converso* minority that lived “in the middle of a society of old Christians who were suspicious (*recelo*) and abhorrent of them, calling them “confesos” and “tornadizos”, that is to say traitors.”⁵ Selke, however, oversimplifies the situation of the converso alumbrados to a straightforward dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed. Selke cites one of Alcaraz’s letters as evidence of the anguish and resentment felt by the converso alumbrados; the problem is that she extends these feelings to *all* of the alumbrados and by extension the whole mass of conversos. Her arguments are, however, interpretively useful and as such those overly neat aspects of her article must be kept in mind as we proceed in our analysis.

By the same token her description of the dislike felt towards conversos is useful. Benzion Netanyahu has also noted this general feeling of resentment towards conversos. The Inquisition, Netanyahu wrote, was driven “by racial hatred and political considerations rather than by religious zeal.”⁶ For Netanyahu, “the aim of the Inquisition... was not to eradicate a Jewish heresy from the midst of the Marrano group, but to eradicate the Marrano group from the midst of the Spanish people.”⁷ Renée Levine Melammed similarly notes “ironically, both those conversos who judaized and those who did not faced lives of fear and insecurity, for they were

³ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 623. Hamilton, 69-71. Nieto, “The Non-Mystical Nature”, 432.

⁴ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 619.

⁵ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 619.

⁶ Benzion Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain: From the Late 14th to the Early 16th Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3.

⁷ Netanyahu, *The Marranos*, 4.

all suspect in a society unwilling to absorb them.”⁸ Succinctly put “conversos were the favorite victims of the Inquisition”.⁹

Indeed, as noted in Chapter 1, the initial response of the Inquisition when dealing with alumbrados like Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz was to charge them with judaizing. This is the heresy it was most accustomed to dealing with. The episode of Alcaraz’s defense against the charge of judaizing is oft cited in alumbrado literature. In this instance Alcaraz was accused of cooking and eating *adafinas*, which is a stew of beans, peas, meat, and eggs that was typically made on Fridays before the Sabbath.¹⁰ Alcaraz defended himself by simply stating that “he has never eaten them, and that ‘he doesn’t even know what *adafinas* is”.¹¹ The interesting thing about this very simple defense is that it worked. The Inquisitors shortly thereafter dropped the charges. As the trials of hundreds of other individuals accused of judaizing attest, this was an unusual turn of events. Selke comments that even “old Christians knew what *adafinas* were” and thus if the Inquisition accepted his defense it is “only because they were very certain that he was not a judaizer.”¹²

The charges of judaizing were quickly dropped for the alumbrados and never appear again in the available documentation.¹³ That judaizing was dropped as a charge did not exclude the pre-existing dislike or suspicion of conversos. During the sentencing of Isabel de la Cruz and Alcaraz in 1528 one of the voting Inquisitors, Alonso de Mariana, “said that the defendants ‘were all the more suspicious since they were *conversos*’”.¹⁴ Their converso status is something that would stay with the alumbrados all throughout their Inquisitorial ordeals. As an example of

⁸ Renée Levine Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel? The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14.

⁹ Bennassar, 179.

¹⁰ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 623. See also Márquez, 86-87.

¹¹ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 623. My translation.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Hamilton, 71.

¹⁴ Hamilton, 63.

the prejudices tied to conversos is the assumption, on the part of the Inquisitors, that Alcaraz was secretly maintaining Jewish practices, something that is paradoxically tied to his converso status. By the circumstance that they “had been born of converso parents meant that they were ‘suspects in the faith’ and as such was something that the Inquisition always had in mind.¹⁵ Alcaraz was initially labeled as a judaizer because, in the Inquisitors’ minds, he could not possibly be any other type of heretic. This immediate assumption of Alcaraz’s maintenance of crypto-Jewish practices is also evidence of the Inquisitor’s inexperience. After all the Inquisition had only been established a scant thirty years before the alumbrados were put on trial. Crypto-judaism was familiar ground for the Inquisitors and thus using that as an accusation gave them a moment’s solace that is until the Inquisitors realized they were dealing with something completely new.¹⁶ The struggles that the Inquisitors underwent in interpreting alumbradismo is equally due to the movement’s novelty as it is due to the lack of experience and procedure for dealing with that novelty. This is partly why the Edict is constantly searching for heretical parallels and foils to the alumbrados because the Inquisitors were not fully equipped to deal with something outside certain pre-determined modes of heretical behavior. The view of conversos as apt to religious regression or degeneration has a complex history and is traced with much skill by both Melammed and Netanyahu.

While crypto-Judaism or marranism is not a direct concern of this thesis, it is important to bear in mind two points about the phenomenon in discussing the converso background of the alumbrados. The first is Netanyahu’s assertion in *The Marranos of Spain* “that the trend toward Judaism among the Marranos, noticeable after the establishment of the Inquisition, was not the product of an underground movement which was merely forced to the surface by the Inquisition,

¹⁵ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 621.

¹⁶ Hamilton, 71.

but rather the product of the Inquisition itself; it was a fundamentally new phenomenon without roots in the past or even in concealed Jewish feelings, and entirely an outgrowth of external pressures.”¹⁷ Netanyahu’s contention is rather provocative as it implies that the *conversos* were not only successfully assimilating, but also *willingly* assimilating to Christian culture.¹⁸

Netanyahu supports these arguments by pointing to the notion prevalent among Jewish rabbis at the time that those *conversos* who did seek a return to Judaism were seen “as Christians, as a camp that included no crypto-Jewish movement to speak of”.¹⁹ What Netanyahu is concerned with is the “breakdown of faith” that led Jews to *voluntarily* convert to Christianity in 1492.²⁰ Netanyahu’s approach is interesting because it is based on Jewish documentary sources, focusing on how the Jewish religious authorities perceived and defined the Marranos/*conversos*.

Netanyahu’s assertion is significant because it highlights the power of the Inquisition and its dual ability to detect heresy, but also to create it.

Second, in *False Mystics* Jaffary suggests that the Castilian alumbrados “became the tribunal’s victims because they were ‘caught between’ its two more central contemporary preoccupations: the new heresy of Protestantism and the older heresy of crypto-Judaism.”²¹ This effectively locates the alumbrados’ place in the Inquisition’s continuum of heresy by pointing to their position in society as belonging to neither fully assimilated New Christians nor crypto-Jews. In any case, the alumbrados’ position between these two heresies is evidence of the idea that the alumbrados belong to a third space, outside what the Inquisitors expected they would find. Indeed, Edward Peters observes that up until 1530 the Inquisition was primarily occupied

¹⁷ Netanyahu, *Marranos of Spain*, 189.

¹⁸ This is in contrast to, for example, the argument presented by Melammed in *Heretics or Daughters of Israel?* that presumes unwillingness to join the Christian way of life as the default attitude of *conversas*, and rather proposes an active, conscious resistance to assimilation via crypto-Judaic practices as the norm.

¹⁹ Netanyahu, *Marranos of Spain*, 61; 72 and 192-203.

²⁰ Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain*, 95-96 and 120.

²¹ Jaffary, 30. For Jaffary’s inspiration for this observation see Hamilton, 65-75.

with the heresy of crypto-Judaism, which was “a distinctive Spanish problem”.²² Peters asserts that the Inquisition’s activities “after 1530 reflect a Spanish response to a European problem—the rise of Protestantism and the perceived Spanish responsibility to defeat it.”²³ Most importantly, the alumbrados arose at a socially and political tumultuous time when the Inquisition was shifting gears in order to respond to new threats:

Its [the Inquisition’s] violent and rapid attacks on Lutheranism occurred in the context of the political unrest of the 1520s, the absence of the king, and the politically revolutionary movements that culminated in the revolt of the *Comuneros*. A number of scholars have argued that by 1520 the initial purpose of the Inquisition [to root out crypto-Judaism] had been virtually completed and that the dangers of the new religious movements offered the Inquisition a new lease on life, one that it accepted quickly and acted upon dramatically. The scope of its activities greatly widened, and what one scholar has termed ‘the universe of heterodoxy’ now became its chief target.²⁴

It is this carryover of the “Inquisitorial mentality” that shaped the dialogue with the alumbrados, “Protestants, and others who were not even remotely suspected of being Jews”. It is also what resulted in the alumbrados getting “caught between” Protestantism and crypto-Judaism because “the Inquisitors wove the threads of their concern with these other heresies into their interrogations of alumbrados and into the edicts they issued against alumbradismo.”²⁵ Jaffary’s contention also allows us to look at the alumbrados as the inter-mixed products of Castile’s late medieval/early modern religious milieu.

Once it became apparent that crypto-Judaism was not an issue, the alumbrados then became lodged in a third space where the socio-cultural baggage of being conversos remained with them, but where they were at once both familiar and other. This is why the Edict wavers and fluctuates so much in its responses to alumbrado ideas. It ultimately succeeds in denigrating the

²² Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 88.

²³ Peters, 88.

²⁴ Peters, 89.

²⁵ Jaffary, 30.

alumbrados because it embraces the uncertainties of classification by declaring the movement a novelty. It carves a heretical third space for them from which they have never been really removed. The notion that conversos could not be trusted and that they were susceptible to heresy was pivotal in the creation of the *limpieza de sangre* laws.²⁶ “The Inquisition was established as a means to control and protect Spanish society and culture”, notes Melammed, “its strength stemmed from the psychological power of fear and the belief that one could inherit a proclivity to engage in heresy. The notion that blood determined one’s faith or caused an inability to assimilate the values of Christianity helped to undermine converso society.”²⁷ It is this fear that drove the Inquisitors when they drafted the Edict of 1525 to proclaim “locura” in the face of alumbradismo’s assertions. It is also the same fear that “introduced...a trend not toward religious but toward *racial* segregation” into Castilian society.²⁸

Due to the attitudes prevalent towards conversos, men like Alcaraz and women like Isabel de la Cruz never discussed before the Inquisition “their *converso* status, [or anything] concerning the situation in which they were forced to live, and that, they did not mention at all their Jewish origins, unless they did not have any other choice.”²⁹ This is not to say that the Inquisitors and the alumbrados’ friends and neighbors were unawares of their Jewish heritage. “It would have been just as impossible [for the alumbrados] to hide their Jewish origins as it would be impossible for a black person to hide the color of their skin”, observes Selke.³⁰

²⁶ See Netanyahu, “The Racial Attack on the Conversos,” (in *Toward the Inquisition: Essays on Jewish and Converso History in Late Medieval Spain*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

²⁷ Melammed, *Heretics or Daughters of Israel?*, 10. See also Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 618-619.

²⁸ Netanyahu, “The Racial Attack”, 38.

²⁹ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 621. My translation.

³⁰ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 621. My translation. She is of course referring to the *Estatutos de Limpieza de Sangre*. It may be a bit faux pas to make such a comparison, but I think it serves to give one an idea of the plight of *conversos* and the difficulty that they faced in dealing with their stigmatized past.

Crazy Conversos

Key in fully appreciating the usage of “crazy” in the Edict of 1525 is the alumbrados’ *converso* status. When one looks at the Edict of 1525 what becomes glaringly obvious is that not even once did the Inquisitors mention that the alumbrados had for a time been considered to be judaizers. As noted above Alcaraz was accused of judaizing, however, the Inquisitors were forced to drop the charges once no real evidence arose.³¹ Even then, the Inquisitor Diego Ortíz de Angulo tried to extend the charge to all of the alumbrados, but in the end was forced to give up the accusation due, once again, to a lack of evidence for judaizing practices. While it is certainly possible that some in the alumbrados’ number maintained crypto-Jewish practices, as far as is known, only Alcaraz was ever accused. The other prominent *alumbrados*, Isabel, María and Francisca were never the subjects of such an accusation. That the Edict of 1525 makes no allusions whatsoever to Judaizing practices also serves to bolster the notion that within the alumbrado movement crypto-Judaism was likely not a factor.³² This does not preclude the indirect or direct influence of Jewish religious ideas, such influence, however, is rather difficult to definitively trace or demonstrate.³³ Thus, by the Edict’s conclusion the Inquisitors refer to the alumbrados as followers of “errors and *novelties*”.³⁴ Going back to my initial analysis of the Edict, the Inquisitors sought out connections with Lutheranism and other heresies, if only by analogy, in order to find and delimit a space for the alumbrados within Castilian society. The issue centers on the Inquisition’s difficulty with assigning a place for the alumbrados. Part of the

³¹ Hamilton, 69-71. Márquez, 86-94.

³² Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 622. Hamilton, 69-71. Márquez, 86-94.

³³ Márquez, 86-94. José Maria García Gutiérrez, *La Herejía de los Alumbrados: Historia y Filosofía: de Castilla a Extremadura*. (Madrid: Mileto Ediciones, 1999), 114-118. See also: Augusta E. Foley, “El alumbradismo y sus posibles orígenes,” in *Actas del VIII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas (22-27 agosto 1983)*, ed. A. David Kossoff, 2 vols. (Madrid: Istmo, 1986, I), 526-532.

³⁴ Italics are my emphasis. The original Castilian in Márquez 282 reads: “yerros, y novedades”.

problem rests with the alumbrados themselves, while the Inquisition sought to rejoin them to the Church the alumbrados wished otherwise.

In his discussion of the evolution of the leper from historical figure to metaphor, Michel Foucault pointed out that while “leprosy disappeared, the leper vanished...from memory; these structures [of exclusion] remained.”³⁵ Foucault continues:

Poor vagabonds, criminals, and “deranged minds” would take the part played by the leper, and we shall see what salvation was expected from this exclusion, for them and for those who excluded them as well. With an altogether new meaning and in a very different culture, the forms would remain- essentially that major form of a rigorous division, which is social exclusion but spiritual reintegration.³⁶

As has been noted, the Inquisition sought to maintain its pre-established system of heresies in spite of the presence of “an altogether new meaning” of religiosity. This religiosity, alumbradismo, stemmed from conversos and their “very different culture” conceived in religious conversion and socio-cultural intermixing. The Inquisitors sought to root out alumbradismo thereby preventing its spread. With the movement’s followers it sought to mark them for social exclusion, to make examples of them. The Edict was intended to serve as the Inquisition’s instrument of classification and segregation. The end goal, however, was as it had always been: to spiritually reintegrate the heretics, to ensure that they return to the path set by the Holy Mother Church. While the Inquisitors were primarily concerned with upholding orthodoxy, they were also, whether they realized it or not, busying themselves with the maintenance of the pre-established socio-cultural balance. As Netanyahu noted, the Inquisition sought to rid society of the crypto-Jewish heresy, a heresy that the Inquisitors themselves unwittingly helped to create. By doing so it would have brought forth, in theory, a restoration of pre-expulsion socio-cultural norms. Particularly significant for our concerns is Foucault’s notion of the leper and the idea that

³⁵ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 7.

³⁶ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 7.

the forms by which their exclusion is expressed, and the function of that ostracism, remain the same. In labeling the alumbrados as crazy the Inquisitors sought to exclude them socially, while expecting to reintegrate their souls.

In light of Foucault's observations on the role of the leper Angela Selke's notion that alumbradismo served as a sort of release for conversos from their difficult social status seems like a compelling argument. In writing about the surviving alumbrado documents Selke notes the presence of "a complex of repressed sentiments...that come up to the surface in the *procesos* of the alumbrados".³⁷ In particular, she argues that the alumbrados seem to feel resentment against:

That entire Old Christian world in which their fathers and grandfathers were forced to enter, but where they [the alumbrados], their descendants are denied a position of *equality*; where 'they were held to be as foreigners' and 'were despised and forsaken' (*menospreciados y arrinconados*); they were held to be 'suspects of the faith' from the day they were born, and *watched* (*acechados*) by the Inquisition at every turn.³⁸

Selke's arguments, however, tend to gloss over the complexities of human affairs, making the alumbrados' prime motivation their at times difficult social status. Selke's "El iluminismo", while filled with many useful ideas, nonetheless elaborates those ideas on the conversos in an historical vacuum. The conversos and their "enemy" the Inquisition are presented in a very undynamic, binary fashion. Selke neglects to mention that many conversos rose to prominence after the mass conversions of the late fifteenth century.³⁹ As several alumbrado historians have noted the alumbrados enjoyed their brief, initial success because of noble patronage. The prominent and well-to-do converso Cazalla family, of which María de Cazalla was a member, were patrons to Francisca Hernández and her followers. María herself was the last of the Big Three to come to trial before the Tribunal of Toledo, likely because of her higher social standing

³⁷ Selke, "El Iluminismo", 625. My translation.

³⁸ Selke, "El Iluminismo", 625. My translation.

³⁹ Hamilton, 65-69.

and connections. María's status as a *conversa* was of course a factor in her life, but it clearly did not stop her or her family from gaining notoriety. For example, María's brother Juan became a chaplain to Cardinal Cisneros later on achieving noted Episcopal positions. María herself became a close friend of the Mendoza family of Guadalajara, the very same family to which the Third Duke of Infantado belonged. Other prominent *converso* families that were patrons of the *alumbrados* include the Pachecos who were the Marquesses of Villena and the Enríquez family who served as Dukes of Escalona.

Certainly as the sixteenth century wore on and the *limpieza de sangre* statutes were widely adopted, even by religious orders, intolerance towards *conversos* grew. This means, however, that Selke's ideas must be considered in light of the research done by Netanyahu into rabbinical attitudes towards the *conversos* and the overall socio-cultural climate of sixteenth century Castile. One cannot simply represent the *conversos* as resentful victims desperately seeking to escape the Christian religious world without fully appreciating their historical background or the dynamics of Castilian society. While the Holy Office was certainly suspicious of *conversos* it was not, as Selke portrays it, to such an Orwellian degree. That many of the *alumbrados* were of *converso* descent, and that a number of their relatives faced the Inquisition for charges of judaizing, was certainly a factor in the Inquisitors' attitude towards the movement in the Edict of 1525, but as this thesis has shown it was not the *only* factor.⁴⁰ The *alumbrados* must be looked at in consideration of their multiple statuses as women, "heretics" and *conversos*.

In his discussion of madness and Temptation, Foucault refers to a painting depicting St. Anthony in which "the freedom, however frightening, of his dreams, the hallucinations of his

⁴⁰ Hamilton, 67, notes that María de Cazalla's parents were tried but eventually reconciled and that Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz's "maternal grandfather had been imprisoned and his paternal grandmother condemned."

madness, have more power of attraction for . . . man than the desirable reality of the flesh.”⁴¹ This, I think, may point to why the alumbrados were considered to be such a danger by the Church and the Inquisition. The alumbrados’ denial of the sacrament of penance, an interiorized meditational practice (*dejamiento*), the disregard for saints and icons, and the lack of a need for priests among other espoused beliefs, were all practices that subverted the Holy Mother’s authority. It seems likely that these alumbrado “hallucinations of madness” are what caused the fear and panic evident in the Edict. Individual alumbrados may have feared or resented the Inquisition, however, on their part the Inquisitors feared the alumbrados just as much, especially given the novelty of their ideas. While purely speculative, it is nonetheless compelling to interpret the Edict of 1525 as partial proof of this, since one of its goals is to find a place for the alumbrados within the Church’s worldview.

What on first glance appears to be an Inquisition confused by the alumbrados, constantly comparing them to other movements, is in reality the wrangling in of a movement that while ill-defined is nonetheless detectable. In calling the alumbrados “crazy, erroneous, scandalous, Luther-esque heretics” the Inquisition is creating a space for them somewhere between the Catholic Church, the Protestants, and the crypto-Jews but not within any of them. It is this third space of heresy to which the alumbrados, in the eye of the Inquisitors, belong. It is a space all their own. It is the alumbrados’ novelties and their “hallucinations of madness” that are a great temptation like those of Luther, Erasmus and the countless heretics of the past; a temptation that the Inquisitors had to squash. The Inquisition calls them *loca* because of their denial of elementary Catholic doctrines and practices and they, above all, are called “crazy” because they present an order, albeit nebulously defined, that could nonetheless subvert the entire basis of the

⁴¹ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 20-21.

Church's power.⁴² In labeling them as "crazy" the Inquisitors are using madness to establish equilibrium within the Church and thus Castilian society.

In reference to the "mad man" Foucault writes: "In madness equilibrium is established, but it masks the equilibrium beneath the cloud of illusion, beneath feigned disorder; the rigor of the architecture is concealed beneath the cunning arrangement of these disordered violences."⁴³

This conceptualization can be turned around and applied to the Inquisitorial response to alumbradismo vis-à-vis the Edict of 1525. The labeling of alumbrado beliefs as *locura* is done in order for the Inquisition to maintain control. They acknowledge the alumbrados not as members of an old or concurrent movement, but as something new; hence they are compared to that which exists but ultimately are judged to be different enough that they are "crazy" and of course "heretical". The Inquisitors, then, are mediating the position of the alumbrados within or without Castilian society by crafting a particular place for them, their own special category of heresy.

Christ in Alumbradismo

That the alumbrados may have been in their own particular category of heresy is bolstered by the limited role allotted to Christ within the movement's doctrines. The Inquisitors' usage of "crazy" as a qualifier becomes more understandable when considered in relation to many the alumbrados' converso background and the role of Christ. Both Márquez and Selke note that the alumbrados rejected the notion of Christ as necessary intercessor between man and God.⁴⁴ Indeed, Proposition 42 acknowledges this perception of Christ:

⁴² Nieto, "The Heretical Alumbrados", 305 asserts that "that exploration of Isabel's religious thought, fragmentary as it is because of the loss of her *proceso*, leaves no doubt about her radical religious doctrines which, if not checked by the ecclesiastic authorities, would eventually have developed into a fully organized institution with its own charismatic leaders, initiation rites, doctrines and a biblical hermeneutics centered in the witness and freedom of the Holy Spirit."

⁴³ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 34.

⁴⁴ Márquez, 172-176. Selke, "El Iluminismo", 629. On the other hand Nieto, "The Heretical Alumbrados", 300-303, seems to disagree instead interpreting de la Cruz' doctrine as "the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ".

Alumbrados: One person said that he did not want to have intermediaries between God and himself, because Father Olmillos had advised him that he might hold a cross to his heart. When a certain person said that it was necessary to come to God through the humanity of Jesus Christ, the other said, “You know a great deal; I would prefer you not to know so much”. When this certain person said more, namely, that he had certain devotions to the Passion, the other told him to relinquish those little pieties and not read about Christ’s Passion, but meditate on the gifts of God instead.

Inquisitors: To affirm that our Lord Jesus Christ crucified (*nuestro señor iesu Xristo crucificado*) is not a means for the faithful soul to unite with God is an erroneous and heretical proposition, because it seems to deny the Son of God was made flesh and became the mediator between God and men. And the last part of this proposition is disdainful toward the mystery of our redemption, because it dissuades men from very salutary meditation on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is erroneous and has the taste of heresy, and it is against the common custom of the Holy Church.⁴⁵

While Proposition 12 asserts:

Alumbrados: Having abandoned themselves to God, such people did not have to work, in order not to block whatever God wished to accomplish. They could withdraw themselves from all created things. Even to meditate upon the humanity of Christ hindered abandonment to God (*dejamiento en Dios*). And such people could refuse all thoughts that occurred to them, even if the thoughts were good, because they should look to God alone. They thought refusing such thoughts was virtuous. Being in that spiritual state of quietude (*estando en aquella quietud*), they even thought it was a temptation to remember God in order not to be distracted.

Inquisitors: This proposition is false, erroneous, scandalous, and heretical.⁴⁶

These two propositions, when coupled with Proposition 22, leave one with little doubt about the minimal role that Christ played in alumbrado doctrines. Proposition 42 emphasizes that one should not meditate on the Passion because doing so turns one away from “the gifts of God” while Proposition 12 drives this notion home by asserting that it hinders the process of

⁴⁵ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 90. Márquez, 281-282.

⁴⁶ Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 85. Márquez, 276.

dejamiento. These propositions present an intimate internalization of God.⁴⁷ Melquiades Andrés has noted “in spirituality there is a movement from the steps and stages of ‘modern devotion’ and observance to the center or core of the individual, which is to unite with God.”⁴⁸

The Inquisition’s response to Proposition 44 is equally fantastic. Here the Inquisitors are eloquent, concise and specific. They understand what the alumbrados seem to be hinting at, “a Christianity without Christ”.⁴⁹ Why did they not respond to this proposition with a cry of *loca*? Perhaps it was because they were equipped with ready-made arguments to counter these alumbrado claims. After all the ideas that alumbradismo is rejecting here form the core of Christian theology while the negation of Christ played a role in crypto-Judaism. The Inquisitors, however, did not disappoint, variously calling Propositions 44 and 12 “scandalous” and “against the common custom of the Holy Church”.

Antonio Márquez in his extensive analysis of Christ within alumbrado belief notes that they “deny the mediating character of Christ, as the objective norm of knowing and experience.”⁵⁰ Márquez attributes this negation of Christ to “a mystical return to God” What catches one’s eye as one looks at the role (or lack thereof) of Christ in alumbrado religious thought is the failure of these scholars to take such an assertion to its next logical step. If the alumbrados did indeed deny Christ’s significance, and even his role as mediator between man and God then can we really call alumbradismo a *Christian* heresy?

As Selke puts it: “the almost total elimination of Christ from the spirituality of the alumbrados of Toledo (which is also detectable in the Edict of 1525) appears to us to be a

⁴⁷ Márquez, 175. See also Melquiades Andrés, “Common Denominator of Alumbrados, Erasmusians, ‘Lutherans,’ and Mystics: The Risk of a More ‘Intimate’ Spirituality,” in *The Spanish Inquisition and the Inquisitorial Mind*, ed. Angel Alcalá. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 457-494.

⁴⁸ Andrés, “Common Denominator”, 459.

⁴⁹ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 629. My translation.

⁵⁰ Márquez, 175. My translation. See also Márquez, 125-126 for more on the alumbrados’ exclusion of Jesus Christ.

symptom of a resentment not yet sublimated against Christ and all of the Christian cult.”⁵¹ She elaborates upon this idea by pointing to the converso origins of the alumbrados: “we do not think it too adventurous if we suggest that that vital force that breathed faith and the hope of salvation into the alumbrados, was extracted, in large part, from their mostly hidden Jewish roots (*de sus más ocultas raíces judaicas*) of a memory submerged by generations of the *Pact* that Jehovah made with his ancestral people.”⁵² “From there”, continues Selke, “comes an ardent yearning, manifested in their teachings as much as their attitude, to a return to being the *chosen people* (*el pueblo eligido*), ‘the named of God’ (*los llamados de Dios*)...with the end of revealing to the world the true spirit of Christianity which the Church had drowned underneath its ‘rituals and ceremonies’.”⁵³ Selke stops short of discussing whether we can really call alumbradismo a *Christian* heresy; she acknowledges, “Christ, as son of God, had been practically eliminated” from the “New Christianity” of the alumbrados.⁵⁴ She also points out: “the alumbrados neither looked for trances or revelations nor an ecstatic union with God, rather they [sought] a new faith and a *new manner of living*.”⁵⁵ It seems like one should not strictly classify the alumbrados because they themselves are so loosely defined (although some scholars like Nieto present a stricter definition for the movement). Thus, we cannot state definitively whether alumbradismo *is* or *is not* a Christian heresy, especially if we wish to maintain our loose definition of the alumbrados as the movement that was led by the Big Three beatas and described by the Edict of 1525. Rather they appear to represent a converso take on Christianity, “a new manner of living”.

⁵¹ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 635 footnote #40. My translation.

⁵² Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 628. My translation. It is possible to translate “ocultas raíces” as cryptic roots instead of hidden roots, this may be an example of Selke playing with language to get her point across that in a way the alumbrados are using crypto-Jewish ideas.

⁵³ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 628-629.

⁵⁴ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 629. Interestingly enough Angela Muñoz Fernández in her article on Isabel de la Cruz, “Madre y Maestra, Autora de Doctrina”, calls alumbradismo “Christianity without Christ” even citing Selke and Márquez but like her colleagues she does not take the next logical step of questioning alumbradismo’s status as a Christian heresy. See Muñoz, 115.

⁵⁵ Selke, “El Iluminismo”, 628.

As José Maria García Gutiérrez notes converso spirituality “insisted on the importance of living faith (*la fe viva*) before the Church’s external manifestations, on the importance of love in the face of fear and apprehension (*temor*), and on the importance of humanity’s internal liberty (*libertad interna del hombre*) in front of ritualized religion.”⁵⁶ All of these aspects of converso spirituality are incorporated in alumbrado thought. As such, the alumbrados of Castile are likely a product of the converso experience with their doctrines representing an amalgamation of Christian ideas, and transformed and translocated Jewish ideas.⁵⁷

J.C. Nieto asserts, “Whatever they [the alumbrados] might have learned through their Jewish tradition had eventually been transformed or forgotten”.⁵⁸ Transformation is the perfect keyword. They could not be tried as judaizers, indeed no evidence of judaizing behavior exists, but they nonetheless *felt* the influence of their former religious tradition. The alumbrados are natural products of their own time but also of their own unique, specific converso history and lived experience. Excluding Christ was a challenge to the religious norms in which, as conversos, they were raised and it was a reflection of the evolution of their own understanding of spirituality and religion influenced by their past as much as their present.

The transformation of identity from converso to alumbrado, like that from Jew to converso, occurred as “a public cultural experience” both because of Inquisitorial involvement and the alumbrados’ dependence on patrons to help spread their ideas.⁵⁹ If anything the notion that alumbradismo is a converso expression of spirituality serves as an example of the idea that

⁵⁶ José Maria García Gutiérrez, *La Herejía de los Alumbrados: Historia y Filosofía: de Castilla a Extremadura*. (Madrid: Mileto Ediciones, 1999), 118. My translation.

⁵⁷ Jaffary, 30.

⁵⁸ *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Illuminism”. See also, Nieto, “The Non-Mystical”, 431-439.

⁵⁹ Barry R. Mark, “Kabbalistic *Tocinofobia*: Américo Castro, *Limpieza de Sangre*, and the Inner Meaning of Jewish Dietary Laws,” in *Fear and Its Representations in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2002), 171. Encyclopedia article Nieto points out that it is not clear why the alumbrados enjoyed noble patronage although “it seems probable that it was because many of those noblemen were also of Jewish ancestry”.

Christian heresy is, among other things, a marker of a desire to reestablish what is perceived as a simpler, uncomplicated Christian practice. In light of the trials and tribulations, both literal and figurative, experienced by the alumbrados one could say that heresy also serves as a means of manifesting social discontent. Alumbradismo, however, remains at its core a genuine, sincere expression of religious belief and an expression of the need for “multiple options” in religious understanding.⁶⁰

When the Inquisitors classify the alumbrados as “crazy” their status as conversos only serves to heighten the Inquisitors’ sense of fear and contempt for alumbradismo. The alumbrados’ denial of the mediating nature of Christ coupled with their background meant that they were ripe for interpretation and characterization as scandalous heretics with mad ideas. This is exactly how the Inquisitors represented them in the Edict of 1525. In order to fully appreciate the Inquisitorial characterization of the alumbrados as “crazy” we must look at the position and role of “mugeres e ydiotas” within the movement.

⁶⁰ As the millennia long problems that the Church has had with heresy attest there seems to be a tendency towards religious pluralism in human experience. Garth Fowden’s *Empire to Commonwealth* serves as an excellent example. Fowden postulates that the enforcement of Christian Nicene orthodoxy led, in part, to the dismemberment of the Roman Empire. This was in turn caused by general religious discontent due to the limitations that Nicene Christianity imposed upon forms of spiritual and religious expression. Religious limitations that sought to maintain cohesion and unity, but in fact ended up doing just the opposite; by not allowing for flexibility and instead preferring rigidity problems, such as heresy, arose. Similarly, John van Engen in his “Multiple Options” presents the notion that plurality within or without orthodoxies is necessary. In the case of van Engen’s “long fifteenth century” plurality of meaning and understanding was tolerated until such time as it became socio-politically untenable; once this occurred heresies popped up like daisies in the spring. Thus one can see heresy as the natural outcome of limited choice and expression in religious and spiritual behavior.

CHAPTER 5
“MUGERES E YDIOTAS”: ISABEL DE LA CRUZ

As women *beatas* were interested in adhering to a religious life outside of convents, either because they did not have enough money to enter one or were not ready to detach themselves from worldly living. As devotees *beatas* usually took vows of chastity and poverty. Many, including our Big Three alumbradas, Francisca Hernández, Isabel de la Cruz, and Maria de Cazalla, joined the tertiary order of the Franciscans.¹ The *beatas* practiced a grassroots approach to Christianity. Women like Cruz took the initiative in their religious practice, taking vows and living holy lives, sometimes without formal ties to an order, confessor or spiritual director. The period of the Cisnerian spiritual revival ending with the Cardinal's death in 1517 was a time of relatively free and open Catholic spiritual and mystical exploration in Castile.

Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros was a patron of Biblical translation projects and spiritual manuals. The Cardinal also “supported the popular dissemination of contemplative religious texts and elementary catechisms. Many of these books were written so as to engage the reader directly in spiritual exercises that would increase devotion when read privately.”² It is in this environment that the alumbrados enjoyed their initial albeit short-lived success as the recipients of aristocratic patronage and a lay and clerical following. It is also the very same environment that allowed three women to function as leaders of the movement.³ Cisneros had, in effect,

¹ Homza, *Religious Authority*, 6. See also Perry, 97-117.

² Sara T. Nalle, “Literacy and Culture in Early Modern Castile,” *Past & Present*, No. 125, (November 1989): 86. See also Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus y España: estudios sobre la historia espiritual del siglo XVI*. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966), 49-51.

³ While numerous alumbrado historians allude to the leadership roles that these women played the best analyses of those roles are rather more recent. See Muñoz “Madre y Maestra, Autora de Doctrina” and Giles “Francisca Hernández and the Sexuality of Religious Dissent”.

“opened up the Church to women and the laity”.⁴ The alumbrados, as much as all beatas, *dejadas* or not, were a product of the Cardinal’s policies.⁵

The emphasis upon the reading of texts aimed at cultivating *private* spiritual reflection and devotion in concert with the rise in popularity of the beata lifestyle for women helps us to partially account for the mentalité of alumbradismo. It also helps to explain the reason behind the Inquisitors’ usage of the word *loca* in the Edict of 1525. The emphasis and focus upon private, interiorized reflection “cuts out the middle man” between humanity and God, the Church. What is more threatening is the fact that it is women who are engaging in this sort of activity.⁶ Angela Muñoz Fernández believes that *dejamiento* and the ideas of alumbradismo provided a path to freedom for women not only from *ataduras* and but also the strictures placed upon their gender by patriarchic Catholic doctrines and Castilian society at large.⁷

In the case of Isabel de la Cruz the risk presented by beatas to the Church’s order becomes more apparent. Isabel did not marry nor did she ever become a nun. In Muñoz’s feminist reading of Cruz, this was because she was rejecting the “dominant forms of relationships that, interrelated with the systems of gender, sustained the patriarchy.”⁸ This is not to say that Isabel was not aware of the difficulties of being a woman, particularly a beata, in early sixteenth century Castile. On the contrary, in the few surviving bits of her testimony Isabel expresses herself quite frankly: “see that I am a woman and that I cannot put in motion the

⁴ Weber, 147-148.

⁵ For more on Cardinal Cisneros see Homza, *Religious Authority* and Pedro Sainz Rodriguez, *La Siembra Mística del Cardenal Cisneros y las Reformas en la Iglesia*, (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1979).

⁶ See Nalle’s “Literacy and Culture”, 84-87. While Nalle is not able to provide data on Castilian reading preferences for the first half of the sixteenth century the trend towards devotional literature is strong enough in the latter half of the century for Nalle and one to assume that it was equally strong if not stronger in the first half, especially considering Cisneros’s patronage of such works.

⁷ Muñoz, 104. Perry, 99 also makes similar observations noting, “mysticism provided an escape from many restrictions on the thought and behavior of women. Developing a personal relationship with God, beatas could completely avoid the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In contemplation and prayer, they could explore an interior world rich in possibilities of meaning and satisfaction.”

⁸ Muñoz, 105. My translation.

desires that our Lord has given me”.⁹ The scribe then recorded, “that this confessant [Isabel] told him this (Pedro Ruíz de Alcaraz) so many times that sometimes she cried in front of him and she would hit herself on the head saying ‘Lord, allow me to fulfill the desires that your magnificence has given me’, and in this manner she said a thousand crazy things (*e dezia mil locuras de esta manera*)...”¹⁰ Once again, we see the appearance of “crazy” as a qualifier. While Isabel was not a feminist by our standards, she was completely aware of the realities of her gender and the expectations for proper behavior placed upon her. Couple this with her converso background then one can very easily see the appeal of *dejamiento* and its related alumbrado ideas. Not only did *dejamiento* promise a direct link to God, so direct in fact that it bypassed Christ all together, but it also meant the nullification of the patriarchic organizational system of the Church. As Muñoz notes, “nothing invites us to think that Isabel elaborated a neutral doctrinal discourse, indifferent to her sexual condition”.¹¹ Far from it, the fact that Isabel, Hernández and Cazalla were women was in the forefront as much as their converso background. One of the first weapons to be used against the alumbrados, and all beatas who came under the eye of the Inquisition for that matter, were charges of sexual impropriety, most infamously in the case of Francisca Hernández.¹²

The truth behind the allegations of Francisca Hernández’s promiscuity remains a matter of serious academic debate. However, from the perspective of the Inquisitors and the witnesses testifying against her Hernández was nothing short of a “slut” who slept with her male followers and one sought out luxuries instead of spiritual illumination. Hernández’s perceived carnal behavior thus doubled the severity of her assertions as an alumbrada beata, effectively making

⁹ Longhurst, “La beata Isabel”, 291. My translation. See also Muñoz, 106.

¹⁰ Longhurst, 291.

¹¹ Muñoz, 107. Márquez, 142, also notes Isabel’s conscious recognition of her “outraged social condition”.

¹² See Perry, 113-114. For details on the case of Francisca Hernández and her sexual denigration by Inquisitor and historian until the modern day see Giles, “Francisca Hernández and the Sexuality of Religious Dissent.”

her a hypocrite. When one considers her status as a beata her religious hypocrisy only adds to the Inquisitors' pre-existing conception of women as unstable beings "who were deemed to be mentally incapable of understanding the [sacred] texts and inherently susceptible to diabolical influence."¹³ Hernández's charges of sexual impropriety were used as means of further disqualifying alumbrado doctrinal ideas, which in turn formed a part of the Inquisition's "struggle to regain control over the Scriptures and Christian doctrine" and their "effort to exclude women from all but ceremonial forms of Christianity".¹⁴ Ironically, the struggle to control and limit women's access to the Scriptures was a product of the alumbrado movement itself, a struggle that came into being precisely because the Inquisition sought to curtail the spread of alumbrado ideas.

If one is left with any doubts about the Inquisitors' reasons for the labeling the alumbrados as *locos* one need only look at another aspect of their movement: their supposed anti-intellectualism. Márquez notes:

When Alumbradismo begins to define itself sociologically, it presents itself as the antagonist of the men of letters and consequently, as the enemy, of not only all rationalization, but also of all reason. The Guadalajara group...is made up in nearly all of its totality of 'mugeres e ydiotas' (which is to be understood as 'persons without a university education')...¹⁵

Indeed all of the nine propositions that the Inquisition labeled as "crazy" contained arguments that seemed contradictory, irrational or simply ignorant from the perspective of Catholic logic. In any case the usage of "mugeres e ydiotas" to describe the alumbrados is done with the intention of lessening their authority, and of making them seem uneducated and inexperienced simpletons.¹⁶ Indeed the word "ydiota" was meant to convey just that during the time. Some,

¹³ Weber, 153.

¹⁴ Weber, 153-154.

¹⁵ Márquez, 195.

¹⁶ Márquez, 138. For his complete overview on this insult see 138-145.

including the Erasmianist Juan de Vergara, portrayed the alumbrados as anti-intellectual, illiterate simpletons.¹⁷ They were, however, anti-scholastic rather than anti-intellectual. J.C Nieto is careful to point out that the core members of the Castilian group of alumbrados (Alcaraz and the Big Three) are members of the “urban lower middle class...[which] is not to be confused with the illiterate peasantry.”¹⁸ The ideas expressed by alumbrado doctrines are quite sophisticated and impart a specific cosmology between God and man, one where the *only* authority is God. It is a simple enough insult to dole out considering that women and the uneducated made up a good portion of the group. The women in the group, however, were not formally educated but they were literate and clearly intelligent individuals. Isabel de la Cruz read and even planned to write a book on alumbrado doctrine.¹⁹ María de Cazalla, due in no small part to her aristocratic background, was well versed in the contemporary Castilian literary culture.²⁰ Francisca Hernández remained illiterate all her life, but she had a sharp mind and her followers testified to her gift for interpreting Scripture.²¹ Alcaraz as a lawyer/secretary and a member of the Castilian middle class was literate, with fine penmanship, knowledge of Latin and the classics, yet he nonetheless presents himself as “unlettered” (*sin letras*) before the Inquisition.²²

¹⁷ Márquez, 139. Muñoz, 114-115. Márquez, 190-191 notes “Iluminismo’s anti-intellectual roots” are “aside from its sociological configuration, intelligence cannot renounce its own nature as the intermediary or bridge between subject and object. That is why [Iluminismo] replaces it with the heart, love or the spirit (*por eso se reemplaza por el corazón, por el amor, o el espíritu*)...Liberty, which is the last resort of all of this theory of love (*teoría amorosa*), is only possible when and where God’s Spirit and man’s spirit are one and the same: *ubi spiritus domini, ibi et libertas*.” My translation.

¹⁸ Nieto, “The Non-Mystical Nature”, 432-433.

¹⁹ Muñoz, 118-120. Longhurst, 297. Nieto, “Non-mystical nature”, 432-433.

²⁰ Márquez, 143.

²¹ Fray Francisco Ortiz attributed “Seven Marvels” (*siete maravillas*) to his beloved *beata*. The seven marvels included such things as her ability to reveal the hidden meaning of Scripture in spite of her illiteracy, Ortiz’ ability to remain happy in spite of his incarceration, his waking visions of her, and the curing of his sin of masturbation. For more see Lu Ann Homza, “How to Harass an Inquisitor General: The Polyphonic Law of Friar Francisco Ortiz” in *A Renaissance of Conflicts: Visions and Revisions of Law and Society in Italy and Spain*, eds. John A. Marino and Thomas Kuehn. (Toronto: Center for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2004), 312-313.

²² Márquez, 141. My translation.

These alumbrados present themselves and are presented as “muger e sin letras”, “mugericillas” or “sin letras”. They, of course, never call themselves “ydiotas.” Why did they use these labels? Part of the reason lies with gender roles. What is available of Isabel’s defense and *proceso* points to a strategy that “consists in attributing and recognizing in herself the lack of a series of attitudes and behaviors that that system of genders considers ought to be absent in a woman, of which she knows herself to be a transgressor.”²³ The notion is to cater to the expectations of proper female behavior. Isabel and her fellow beatas are guilty of violating these expectations. Here we are arriving at the danger inherent in the lifestyles and function of the beatas.

Isabel’s “words, transcribed by an *escribano* in the third person, recognize as an infraction the act of talking ‘about the sacred scripture and doctrines...and she confessed as an error this daring behavior that she, as a woman without letters, undertook’ (*y este atrevimiento que tuvo siendo muger e sin letras o confiesa por error*).²⁴ Francisca as well was faced with similar problems over her interpretations of Scripture and doctrine. So the label of “mugeres e ydiotas” while meant to convey the idea that these individuals are anti-intellectual, illiterate morons is used as insult but also appropriated as a means to an end. Cruz is interested in allowing herself the freedom to discuss her doctrinal interpretations and her essentially anti-theological stance, particularly against “all of the written tradition elaborated by the theologians and [against] the system of knowing by rational thought (*conocimiento racional*) that sustains this theological tradition.”²⁵ Isabel and her fellow alumbrados use this label to distance themselves from Catholic theological underpinnings in order to return to a simpler understanding of scripture, one unencumbered by Doctors of the Church, priests and catechisms. Isabel knows

²³ Muñoz, 106. My translation.

²⁴ Muñoz, 106. My translation. See also Longhurst, “La Beata Isabel”, 285.

²⁵ Muñoz, 115. My translation.

that she is “outside the circles of knowledge...of which, regardless, [she] did not wish to participate in.”²⁶ They used the labels of “mugeres e ydiotas” because it enabled them to freely evade the restrictions upon interpreting Catholic theology and doctrine.

Teresa and Isabel: A Brief Parallel

Alison Weber’s “Little Women: Counter-Reformation Misogyny” treats Saint Teresa de Avila and her relation to the derogatory epithet “mujercilla”.²⁷ Weber’s central thesis maintains Teresa took this derogatory remark about her person and used it to give herself the freedom to express her ideas. “Teresa concedes to women’s weakness, timidity, powerlessness, and intellectual inferiority but uses the concessions ironically to defend, respectively, the legitimacy of her own spiritual favors, her disobedience of *letrados*, her administrative initiative, her right to ‘teach’ in the Pauline sense, and her unmediated access to the Scriptures.”²⁸ It is not surprising that the Inquisition accused Teresa of a being an *alumbrada* especially when one considers her belief “that true prayer is not words but meaning, that spiritual experience is superior to learning, and that God can be apprehended intimately.”²⁹ Teresa, however, was not an *alumbrada*. She did not disapprove of Catholic practices like the sacraments and exterior works nor was she opposed to the veneration of the saints.³⁰ Due to Teresa’s status as a *conversa* and as “a practitioner of mental prayer, she was suspect on multiple grounds and associated inevitably with the Inquisition’s ever-expanding definition of Illuminism.”³¹ She would forever fight accusations of *alumbradismo* and “the ecclesiastical misogyny with which it was inextricably associated.”³²

²⁶ Muñoz, 118. My translation. See also Weber, 151.

²⁷ Weber, 145.

²⁸ Weber, 160.

²⁹ Weber, 157.

³⁰ Weber, 156-157.

³¹ Weber, 156.

³² Weber, 157.

Teresa shows us that Isabel, as is evidenced by what remains of her *proceso*, was likely attempting a similar strategy in her own defense. Unlike Teresa, however, Isabel's strategy did not pay off; her ideas were too extreme and dangerous to be simply corrected or just brushed aside. Isabel had already proselytized before coming before the Inquisitors in 1524 and subsequently been "accused of numerous breaches of magisterial authority" such as teaching the Scriptures, telling her audiences to read the Scriptures with "simplicity of spirit" and of course expressing her idea that priests and other religious intercessors or interpreters were unnecessary.³³ That Isabel, like Teresa, was called an "ignorant, proud little woman" (*mujercilla ignorante y soberbia*) is not entirely surprising in light of her attitude toward religious officials: insulting the *letrados* and essentially describing them as useless automatons who simply regurgitate doctrine and Scriptural interpretations.³⁴ Isabel's status as a woman proved beneficial in that it allowed her to confess to a lack of humility from which her "effrontery" (*atrevimiento*) stemmed: "and she confesses that she was in error in committing this act of effrontery, since she was an unlearned woman (*muger e sin letras*)."³⁵

Gender, Literacy and the Inquisition

Ultimately, gender remained a central issue for the Inquisition and for Isabel. While Teresa was able to manipulate the "systems of gender" to her benefit Isabel was not as successful, maybe because "Isabel knew that to intervene in theological matters was a breach of conduct for all women, while it was as such for some men only."³⁶ The period following Cardinal Cisneros's death in 1517 witnessed a revival of misogyny as a response to the rise of the *beatas* and the encroachments of Protestantism. Teresa and other spiritual explorers like her,

³³ Weber, 151.

³⁴ Weber, 151.

³⁵ Longhurst, "La Beata Isabel", 285. See also Weber, 151.

³⁶ Muñoz, 106. My translation.

including Ignatius of Loyola, lived in this increasingly intolerant, post-Cisnerian world where deviance was immediately suspect.

What differentiates Teresa de Avila from her alumbrada counterparts, particularly Isabel de la Cruz, is that Teresa wished to work from within orthodoxy and the Church hierarchy.³⁷ Cruz had no interest whatsoever in either keeping to Catholic orthodoxy or accepting the authority of the Church's hierarchy. Teresa certainly skirted the shores of heterodoxy many times throughout her life, but her strategy of using *mujercilla* in her favor eventually worked and kept her within the bounds of acceptable behavior. If anything, the comments made about Teresa in her canonization documents are witness to the success of such a strategy.³⁸ The alumbrada beatas were another case. Weber sums up nicely the threat presented by the alumbrada beatas: "In short, the fear of Protestantism nourished by anti-Semitism transformed a tiny sect of evangelicals [the alumbrados], in the Inquisition's eyes, into a threatening band of heretics. The prominence of women in such dangerous sects provided the justification for reaffirming traditional ecclesiastical misogyny."³⁹

From the perspective of the Inquisitors these alumbrado beliefs were perceived to be that much more dangerous *because* they were taught and elaborated by relatively independent, spiritually charismatic women. Márquez notes, "in many of the denunciations one can see that it is not the error that preoccupies the *letrado*, but rather the fact that [the error] is taught by a woman."⁴⁰ This, I would argue, reveals the root of accusations of madness. Isabel and her fellow

³⁷ Indeed Weber, 157, notes that Teresa "repeatedly acknowledged her dependence on the guidance or correction of the educated clergy or *letrados*, while maintaining that those who had not practiced mental prayer were incapable of judging its orthodoxy."

³⁸ Weber, 144, notes that Teresa was variously referred to as "a virile woman", "a manly soul", and as someone who "endured all conflicts with manly courage".

³⁹ Weber, 149.

⁴⁰ Márquez, 143. When read in context Márquez is not implying that the errors committed by the alumbrada beatas were perceived as insignificant, but rather that for the *letrados* the origins of those errors in women was far more problematic.

alumbradas, like their counterpart Teresa de Avila, are women on the margins, women who do not fit into the accepted cultural mold.⁴¹ That Teresa wrote and read and that Isabel wanted to write was not only exceptional but also on the verge of being an *atrevimiento*. By the end of the sixteenth century reactionary moralists in Castile were of the opinion that reading could lead to heresy and “therefore it was better to be an illiterate, but orthodox peasant.”⁴²

What is particularly interesting is the comment made by one illiterate woman, Ana López, wife of a Cuencano fisherman, who, in reaction to the idea of women reading, is said to have responded: “women should not have books, nor know how to read or write- they’re crazy [to do so]”!⁴³ Even this illiterate woman, however, was not ignorant as she was an experienced pilgrim who “knew all her catechism.”⁴⁴ Ana’s opinion serves to illustrate the general attitude toward women’s reading and writing prevalent in sixteenth century Castile. It is indicative of the trends in cultural behavior during the time of the alumbrados persecution by the Inquisition.

That Isabel wanted to write a book, something that the Inquisitors likely found out about, presented an unacceptable level of danger. The characterization of the alumbrados as a movement made up of “mugeres e ydiotas” was meant to reflect the alumbrado rejection of scholastic Biblical interpretation. It is not that they were literally idiots or simpletons, but that they rejected orthodox interpretive mechanisms e.g. the Church Fathers, priestly authority. The insult of “muger” or “mugercilla” was meant to convey the perceived incapability of women to understand the nuances of Scripture since they were not learned *letrados*. While Teresa turned

⁴¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: three seventeenth-century lives* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1995) is my inspiration for this observation.

⁴² Nalle, “Literacy and Culture”, 92.

⁴³ Nalle, “Literacy and Culture”, 92. This quotation was given by one Ana López of Cuenca in 1579. While Nalle does not present the original Castilian quotation it sourced from Inquisitorial documents and likely used the phrase “locas”.

⁴⁴ Nalle, “Literacy and Culture”, 92, footnote 75.

this stereotype around, arguing “women may receive more spiritual favors from God precisely because they are weak, whereas learned men have less need of these divine consolations.”⁴⁵

Isabel instead extended the notion of divine consolation to all, her status as a woman a key motivation in elaborating alumbrado doctrines: “it induced her to look for abandonment in God (*un solo dejarse en Dios*), without steps or methods to master in order to have the encounter [with God], a voluntary abandonment consciously expressed in that well known phrase ‘the love of God which in man is God (*el amor de Dios que en el hombre es Dios*)’.”⁴⁶ Love of God played an important role in the elaboration of alumbrado doctrine. Proposition 32, for example, elaborates on the idea of “the love of God in man” by declaring, through a likely mistranslated bit of Latin, “greater is God, our heart”; the alumbrado interpretation of which inferred “that an internal perception of God or His nature, which they found in themselves, was completely from God and sent from the same.”⁴⁷

What remains surprising is the silence of Isabel. The majority of her *proceso* is lost as is the case with Francisca Hernández, what does remain is derived from references or copied excerpts from the *procesos* of the other alumbrados. In a way the misogyny of the Inquisitors won out because historians of alumbradismo have always been dependent on the testimony of the alumbrado men, particularly Alcaraz, as their primary source for details and further insights into the movement. Muñoz in trying to explain the documentary silence of Isabel, both due to lack of source material and what Muñoz perceives to be a misunderstanding of alumbradismo’s gender neutrality, proposes that the egalitarianism in alumbradismo was out of necessity: “Does this

⁴⁵ Weber, 158-159.

⁴⁶ Muñoz, 117. Proposition 9 in the Edict of 1525 contains this idea see Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 84 and Márquez, 276.

⁴⁷ See Homza, *Spanish Inquisition*, 88-89. See also Márquez, 280. According to Homza Isabel and Alcaraz likely mistranslated the Latin perhaps because they used linguistic cognates or were unawares of the ablative of comparison in the phrase “Major est Deus corde nostro”. Mistranslations, however, do not discredit the importance of this idea in alumbrado thought nor its significance for Cruz and company.

[egalitarianism] have something to do with the necessity to renounce themselves, felt by women in patriarchic societies, in order to know themselves in the universal, falsely presented as [gender] neutral?”⁴⁸

Isabel then may have been more like Teresa de Avila than we think. In any case it is alumbradismo’s gender egalitarianism that helped to give its female leaders authority and success. This authority can be witnessed in the expressions of the alumbrados’ devotion to the beatas: “And he said that when he talked about this witness [Isabel de la Cruz] with Alcaraz and María de Cazalla he said to them ‘How could they give so much credit to Isabel de la Cruz and her craziness and her sayings (*e a sus locuras e los suso dichos*)?’ but Ruíz de Alcaraz and Maria de Cazalla responded that ‘they would give Isabel de la Cruz greater authority than Saint Paul and all the saints’.”⁴⁹ Francisca Hernández’s devotees who included such prominent men as the royal accountant Pedro de Cazalla, cousin of the *beata* María, was praised in a similar fashion. Friar Francisco Ortiz, her most ardent devotee, “compares Francisca to the Mother of Christ and...seemingly sings a hymn to Francisca which in effect identifies her with the Blessed Mother”.⁵⁰

In the end, “in all of these available options [for beatas] one can see an attitude of rejection towards the spaces and fundamental roles that the system of genders imposed upon women.”⁵¹ Hence, the usage of “mugeres e ydiotas” as a denigration, one that was motivated by the Inquisitions’ *fear* of the potential of alumbradismo to dismantle the Church and fear of the threat that beatas, as autonomous and charismatic spiritual figures, posed to the traditional

⁴⁸ Muñoz, 120. My translation.

⁴⁹ Longhurst, 297. My translation. See also Muñoz, 107.

⁵⁰ Giles, 88.

⁵¹ Muñoz, 105. My translation.

religio.⁵² Their “religious enthusiasm permitted beatas to break free from convention. It explained their daring to criticize religious observations, asserting, as did one beata, that saying the Rosary was nothing more than a ringing of cowbells.”⁵³

Just as the Inquisitors were capable of generating fear by portraying the alumbrados as being exclusively comprised of crazy women and idiotic men it was equally capable of being afraid of the potential power of the heresies that it hunted. By labeling them as such the Inquisitors were using a “comparative mythological” approach in which “they were translating- or, rather transposing-beliefs fundamentally foreign to them into another, more unambiguous code.”⁵⁴ In other words, they make the alumbrados into the “bad guys” by labeling that which they do not fully understand, nor care to understand, as anathema and madness, a novelty suitable only for, and thus a product of, “mugeres e ydiotas”.⁵⁵

Conclusion

“In madness equilibrium is established, but it masks the equilibrium beneath the cloud of illusion, beneath feigned disorder; the rigor of the architecture is concealed beneath the cunning arrangement of these disordered violences.”⁵⁶ Foucault is referring to the “madman”, but it seems that this can be turned around and applied to the Inquisitorial response to alumbradismo. The Inquisitors maintain control by labeling the alumbrados’ beliefs as *locuras*. They acknowledge the alumbrados not as members of an old or concurrent movement, but as something totally new; hence they are compared to that which exists, but ultimately they are

⁵² For more on the difficulties of controlling and manipulating *beatas* see Perry, 97-117.

⁵³ Perry, 101.

⁵⁴ Ginzburg, 162.

⁵⁵ Selke, “Alguno datos”, 128 notes: “In no moment can there be seen an effort to make manifest the true meaning of those enigmatic affirmations, of those wobbly phrases or extravagant and coarse expressions that form the main bulk of the 48 Propositions. [The Inquisition] did not seem very interested in knowing with exactitude what exactly the doctrine that they were condemning was. But this is, in my opinion, above all what anyone who is interested in studying this document [the Edict of 1525] without partially ought to do.” My translation.

⁵⁶ Foucault, 34.

judged to be different enough that they are “crazy” and of course “heretical”. The Inquisitors craft a portrait of the “disorder” that is alumbradismo in order to create madness and establish or maintain equilibrium. If the alumbrados represented the culmination of everything that the Inquisition sought to eliminate then their exclusion was like a release of systemic pressure. The alumbrados’ madness was after all nothing more than a “feigned disorder” meant to conceal the intellectual and spiritual depths of alumbradismo’s doctrine and thought.

In using madness to characterize alumbrado ideas in the publicly circulated and read *Edicto de los Alumbrados de Toledo* the Inquisitors sought to mediate the position of the alumbrados within or without Castilian society. When read as a whole, and when one carefully considers the Inquisitors’ usage of *loca/locura* as qualifiers in their response to the alumbrado Propositions, it becomes clear that the Inquisitors crafted a particular heretical space for the alumbrados. That the Edict was meant to be listened to as much as read signifies that the Inquisitors created this document accordingly. The Edict’s conclusion leaves one with little doubt that the Inquisitors expected a particular reaction from the public at large, referring to the alumbrados as “heretics and transgressors of things that are divinely ordained” and thus threats to the cosmological order. In crafting this public image of “alumbrado insanity” the Inquisitors also considered the role of the movement’s leaders and members as women and conversos. In the world of early sixteenth century Spain the recently established Inquisition of Toledo tried to make the best it could of alumbradismo. The Inquisitors’ dependence on drawing parallels to other heresies is demonstrative of the youth of the Holy Office and the lack of experience or procedure when it came to dealing with heresies that, like alumbradismo, were “caught between” the seemingly bigger threats of Protestantism and crypto-Judaism.

The beatas as nearly autonomous, grassroots spiritualists challenged Castilian notions of acceptable female behavior. In taking the Bible and God into their own hands the beatas threatened the authority of the *letrados* and the Church hierarchy to control and interpret Scripture. The trend towards interiorized spirituality prevalent in the early sixteenth century when coupled with beatas in the form of alumbradismo was thus a special kind of threat. That conversos also made up a significant number of the alumbrados only heightened the tension for the Inquisitors. In dealing with the alumbrados the Inquisitors attempted to write them off as crypto-Jews, however, their prejudice towards conversos was ill founded. Rather, the converso factor seemed to have exerted itself more passively than the Inquisitors would have liked, manifesting itself as a “Christianity without a Christ”. Alumbradismo, it must always be kept in mind, was the product of a variety of factors, and the ones touched upon here are only a fraction of them. However, they form a significant portion of the Inquisitorial outlook before the threat and promise of alumbradismo and its Protestant “co-heretics” whose ideas were spreading like wildfire.

In the end, the alumbrados of Toledo seem to have been a nameless converso religion that technically did not exist as a religion, only as a movement gathering momentum that, nearly just as quickly as it appeared, became a heresy. It is a movement that has never been concretely delimited and defined because the alumbrados shared ideas with other movements, making them as hard as a to make out as a chameleon in the wilderness. The limited role of Christ is key in understanding that they were not a conventional heretical movement, but rather, as the Inquisitors realized, a novelty. Their ideas came from threatening sources: women, conversos, and people without university education.

They were labeled as crazy in a time of great socio-religious changes and upheavals in a newly born nation-state where multiple options were no longer possible. It was a Catholic nation that, only a few years after the final expulsion of unwanted peoples and socio-cultural elements, was attempting to consolidate itself while trying to formulate a *Spanish* political identity. At a time when the enemies of orthodoxy were drawing ever closer and when the balance of the “systems of genders” was in flux. In the midst of it all were the hybrids, the conversos, naively created by the Old Christians yet feared at the same time. Like all minorities have done in history they tried to guarantee a place for themselves in a society that they were forced to inhabit, pursuing what they considered to be the best possible of all worlds. It is in this world that the alumbrados were born, and while in time they are only as brief as a spark, their legacy has remained for centuries.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Javier A. Montoya graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Florida in December of 2006. Upon the encouragement of his advisors he entered the master's program in history at his alma mater in January of 2007. Originally entering into the program with the desire to work in the Late Antique period. Javier's historical interests led him from studying Pagan-Christian relations to a comparative study of medieval borderlands epic poetry focusing on the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and the Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritas*. His interest in religious identity and portrayal then led him to the study of religion and heresy in medieval Spain particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Currently he remains focused on studying the heresy of alumbradismo in early sixteenth century Castile, and its impact upon the burgeoning Inquisition, the Spanish religious imagination and its reflection of converso religious sensibilities. A prototype of this thesis was presented at the 3rd Annual Sacred Leaves Graduate Symposium in Tampa, Florida in the winter of 2009. Future chapters will look at how the Inquisition used alumbradismo as a heretical charge that helped to maintain orthodoxy throughout Spain and its colonies, incorporating research into Jewish mystical practices, early modern literacy and the later iterations of alumbradismo. After graduating with a master's degree in history in 2010 Javier will take a year's leave from graduate study before applying to PhD programs in medieval history. In the meantime he will continue doing research into the alumbrados and other topics of interest including medieval epic poetry and pagan conversion. Javier also remains interested in questions of literary portrayal versus lived experience and the impact of fiction upon the historical imagination.