

Luther's Ghost in Spain (1517-1546)

John Edward Longhurst

Chapter One

Visionaries and Mystics

FRANCISCO Lopez de Villalobos, scholar and physician to the Spanish crown, published a book on medicine at Salamanca in 1498.(1) He was no Hippocrates, this Villalobos, but he had a quality the master lacked: he considered Bad Think to be a kind of disease.

For after cataloguing and prescribing for a variety of known afflictions, he listed a new one, a "contagious and damnable swelling" which had recently infected Spain. Those afflicted with it were *aluminados*, and it led them to perform all sorts of wicked deeds. The only satisfactory therapy for such a stubborn ailment, said Doctor Villalobos, was flogging, jail, cold and starvation.

The good doctor's readers undoubtedly knew what he was talking about; unfortunately, we do not. He does tell us that this contagion was brought over from Italy, but that is all. On the basis of this quotation, historians (including myself) have concluded that Villalobos was referring to a tradition of prophetic mysticism inspired by the apocalyptic visions of the Dominican friar Savonarola in Florence just a few years before(2) and that these *aluminados* are the so far

1. *Sumario de la medicina* reprinted in vol. xxiv of the publications of the *Sociedad de bibliofilos espanoles*, Madrid, 1886.

2. See particularly pages 11-17 of Vicente Beltran de Heredia, *Las corrientes de espiritualidad entre Los Dominicos de Castilla durante La primera mitad del siglo XVI*, Salamanca, 1941.

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unidentified forerunners of the *alumbrados** of the 1520s and 1530s(3).

This may indeed be so, but I have never felt comfortable with this conclusion. The "disease" may have come from Italy, but then the Italians were blamed

for bringing other diseases to Spain-the well known "Italian pox" for example. ** Also, we must move ahead ten years or more to find evidence of the kind of activity we think Villalobos was talking about. And even then we are forced to make this connection on the meager basis of similarity between the words *aluminado* and *alumbrado*.

One of the noteworthy things about the Illuminist movement is that many of those involved in it were *conversos*, or persons of Jewish ancestry. A few years ago, when I was working on something else(4), I came across a wild drama of messianic prophesying among Spanish *conversos* in 1498, when their tormentor, Inquisitor general Torquemada, went to his reward:

Latter-day prophets suddenly appeared from the northern frontier to Cordova in the south and Valencia in the east. The small village of Herrera near the French border became a Mecca for conversos as far away as Madrid and Toledo. A shoemaker's daughter named Inez was making weekly ascensions into Heaven and returning with olive branches, carnations, letters from Yahweh, and advance reports on the coming of the Messiah. There she saw the souls of all those who had been burned at the stake by Torquemada. They were now living in abundance and glory, sitting in golden chairs and eating from golden plates. Meanwhile, God was building a wonderful city where all the conversos would live forever in the land of milk and honey. On

*Or Illuminists, which is the word I shall use hereafter.

**In Italy, the "French pox" and in France, the "Spanish pox."

3. John E. Longhurst, "Alumbrados, erasmistas y luteranos en el proceso de Juan de Vergara," in *Cuadernos de historia de Espana*, vols. xxvii (1958) and following. See vol. xxvii, pp. 99-100.

4. Longhurst, *The Age of Torquemada*, 2nd ed., Lawrence (Kansas), 1964, chapter 13.

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the appointed day the sky would turn copper, the prophet Elijah would descend on a cloud to preach of redemption, with the Messiah right behind him to lead the way into the Promised Land. For the next seven years no rain would fall on the earth below. Those who wished to make the trip must return immediately to the Law of Moses. They need no longer fear the Inquisition, for they would soon be beyond its reach.

The revelations of Inez were quickly confirmed by some of her disciples. A butcher reported a conversation with his dead father-in-law who stepped from the beyond to ten of the discomforts he was suffering for having neglected the Mosaic Law. A neighbor lady spoke with her dead father who also urged the future merits of Mosaic custom. A young girl stumbled on Abraham and Moses in the family parlor and they corroborated the reports about the forthcoming trip to the Promised Land. So the Conversos gave away their

worldly goods, scanned the heavens for the promised signs, and began dancing in the streets, singing "Tomorrow we go to the Promised Land." Inez was decked out in jewels and fine clothing in preparation for her marriage with the Prince of Judea who was waiting in Heaven to wed her when she arrived with her friends.

In the village of Chillon a peasant girl named Maria announced that she too had made a recent trip to Heaven where she was informed that all *conversos* who observed the Mosaic Law would be carried off to the Promised Land. The citizens there followed the example of their brethren at Herrera by openly returning to Judaism in celebration of the coming salvation. A wool-carder named Gomez began holding seances at the town of Almodovar on Thursday and Sunday evenings. His spirit would travel across country to visit with Inez and Maria, and then up to Heaven to see God, Elijah, and the Messiah. There he learned that one day soon a great thunderclap would split the heavens and Elijah would descend to lead the *conversos* into the Promised Land, where seven thousand handsome young men were waiting to marry the earthbound local maidens, and six young virgins were

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on hand to wed Gomez and his five fellow-prophets, who are otherwise not identified. The sinners marked out for salvation had already been chosen and their names revealed to Gomez who would assign them their lodgings with a wave of his golden wand. At Valencia, Moses himself was reincarnated in the person of one Miguel Vives, where he was preparing once again to lead the Jews (*conversos*, that is) out of the Spanish Egypt and into the new Canaan. And when the Chosen People were rolled up in the heavenly scroll, the Lord would visit His vengeance upon their persecutors. Spain would be ravaged by famine, war, disease and death. The beasts of the field would roam the streets of her deserted cities. And the dogs would eat of their flesh and lick the blood of their bones.(5) The Inquisition soon put a stop to all this, of course, and we hear no more of it. But, the question suggests itself: did some *conversos* later find an emotional refuge in Illuminism? Is this frenzy of 1498 the "disease" of Villalobos' *aluminados*? I simply do not know: I can but sketch the outlines of the events which follow and leave the question of relationships and identification open to speculation.

Maria de Santo Domingo, an Aryan auxiliary (*beata*) of the Dominican order, was confounding her contemporaries as early as 1507.(6) The daughter of a laborer in the town of Piedrahita, near Avila, she

5. The original documents appear in Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien*, 2 vols., Berlin, 1926-1936.

6. Additional information on these early figures can be found in the following works and references therein: Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus y Espana*, Mexico, 1950, vol. I, pp. 72-82; Beltran de Heredia (note 2 above), pp. 10-17; Henry C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, New York, 1922, vol. iv, pp. 6-7; Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos espanoles*, Santander, 1947-1948, vol. iv, p. 215; Manuel Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras espanolas*, Madrid, 1903-1905, vol. ii, pp. 543, 669-670. A contemporary of Maria de Santo Domingo was the *beata* del Barco de Avila, who had similar prophetic visions.

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was gifted with numerous revelations, in which she held celestial converse with the Virgin Mary and with Christ. To her admirers she proclaimed that Christ was with her, that she was Christ, and that she was Christ's bride. For long hours she remained in an ecstatic trance, unmoving, with arms and legs rigidly extended, dissolving herself in the arms of the Deity. In the convent at Aldeanueva, which she established, she took a leading part in the mystic dances by which her followers presumably induced experiences similar to her own. Though unlettered, she was reputed to be the equal of the most learned theologians, her supernatural lights more than making up for her earthly ignorance. Some of these theologians, however, suspected that she was inspired by the devil rather than God, and serious charges were made regarding her orthodoxy. However, Cardinal Francisco Ximenez de Cisneros and King Ferdinand were satisfied that she enjoyed a special inspiration available to a chosen few, and their support was largely responsible for the failure of her critics to bring about her downfall as a heretic.

In Toledo, at about the same time, one Maria de la Cruz, a Benedictine of the convent of Santo Domingo, was seeing the future in a series of ecstatic visions and revelations and had learned to distinguish between the devil and God as they appeared to her in her trances. She too enjoyed the protection and favor of King Ferdinand and Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros, as did another contemplative religious, Juana de la Cruz, celebrated for her virtues and miracles, and author of a mystic treatise whose orthodoxy fell under grave suspicion in later years. In the same class was Maria de Toledo, la pobre, a contemplative mystic of noble origin, well known for her severe self-discipline, and founder of the rigidly ascetic Franciscan order of Clarisas (Poor Clares) in Guadalajara, which order would in a few years become deeply compromised with the Illuminist movement of New Castile.(7)

7. In several of the Illuminist trials of the 1520s and 1530s, the Guadalajara branch of this order is mentioned under suspicious circumstances. The abbess, Dona Aldonza, received letters from Juan del Castillo, who was burned at the stake in 1535. Isabel de la Cruz (of whom more immediately below) was a frequent visitor to the

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Within the Franciscan order of Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros, there were similar stirrings, although the response to them was not always so enthusiastic as it was to the activities of the beatas. In 1512, Friar Antonio de Pastrana,(8) custos of the Province of Castile, wrote to Ximenez de Cisneros about a fellow friar from Ocana who was "illuminated with the darkness of Satan." This unfortunate religious had been commissioned, in what he thought was a revelation from God, to seek an unspotted virgin of holy character by whom he could engender a prophet who would save the world. He wrote to Juana de la Cruz to enlist her cooperation in his mission, but that lady promptly turned his letter over to Antonio de Pastrana. The latter hastened to Ocana, clapped the bewildered friar into jail, and wrote a full account of the affair to Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros, promising not to release his errant colleague until he gave up "such contemplations procured by Lucifer."

convent. Gil Lopez de Bejar, also an active Illuminist, was known to have preached there. Diego Hernandez, a notorious Illuminist informer, was confessor to the nuns, and the sister of the Illuminist Geronimo de Olivares was a member of the Alcala branch of this order. AHN, *Inquisicion de Toledo*, Legajo 102, no. 3, *Proceso contra Luis de Beteta*, fol. 36r; AHN, *Inquisicion de Toledo*, Legajo 213, no. 7, *Proceso contra Rodrigo de Biuar*, fol. 3r; AHN, *Inquisicion de Toledo*, Legajo 110, no. 21, *Proceso contra Maria de Cazalla*, fols. 19r, 26v, 127r; AHN, *Inquisicion de Toledo*, Legajo 111, no. 46, *Proceso contra Petronila de Lucena*, fol. 4r; AHN, *Inquisicion de Toledo*, Legajo 223, no. 42, *Proceso contra Juan de Vergara*, fol. 45v; Uniuersitaets Bibliothek (Halle, Germany), vol. II, Yc20, 2, 2, *Proceso contra Francisco Ortiz*, fol. 42v.

8. By the early 1520s we find this same Antonio de Pastrana, along with another Franciscan, Diego de Barreda, active among the Illuminists of New Castile, and imbibing the teachings of Isabel de la Cruz.

This Diego de Barreda, who shared with Antonio de Pastrana the leadership of the Illuminist coterie at the Franciscan monastery in Cifuentes, was burned at the stake some time before 1533. See pp. 2-3, 4, 7-8 of Manuel Serrano y Sanz, "Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, aluminado alcarreno del siglo XVI," in *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos*, vol. viii (1903).

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Another Franciscan, the mysterious Friar Melchor,(9) was a *converso*, as were most of the Illuminists. He spent his youth at the English court, where

he had his first experiences of revelations from on high. As a result of divine inspiration, he decided to go to north Africa to convert the Moors. Stopping off in Spain, he met Maria de Santo Domingo, whose visions confirmed his hopes of converting the Saracens to the true faith. Other beatas also encouraged his good work: in Toledo, Maria de la Cruz quoted certain miraculous words about him from one of her visions; in the region of Salamanca, a humble woman named Francisca [Hernandez?] full of the spirit of God, gave him many testimonies of his chosen calling.

Thinking to further his work through the religious orders, Melchor became a Franciscan, but soon aroused the animosity of his brethren. Proclaiming himself to be an instrument of God and scolding his fellow friars in the same language which Paul used with the Sanhedrin, he prophesied the immediate future in catastrophic detail. By 1517 a series of miraculous events would transpire. The Roman Empire would be destroyed. The rulers of Europe would die and their kingdoms would disappear. The See of Saint Peter would be thrown down and all the clergy, including the Pope, would be beheaded. The Church would be removed to its ancient seat in Jerusalem, where all men would live freely in the promised land of milk and honey. All this would be accomplished without violence because Melchor, God's chosen instrument for this work, scorned human force and was sustained only by divine virtue. By the year 1517, when these events were scheduled to take place, Friar Melchor had disappeared from view, his prophecies long since forgotten.

Isabel de la Cruz

Whether or not any of these early prophets belong to the Illuminist movement is debatable. There is no question, however, about Isabel de la Cruz. She was not only one of the pioneer leaders of a recog-

9. Bataillon (note 6 above) suggests (in vol. i, p. 72), for a number of plausible reasons, that Friar Melchor was really the Franciscan bishop Juan de Cazalla, a major figure among the Illuminists.

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nizable "movement," but she was, I am convinced, the most important. She was the originator of the Illuminist heresy in Guadalajara, and the teacher of a vast coterie of laymen, clerics and beatas who, under the inspiration of Isabel, went forth from her to create an Illuminist network which extended throughout much of New Castile.

Although some Inquisition trial records of the Illuminists remain to us today,

unfortunately the *proceso* of Isabel de la Cruz is not one of them. Enough remains, however, from the trials of her followers, to reconstruct her heretical career as the founder of the Illuminist "movement" in Spain.

Isabel de la Cruz was a native of Guadalajara.(10) Of her family we know little beyond the facts that they were of Jewish ancestry, that Isabel's mother was still living in 1524, and that Isabel had at least two brothers and one sister, who was a nun. While still a young girl, living at the home of her mother in Guadalajara, Isabel apparently began to have some unusual experiences. By her own account, she felt so certain that she was in union with God that she refused to pay attention to the advice of any mortal beings, including her mother. Christ's words, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37), also helped convert Isabel into a rebellious daughter. She not only refused to obey her mother, but refused even to live in the family home.

Because she considered herself to be a true servant of God, and was annoyingly aware of her mother's human imperfections, as well as those of her brothers and sister, she moved out of the house into a place of her own where she could better devote herself to mystical reflection and the indoctrination of others in the ways of spiritual perfection.(11) It was probably about this time that Isabel ascended to the title of *beata* as a tertiary sister of the Franciscan order. We know that by

10. The biographical data which follow are taken from the trial of Isabel's disciple Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz: AHN, *Inquisicion de Toledo*, Legajo 106, no. 28, *Proceso contra Pe(d)ro Ruiz de Alcaraz*. See particularly fols. 39r, 106v, 211r.

11. *Ibid.*, fol. 106v.

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1512 she was dogmatizing in Guadalajara, preaching the principles of mystical abandonment and perfection under the name of *dejamiento*.

To Scriptural explication and exegesis she added the message of surrender of the will to God and the consequent submission of the individual to divine direction in all things. As a logical corollary to this she urged her listeners to reject all exterior forms of devotion, such as kneeling in church, making the sign of the cross, taking holy water, bowing the head and praying aloud. Her clerical followers, mostly Franciscan friars, were advised to give up disciplines, vigils, fasts and private prayers, because these were not to be found on the road to perfection.(12)

Within a few years Isabel de la Cruz had achieved considerable success and prominence in Guadalajara. Many laymen and clerics regularly attended the conventicles at her home. She had also made successful inroads into the convents of both the Franciscans and the Poor Clares of Guadalajara. In addition, her *dejamiento* thesis had been warmly received by numerous members of the household of Guadalajara's leading citizen, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, third Duke of Infantado.(13)

The apple of discord was dropped into Isabel's spiritual community by another *beata* named Maria Nunez, who apparently had a falling out of some kind with her former friend and teacher. In May and

12. See the testimony to this effect of a number of witnesses in *ibid.*, fols. 2r-v, 87v, 90v-91r, 92r-94v, 109v-110r, 352v, 369r. See also the Proceso contra Rodrigo de Bivar (note 7 above), fols. 2v-3r, 4v-5r.

13. The following Illuminist trials provide detailed elaborations of these remarks: Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz (note 10 above), fols. 64v-65r; *Proceso contra Rodrigo de Bivar* (note 7 above), fols. 2r-3r, 5v, 8v, 9v, 11v-12r, 20r; *Proceso contra Luis de Beteta* (note 7 above), fols. 8r, 9v; *Proceso contra Maria de Cazalla* (note 7 above), fols. 11r, 134r; *Proceso contra Juan de Vergara* (note 7 above), fol. 46v.

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June of 1519, Maria Nunez denounced Isabel to the Toledo Inquisition as a heretic. (14) In her first accusation, which she made in Toledo on May 13, Maria Nunez said that on one of her visits to the home of Isabel early in 1518, Isabel was reading in Saint Bonaventure about how Our Lord punished the souls of the wicked for all eternity. Maria cried out in commiseration: "Oh Lord, to think that they must be denied your presence forever and must be tormented." But Isabel scolded her:

"Quiet, you idiot. There is no Hell. . . . They just tell us there is in order to scare us." On other occasions, according to Maria Nunez, Isabel had whipped one of her maids for weeping over the Passion of Christ, she had disregarded the solemnities of Holy Thursday by making merry, and she had described the soliloquies of Saint Augustine as fantasies.

Exactly one month later Maria Nunez remembered some more things. Isabel and her favorite disciple, Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, used to mock as weeping penance nuts ("penitenciaros" and "lloraduelos") those who wept and did penance for their sins. They claimed also that they had arrived at the Truth through *dejamiento*, whereas until that happy moment they had been living in deception, especially when performing exterior works prescribed by the

Church.

The Toledo inquisitors probably thought this was a lot of foolishness, because they did not bother to take any action against Isabel on the basis of these accusations. However, in the years immediately following 1519, the influence of Isabel de la Cruz began to spread beyond the municipal confines of Guadalajara. As a result of the personal missionary activities of both Isabel and Ruiz de Alcaraz, Illuminist communities were established in several other towns of New Castile. In Cifuentes, the Franciscan friars Diego de Barreda and Antonio de Pastrana began to convert both clerical and lay colleagues

14. *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fols. 39r-41r. The full depositions of Maria Nunez may be found on pages 281-3 of my article, "La beata Isabel de la Cruz ante la Inquisicion, 1524-1529," in *Cuadernos de historia de Espana* (Buenos Aires), vol. xxv-xxvi (1957).

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to the new doctrines.(15) Another community was established at Pastrana as a result of the influences emanating from both Guadalajara and Cifuentes.(16) Even the university city of Alcala was affected: Isabel visited Alcala herself, and also received visits in Guadalajara from some of the intellectuals (faculty and students) of the university community.(17) By 1523 Isabel was the recognized leader of an Illuminist movement which was gathering momentum throughout New Castile. And now the Toledo inquisitors were sufficiently persuaded that a menace to orthodoxy existed. The first hint of trouble came in late 1523 or early 1524, when the Franciscan provincial Andres de Ecija, after making a personal investigation of Isabel's teachings, deprived her of her nimbus as a tertiary sister of the Franciscan order.(18) Very soon after that-on February 26, 1524-the Toledo Inquisition arrested Isabel and her first disciple, Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, and began their long (five-year) trials for heresy.

We have, from the trial of Alcaraz, a series of confessions made by Isabel between September 1524 and January of the following year.

Elsewhere(19) I have published this testimony in full. However-as is invariably the case in these question-answer sessions with the accused-it is rambling and verbose, so I shall content myself with paraphrasing.

(September 19, 1524) Announcing that she wished to clear her guilty conscience and receive penance with mercy, Isabel confessed

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15. *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fol. 86v; *Proceso contra Rodrigo de Bivar* (note 7 above), fols. 2v-3r, 6v-7r.
16. *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fols. 87v-90r; *Proceso contra Rodrigo de Bivar* (note 7 above), fol. 2r; *Proceso contra Maria de Cazalla* (note 7 above), fols. 90v, 91r; *Proceso contra Francisco Ortiz* (note 7 above), fol. 41v.
17. *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fol. 172v; *Proceso contra Rodrigo de Bivar* (note 7 above), fols. 2v-3r.
18. *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fols. 263r-v.
19. John E. Longhurst, "La beata Isabel de la Cruz..." (note 14 above), pp. 279-303.

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that because she felt so filled with God's love she had deceived herself into believing that she was beyond error. She felt that so long as God held her by the hand she was safe, whereas without Him to guide her she could fall into a thousand sins. This self-deception had led her to do many wrong things, such as talking about Holy Scripture and interpreting it to others, which was particularly bad since she was uneducated and a woman besides, and therefore hardly omniscient. She showed a grave lack of humility by tampering with the consciences of other people and being so presumptuous about Holy Writ. But this was because her false conviction that she was in the love of God had opened her mind to the counsel of Satan. As a consequence she told her followers they did not need to make any special devotions or prayers to God; they need only ask God to do in them whatever He willed, and everything would be fine.

(October 21, 1524) Isabel realized that until now she had been in hell rather than heaven, in tune with Satan rather than God. She now wished (again) to unburden her conscience completely of all past error. For example: she used to believe that when one was with God in love, he could not fall into mortal sin. As for herself, she was so certain she was in such union that she refused to obey anybody, even her own mother who, like everybody else, was spotted with the imperfections of self-love. She had also preached against the observance of "externals" such as prayers, fasting, images, holy water, kneeling at mass, claiming that such things were works of imperfection because they required that the individual exercise his own will rather than God's. She also refused to obey her prelates and counselled others to similar disobedience to anyone who was not, like herself, in a state of God's love.

(October 22, 1524) She had spoken against excommunication, claiming that a merciful God would not allow such hateful things in His church, and that a person's soul could not be bound to hell by such human devices. She also taught her followers to put all their trust directly in God and His love, and to give up such things as penance and other works of corporeal affliction. The

fear of Hell, she preached, was for those in mortal sin. Anyone steeped in God's love had no need to perform good works to avoid Hell; he should do his good works for love of God. She thinks that much of her troubles

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have arisen from the fact that she sometimes talked without thinking of the implications of what she said, and that people misinterpreted her meaning, because she never had believed in any heresies, not really. But she did feel that she has been a great sinner, without virtue, full of pride, vainglory and weakness, that she had failed to keep God's commandments, that she had become the "devil's martyr" by thinking she was beyond evil through God's love. In fact, the devil has been giving her a bad time of it, for he has often tempted her to kill herself. (October 24, 1524) Isabel de la Cruz repeated details of her previous confessions. She fully realized now, she said, how wrong she had been, that the Church is indeed the only true road to perfection. She said she was grateful to those persons who had testified against her, for they have helped her to see the error of her ways and have brought her to a knowledge of the truth.

While these confessions were being wrung from Isabel de la Cruz, the Toledo inquisitors were collecting additional material against her.

Between May, 1524 (before Isabel was jailed) and February of 1526 at least a dozen witnesses from Guadalajara, Pastrana and Toledo were questioned about the activities and teachings of both Isabel and Alcaraz.(20) These interrogations confirmed inquisitorial suspicions that Isabel had "converted" to the principles of *dejamiento* a fair number of persons in New Castile.

The most damning accusations came from Maria Nunez, whose memory kept improving with each subsequent denunciation. On March 13, 1526, she was called before the Toledo inquisitors to verify the testimonies she had given unsuccessfully seven years before. She was now asked if she had more to add, and indeed she

20. These testimonies appear in: *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fols. 2r-v, 42r-46r, 49r-51r, 86v, 87v, 90r-91r, 92r-94r; *Proceso contra Rodrigo de Bivar* (note 7 above), fols. 2r-3r, 4v-5r; *Proceso contra Maria de Cazalla* (note 7 above), fol. 11r; *Proceso contra Francisco Ortiz* (note 7 above), fol. 41v.

did: Isabel used to sigh because all the children of Adam had not achieved the state of perfection reached by herself and Alcaraz. She was also writing a book about her new doctrines, which was to be published only after her death. She and Alcaraz were always making fun of sermons they had heard; they also claimed that they both had reached a higher state of perfection than had any of the saints of the past. Two days later Maria Nunez was back with more: Isabel claimed that God was to be found more perfectly in one's spirit than He was in the sacrament of the Eucharist, and that people should not give such reverence to said sacrament; if there was anyone in Rome who was in the same state of perfection as Isabel and Alcaraz, they would both go to Rome to kiss that person's feet. And so on, ad nauseam.

BUT, said Maria Nunez, I never shared these bad opinions. In fact, I tried to persuade them to give up their errors, but they laughed at me. So I told them I was going to report them to the authorities, and they told me to go ahead-that they would gladly die for their beliefs.

November 8, 1526, the Toledo inquisitors received a letter from Maria Nunez, written in response to the promptings of memory and conscience. Not only had she tried to detour Isabel and Alcaraz from the road to perdition, but she had also tried to save some of the naive young ladies who had been hooked by them. But in return for her efforts these corrupted persons told Isabel de la Cruz all about Maria's missionary efforts. From that time on the whole gang of them began to persecute her, and that was how all the troubles began. In fact, these Illuminists began an investigation of me, making up all kinds of lies, and even tried to get some of the local politicians to do things against me. It finally got so bad that I had to leave Guadalajara to get away from their wickedness. But they followed me wherever I went, for they had accomplices everywhere, including the Franciscan order. As a result my life has been one of great persecutions, suffered for the sake of justice.

Maria Nunez added the following postscript:

Friar Pedro Regalado of Guadalajara, of the Franciscan order, spoke to me with some heat in favor of this beata [Isabel de la Cruz]; he asked me sternly what I was accusing her for. I replied

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that I didn't have to account to him for my actions, but only to God and the inquisitors. He replied, "Well, be careful, because the whole Franciscan order is ready to take up the defense of Isabel de la Cruz."

The trial dragged on, and it is safe to assume that the time was taken up with

working over the same basic charges, for this was usually the way these heresy trials spun themselves out, sometimes, it seems, interminably. In 1527 the judges voted six to three in favor of burning Isabel at the stake (the minority supporting life imprisonment). A delay of almost two years followed until finally, on April 21, 1529, Isabel de la Cruz was sentenced to life imprisonment as an "inventor of scandalous errors and novelties in the church of God," and as a kind of fake messiah of the whole Illuminist movement. (21) We know more (at least quantitatively) about Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, who was sentenced to life imprisonment along with his mentor, and was also given an added sting of one hundred lashes in a public flogging. (22) Alcaraz, whose home town was also Guadalajara, early came under the influence of Isabel, and was soon proclaiming that the latter's teachings carried more authority than those of Saint Paul. (23) Although he was a layman and had little or -no education, Alcaraz had his own passion for Holy Writ, which he was reputedly able to quote at virtually interminable length, to the amazement of the most learned theologians. In 1523 he was invited to the town of Escalona to join the household of the Marques de Villena, Diego Lopez Pacheco, who seems to have had a penchant for collecting strange people. Alcaraz preached the passive principles of his *dejamiento* to the other members of the household, and illustrated his meaning with live demonstrations. During mass, for example, instead of kneeling and crossing himself at the proper moments, he would remain rigid as a statue, his arms straight at his sides, his lips unmoving, his eyes unseeing, all the while frozen in deep meditation.

21. *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fols. 357r-368r, 375r-376r, 436r.

22. *Ibid.*, fol. 399r.

23. *Ibid.*, fol. 44v.

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He also maintained that there was no need for external practices such as fasting and the rest. To be saved one needed only to be in this condition of *deja mien* to, in which he surrendered his will to God to do with as He wished.

A couple of other prophets had already staked out a claim at Escalona by the time Alcaraz arrived there. These were two Franciscan friars, Juan de Olmillos and Francisco de Ocana. They represented a school of religious thought-which is really an overstatement of its pretensions-called *recogimiento*. Whatever it was, its practitioners rejected *dejamiento* in favor of apocalyptic visions reminiscent of the early *beatas*. Ocana, for example, was given to making horrendous prophecies foretelling the devastation of

Church and Empire, in a vein very similar to the preachings of Friar Melchor just a few years before. Olmillos, on the other hand, specialized in ecstatic transports: when preachinG, he would edify his listeners by his weeping, contortions and tortured grimaces which were looked upon as sure signs of his saintly inspiration.(24) Alcaraz apparently managed to substitute the more passive mannerisms of *dejamiento* for the more muscular *recogimiento* although not without opposition from Ocana and Olmillos, who had some unfriendly things to say about their new rival.(25) Despite the rivalry between these two "schools," and the inclination of some scholars to treat their "theories" with the deference one accords to Realism and Nominalism, I must say that the whole thing sounds pretty silly. Bataillon, at least, is kind: he remarks that the two "doctrines" are not really in any "violent disagreement."(26)

It seems most likely to me that such disagreement as existed among the practitioners of *dejamiento* and *recogimiento* was largely a matter of personal rivalry which emphasizes minor differences all out of proportion to reality. In 1525, Geronimo de Olivares, an Illuminist from Pastrana, defined the two viewpoints as follows:

24. *Ibid.*, fols. 7r-8r.

25. *Ibid.*, fol. 68r.

26. Bataillon, *Erasmus y Espana* (note 6 above), vol. i, p. 198.

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Recogimiento is a state of mental prayer in which the senses are inactive, one drives out all thoughts from his mind and puts his soul in repose, so that the soul might reach such a state that one will remember nothing about himself nor about God. For, although he will not remember God with his mind, in this state of repose his soul will be united with God. And in order to induce this state, we used to kneel down for a while, and then sit in a corner for a long time with our eyes closed.

Dejamiento is to make no effort at mental prayer, but to subject oneself to whatever God wills, to let thoughts pass through the mind without heed, for Our Lord so permits it that our spirit may be purged, on condition that our will not give in to our thoughts.(27)

Alcaraz himself, when asked by the inquisitors to distinguish between *dejamiento* and *recogimiento*, replied that "*recogimiento* is to cease to offend God and to give up vices and vanities and to keep the commandments of God and of the Church. As for *dejamiento* that stands for the same thing." (28) According to one witness before the Inquisition in 1525, the Illuminists called each other "brother," they did not cross themselves in church, they remained

kneeling with their eyes closed throughout the entire mass, they did not bow their heads at the elevation of the Host, they did not pray aloud during mass, and when mass was over and everybody else had gone home, they remained inside still on their knees. (29) In 1529, another witness at Toledo reported that he had been informed by a Franciscan friar that in the kingdom of Toledo were people called *dejados* (many of them in the Franciscan order) who had learned the Road to Perfection in a short time.(30)

27. *Proceso contra Francisco Ortiz* (note 7 above), fol. 41v.

28. *Proceso contra Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz* (note 10 above), fol. 37r.

29. *Proceso contra Maria de Cazalla* (note 7 above), fol. 9r. *Testimony of Pedro de Pastrana.*

30. *Proceso contra Francisco Ortiz* (note 7 above), fol. 41r.

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It seems then that whether a devotee of *recogimiento* or *dejamiento* the Illuminist sought to purge himself inwardly in order to provide a vessel for the unobstructed entry of the divine will. A person in a true state of *recogimiento* or *dejamiento* had no will of his own. He became a passive vessel in complete surrender of his will to God. From this there developed among the Illuminists a belief in individual inspiration and direct communication with the Creator, which in turn led to the extreme logical (and unacceptable) conclusions that there was no real need for Church ceremonial, or for intermediaries between man and God, or in fact for any form of external worship. It is no wonder the Inquisition considered them to be heretics - if they weren't already, they soon would be. It was enough even to make a saint suspect, as we shall see.