

HISTORICAL WRITING IN VISIGOTHIC SPAIN
FROM c. 468 TO THE ARAB INVASION OF 711

by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the present dissertation is to investigate the nature of the historical works composed in Visigothic Spain from the *Chronica* of the Gallaecian bishop Hydatius written c. 468 to the Arab Invasion of Spain in 711. The limited amount of concrete evidence to have survived with regard to the Visigothic kingdom in Spain, has generally led scholars to treat these historical texts as sources for historical facts rather than to approach them from a historiographical perspective. Alternatively, they have been used, selectively, to support certain thematic arguments.

The thesis examines the major extant historical works produced in Spain in this period in an attempt to derive from them the emerging perception throughout the period of the Visigothic presence in the peninsula and its role vis-à-vis external political entities, the Spanish Church and the indigenous population. An attempt is made to identify the ways in which the various kinds of historical works were used to direct and shape perceptions of the Goths and of Gothic history to certain ends, determined by the authors, all of whom held high ecclesiastical office, and to place these works within a larger context of Christian historical writing in its various genres.

Chapter 1 contains a general discussion of the nature of

historical writing in the medieval period, the selection of texts for the present study, and the historiographical background which preceded and influenced the Iberian authors. Chapter 2 considers how the *Chronica* of Hydatius reflected the Hispano-Roman reaction to the initial barbarian incursions. In Chapter 3 the focus shifts to the Visigothic period proper with the late-fifth-century chronicle of John of Biclar. Chapter 4 serves as an introduction to Isidore of Seville and an examination of his political and historical theories as they appear in his non-historical writings. Chapter 5 focuses on the various genres of historical writing in which Isidore worked, and the manner in which he used them to direct the historical perceptions of his audience. Chapter 5 examines the narrowing of the focus of historical writing in the later Visigothic period and includes the two major historical works produced in Spain from the death of Isidore to the Arab invasion, the *De viris illustribus* of Ildefonsus of Toledo and the *Historia Wambae* of Julian of Toledo. Chapter 6 summarizes the major changes of focus which took place in Spain throughout the Visigothic period.

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Chapter I

Introduction

When one considers the historical texts produced in the Middle Ages, those composed in the Iberian peninsula during the Visigothic period seldom spring to mind with the same readiness as do the histories of such authors as Gregory of Tours, Bede, or William of Malmesbury. Spain is not generally deemed to have produced historians of such high calibre in this period, and this assessment is not without some merit. Historians studying the early history of the region often lament both the small number of historical works produced and the sparsity of information contained within them.

Certainly there are few extant historical works from Visigothic Spain, and it is probable that those that do survive represent the bulk of what was produced. There is no evidence of a significant number of lost historical texts from this period. The most popular historical genre employed by the Spanish authors was the chronicle, a format which does not lend itself to highly detailed accounts. Even those authors who attempted to write 'proper' histories rather than chronicles produced works which appear very limited when compared with the richly-textured compositions of historians such as Bede or Gregory of Tours. Isidore of Seville's *Historia Gothorum* is comparatively sparse in its detail and the *Historia Wambae* of Julian of Toledo, while more detailed, is narrowly defined both by its temporal span and by the

events narrated.

There are two other forms of historical composition, represented in the Spanish corpus, which may be included in the definition of the historical genre. The first of these is biography, which in Spain took the form of works entitled *De viris illustribus*, a style which provided collections of brief biographical sketches of famous men in the manner initiated among Christian authors by Jerome and continued by Gennadius of Marseille. The Spanish authors who chose to write in this genre no doubt viewed their works as conscious continuations of their two predecessors. The second genre which falls loosely within the realm of historical writing is hagiography. What one might term contemporary hagiography seems never to have caught on in Visigothic Spain, and there are only four extant texts which fall into this category, the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* by an unidentified author, the *Vita S. Emiliani* by Braulio of Saragossa, and the *Vita Desiderii* composed by King Sisebut, all dating from the early seventh century, and the late seventh-century *Vita Sancti Fructuosi*, often attributed to Valerius of Bierzo. The reasons for this lack of interest in composing lives of contemporary saints are not readily apparent.¹

Having delineated the limitations of the historical output of Visigothic Spain, one must also consider the value of a study of

¹Judging from the collection of lives dating from the seventh to eleventh centuries edited by R. Dr. Ángel Fábrega Grau under the title Pasionario Hispánico (Madrid-Barcelona, 1953), there does, however, appear to have been an interest in the passions of martyrs. Dr. Fábrega Grau suggests that the Pasionario was essentially a liturgical book (p.12).

this material. From a practical point of view, although these texts are often frustratingly spare of detail, they remain the chief source for the history of the Iberian peninsula in this period.² However, they may also be very revealing of the perceptions held by their authors with regard to the political situation in which they found themselves, of their understanding of the nature of the unfolding of history and the meaning that might be found in it, and of the manner in which the writing of history might be used in order to shape perceptions of both past and present in an attempt to direct the future.

Historical writing in the early Middle Ages was often an attempt to provide an identification for a clearly defined group, a sense of what one might term the 'collective self'. One sees this in the early Christian histories, in which the group is identified by a common religious adherence, and in the early 'national' histories in which the group identification is based on ethnic association. The group can define itself, or be defined, either in terms of what it is, that is to say, what the members of the group have in common, or by what it is not, in other words, in contrast to some 'other', external to the group. This use of written history as a tool of definition could be aimed at two distinct, but not necessarily exclusive, forms of perceiving the group, depending on the audience intended by the author. On the one hand, it could be

²Apart from the historical texts, the limited amount of information available on the Visigothic period of Spanish history is largely derived from the conciliar records, some surviving correspondence, archeological evidence and coins.

an attempt to direct the way in which the group perceives itself and its own past with a view to directing the course it took in the future, or, on the other hand, the intent could be to influence the perceptions of some external entity to enhance, or denigrate, the reputation or prestige of the group in the estimation of another.

In the case of the Visigoths in Spain, the attempt to define the ethnically-demarcated group through the medium of written historical accounts was, in the majority of cases, made by individuals from outside of that group. Of the five authors included in the present study,³ only two, Ildefonsus and John of Biclar, were Gothic and, as will be discussed in a subsequent chapter,⁴ the chronicle of the latter may have been significantly influenced by a non-Gothic individual. The other Goth, Ildefonsus, was the author of a *De viris illustribus* which had more to do with the see of Toledo than with defining the Visigothic identity through its past. The only attempt in Spain to compose a comprehensive history of the Gothic people was made by the Hispano-Roman Isidore of Seville. Thus, in Spain we encounter a situation in which 'outsiders' are attempting to define the perceived identity of another ethnic group. In such a situation, the obvious question is what benefit would those 'outsiders' see for themselves in doing so, if we take it as a given that such an endeavour would be for the benefit either of the individual who had undertaken it or of the group to which he belonged.

³For a complete discussion of the authors selected, see below, p. 11f.

⁴See chapter three, p. 88.

In considering this question, it is important to recall that identifiable groups are not, of necessity, mutually exclusive. There is more than one criterion by which individuals may determine their affinity to a particular group. Common ethnicity, religious beliefs or practices, or even a common geographical location may serve as the means by which individuals discern their adherence to one association and distinction from another. The result of multiple criteria can be, and often is, a crossover of group identity, wherein members of diverse ethnic groups may find a common adherence through religious identity or, conversely, individuals of the same ethnicity may turn outside of that group for their sense of religious affinity, thereby creating subgroups within the larger collective. The historians from Spain which are included in the present study all have a common religious identification in that they are all Catholic. Additionally, with one exception, they all wrote their historical works after the official conversion of the Visigoths in Spain from Arianism to Catholicism in 589 A.D. Thus, in most of the cases, subject and historian adhered to the same religious self-identification even if they did not share common ethnicity. We may then, tentatively suggest that it was the intent of these historians that the benefit from their attempts to define, or re-define, perceptions of the Visigothic past would accrue to the larger, religiously-defined group of Catholic Christians, of which the newly-converted Visigoths comprised a sub-group. It was, perhaps, the newness of the incorporation of this sub-group into the larger assembly that

informed many of their efforts.

The present study is defined by two parameters, the identification of what is meant by 'Visigothic' Spain, and the selection of the main texts to be taken into consideration. The general term 'Visigothic Spain' is commonly used to identify the period of time in which the Visigoths played a key role in the history of the Iberian peninsula, that is, loosely, from the first Gothic incursions into Spain under the aegis of the Empire early in the fifth century and the conquest of Roman Spain by the Visigothic king Euric in the second half of that century, to the Arab invasion of 711 A.D. which marked the end of Gothic rule in most of the country. However, as has been pointed out, the use of the term 'Roman' or 'Visigothic' Spain tends to indicate that "one is dealing with one entity". On the contrary, while Roman Spain was marked by considerable social and cultural contrasts between its different regions, the "disunity of Spain under the Romans becomes even more evident under the Visigoths."⁵ The population of the peninsula in this period was an amalgam of various cultural groups - Goths, Hispano-Romans, Jews, Basques, et al. While all of these groups, with the exception of the Basques, would eventually come under the political authority of the Goths, they did not assume a common cultural identity with them. It is therefore necessary to distinguish what is encompassed by the term 'Visigothic' Spain within the bounds of the present study.

⁵J.N. Hillgarth, "Popular Religion in Visigothic Spain" Visigothic Spain: New Approaches, ed. Edward James. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 5-8.

The chronicles and histories written in this period have little to do with the interests and lives of the ordinary inhabitant of the peninsula, except in instances where the policies of those in authority affected considerable segments of the population, for example, the official conversion of the country to Catholicism or the attempted forcible conversion of the Jews to Christianity under king Sisebut. However, even in these cases, the authors are less concerned with the effect these policies may have had on the general population than with their importance to political and ecclesiastical interests.⁶ In defining the 'Visigothic' focus of these historical works, it is important to note that the authors of all of them were bishops of the Catholic Church in Spain, in other words, at the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It is therefore not surprising that their concerns should focus on the larger issues that faced the Church in Spain in their lifetimes. It should also come as no surprise that they would see those ecclesiastical issues as intertwined with the political events taking place in Spain at the highest level. Thus, in view of the contention made above that historical writing in this period was often viewed as a tool with which to direct the course of future events or policies through a directed perception of the past, it would not be unreasonable to expect that these bishops would wish to influence the direction of future political policy at

⁶This is not to imply that the clerical authors of these texts did not take a pastoral interest in the spiritual and even physical well-being of their congregations, only that their historical works were, for the most part, directed toward different purposes, dealing with the larger issues which confronted both church and kingdom.

the highest level toward the best interests of the Catholic Church, particularly that branch of it which existed in Spain. In such circumstances, the term 'Visigothic' Spain, within the context of these historical works, is defined, for the most part, by an interest in the Visigothic authority or ruling class who directed policy, in other words, the Visigothic king and nobility.⁷ Thus, 'Visigothic' Spain, for our authors, is demarcated by the temporal boundaries outlined above, by that segment of the Visigothic population which exercised authority and formed policy, and, at least prior to the official conversion to Catholicism, by the Gothic Arian church which existed in parallel with the Catholic church in Spain.

The two and a half centuries covered by this study were witness to significant upheavals and changes in the peninsula, beginning with the disruption of the romanized administration and way of life by the first barbarian invaders and the gradual reimposition of some sort of order by the Visigoths. This was followed by the return of the Byzantine presence in the south-east, the partial unification of the country under Visigothic royal power by Leovigild (569-586), the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism under Reccared I (586-601) and the suppression of the Arian church, and the final expulsion of the Byzantines by Suinthila (621-631) in 624. All of this was accompanied by

⁷This is not to suggest that the Gothic rulers and nobility were the only focus of these historical works, but is rather an attempt to define what aspect of the Visigothic presence in Spain was encompassed by these works. Theological and ecclesiastical matters provided additional foci, but these contribute less to the definition of the Visigothic component.

intermittent outbreaks of rebellion within the peninsula, the most important of these including the unsuccessful revolt of Hermenigild against his father, Leovigild, in 579 to 583, the successful usurpation of the throne by Sisenand (631-636) with Frankish assistance, and the revolt of the *dux* Paul against Wamba (672-680) in 672. With such momentous events taking place around them, it is perhaps both surprising and regrettable that so few authors in Spain produced historical works and that those they did are so lacking in detail. The modern historian would give much for a Spanish Gregory of Tours. However, the unfairness of reproaching the Spanish authors for not producing a different sort of work has recently been pointed out with regard to Isidore.

"It is tempting to criticise Isidore of Seville for not being Gregory of Tours...Yet all of this is patently unfair. However much we might wish for a substantial narrative history of the Visigothic kingdom, this has no bearing on the assessment of what Isidore actually did write or of the intentions that lay behind his work."⁸

Such sentiments may equally be applied to all the historians included here.

The second defining parameter of the current study is the selection of authors and texts to be taken into consideration. Even with such limited production within the historical genre, some process of selection and elimination must occur. Let us first consider the exclusions. Of the intact texts, those which fall into the sub-genre of hagiography, although occasionally referred to,

⁸Roger Collins, "Isidore, Maximus and the *Historia Gothorum*" *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*. eds. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter. (München, 1994) 354.

have not been included for major consideration in their own right. There are a number of reasons for this. Of the four extant texts of this *genre* to have emerged from Spain in this period, one, the *Vita Desiderii* composed by king Sisebut, records the *vita* of a bishop of Vienne in Gaul, a subject with little direct connection to a study of historiographical pursuits in Spain.⁹ The second text, the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, while providing an interesting point of comparison with some of the events covered in the chronical and historical literature, is, as the title indicates, for the most part a highly localized work of hagiography. While a less than national focus alone would not necessarily be reason to exclude this work,¹⁰ the combination of its narrow focus and its hagiographical nature tended to influence its exclusion. The same may be said of the *Vita Sancti Fructuosi*, which was designed to exalt a famous Gallaecian monk, and the *Vita S. Emiliani*, the life of a saintly hermit. Hagiography, while rightly considered a sub-*genre* of historical writing, carries with it its own special set of stylistic criteria and formulae which tend to place it apart from the more traditional forms of historical literature. Given the small number of hagiographical compositions of the period, the distance between the subject matter of these texts and the more

⁹Although the *Vita* may be of considerable use in understanding the thought and interests of the particular king who was its author, a study of this aspect of the work having already been made by Jacques Fontaine in his "King Sisebut's *Vita Desiderii* and the Political Function of Visigothic Hagiography" *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 93-129, a duplication of his efforts was felt to be insufficient reason to introduce the *genre* of hagiography into this dissertation.

¹⁰The fairly local foci of the works of Ildefonsus and Julian of Toledo was not a barrier to their inclusion.

main-stream histories written in Spain, and the highly specialized nature of the genre, the decision was made to set aside the hagiographical material for a separate, future study.

The decision to exclude other historical texts was more easily made. The *Chronica Caesaraugustae*, probably written in the early part of the seventh century, attributed to bishop Maximus of Caesaraugusta by Mommsen and identified with the brief *historiola* which Isidore of Seville tells us was written by that bishop,¹¹ would certainly have warranted inclusion but for the unfortunate circumstance that only fragments of it remain as marginalia in a much later manuscript. Those fragments are insufficient to support a detailed study of the *Chronica*. Also excluded was a brief work written in the later part of the seventh century entitled *Laterculus Regum Visigothorum* which is little more than a regnal list of the Visigothic kings.

The texts chosen for inclusion in this study represent the major authors and historical works in various genres of the Visigothic period. It should be noted from the outset that, although the previous discussion of the nature of historical writing in the medieval period and of the definition of Visigothic Spain within the context of the historical literature produced there may seem to have implied a monolithic nature for these works, this is far from the case. Although all influenced by, and to varying degrees concerned with, the Visigothic presence, these

¹¹MGH *Chronica minora* II 221-3; Isidore *De viris illustribus* XXXIII; contra Mommsen, Roger Collins, see chapter five, n. 79.

works do not share a common intent or a common perspective.

The earliest work considered is the *Chronica* of the Gallaecian Catholic bishop Hydatius, which covers the years 379 to 468. While this chronicle does not belong to Visigothic Spain proper, it is the earliest, and the only contemporary, account of the first Gothic presence in Spain. This is the only included text in which the author does not share some common group identity with the Visigoths. Hydatius was not Gothic and the Visigoths were not yet Catholic. The bishop had less interest in defining the Gothic sense of identity than in attempting to come to terms with the presence and effects of a new 'other' in his homeland.

All of the subsequent historical texts included were written after the conversion of the Goths to the Catholic faith in 589. From that time, subject and author shared a common point of identity in their religion if not in their ethnicity and, as a result, the interest of the authors in the Goths shifts in perspective. The earliest of the post-conversion works is the *Chronica* of John of Biclar, both a Catholic bishop and a Goth, covering the years from 565 to 590, ending just shortly after the conversion of Reccared. His work was followed by that of Isidore, bishop of Seville (c. 600-636), the most prolific writer to have lived in Spain in this period. Isidore, apart from his many other works, composed three texts in various historical genres, the *Chronica*, the *De viris illustribus* and the *Historia Gothorum Wandalorum Sueborum*, all of which are included in the present study. The two remaining authors, both bishops of the see of

Toledo, wrote their historical compositions in the second half of the seventh century, Ildefonsus his *De viris illustribus* between 657 and 667, and Julian his *Historia Wambae* within the period between 673, when the events described took place, and 690, the year of his death.

It is apparent from the foregoing list that the texts fall into three major historical genres. The earliest of these is the chronicle, inspired by and based on the concept of the world chronicle which was developed in the early Christian centuries, most notably in the *Chronici canones* begun by Eusebius of Caesarea and translated into Latin and continued by Jerome. This chronicle inspired continuators throughout the Christian world and it was known in Spain at least as early as the fifth century when it provided inspiration for the continuation of Hydatius. Another professed continuator of the chronicle was John of Biclar, who conceived of his own work as an addition to the earlier procession from Eusebius, Jerome, Prosper of Aquitaine and Victor of Tunnuna. The chronicle form appears only one final time in the Visigothic period, in the *Chronica* of Isidore of Seville, and in his hands a shift in approach takes place. While acknowledging the works of his predecessors, Isidore chose not merely to continue their work, but to produce his own world chronicle from the beginning. Although the authors of the Spanish chronicles may have viewed themselves as continuators, or at least as following in the tradition, of their predecessors, as will become evident in subsequent chapters, the influence of events in Spain could turn the chronicle into

something quite different from their original intent. In other words, geographical location becomes a formative influence on historical genre.

Although the chronicle form fell out of use in Visigothic Spain after Isidore, that bishop introduced two new forms of historical writing into the peninsula. The first of these was biographical history in a form which may be distinguished from hagiography. This, like the chronicle, was also a tradition inherited from earlier Christian authors and followed by their Spanish successors. Taking the form of a compilation of brief literary biographical sketches of illustrious men, this genre appeared under the title of *De viris illustribus*. It makes its first appearance under the authorship of Jerome and was supplemented by Gennadius of Marseille. Although Isidore's *De viris* has no preface in which the author acknowledges his debt to his predecessors in the genre, the title and comparable format of the works strongly indicate a conscious continuation of Jerome and Gennadius. In the subsequent appearance of the genre in Spain, there is no doubt that the continuation was deliberate. In the preface to his *De viris* Ildefonsus of Toledo explicitly acknowledges the works of his predecessors, including that of Isidore, and makes plain his intention of supplementing their collective work with *addenda* of his own. However, the form changes somewhat in the hands of Ildefonsus to go beyond the restriction of literary biography and include *viri* whose claim to being considered illustrious does not rest on their literary achievements.

The second historical form which makes its first appearance in Visigothic Spain in the oeuvre of Isidore is what we might call history proper, that is, a continuous narrative devoted to a single, clearly-defined subject, be that subject a people, a territory or an event. Isidore was the first, and almost the only, author in Spain deliberately to create such a work in the Visigothic period. His *Historia Gothorum* is both defined by and restricted to its subject, the Gothic people. The only other work attempted in this genre is the *Historia Wambae* written by Julian of Toledo. Although the short form of the title by which it is customarily cited may suggest that this is biographical history, its full title, *Historia excellentissimi Wambae regis de expeditione et victoria, qua revellantem contra se provinciam Galliae celebri triumpho perdomuit*, clearly indicates that this is not biography, but the history of a specific event within the reign of that king, thus having more in common formally with the *Historia* of Isidore than with the more biographical *De viris*.

The majority of historiographical models which inspired the Spanish historians were of eastern or North African origin. Certainly the most influential was the chronicle form familiar to the Spaniards in Jerome's translation and continuation of the *Chronici canones* of Eusebius and in the works of their later continuators. The Eusebius-Jerome chronicle was already known in the fifth century in Spain and provided the impetus for its continuation by Hydatius. John of Biclar also acknowledged his debt to the same chronicle and to one of its continuators, Victor of

Tunnuna, bishop of an unidentified see in Africa, whose work he proposed to continue. In John's work, the influence of Eusebius is particularly noticable in his presentation of Reccared at the Third Council of Toledo as a new Constantine, although the Spanish authors never conceded to the Visigothic monarchs the excessive providential role in history that Eusebius assigned to Constantine. While Eusebius' chronicle form proved very popular among historians in the peninsula, his ecclesiastical history, although known in Spain,¹² did not serve as a historiographical model for the Spanish historians, and inspired no attempt to write an ecclesiastical history of the Spanish Church as it was later to do in England.

A further eastern text used as a source by Hydatius in the fifth century was the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, or consular list, with historical annotations. Hydatius was the recipient also of copies of letters from the east and of oral reports from Greeks visiting Spain. Although John of Biclar gives us almost no information about his sources, apart from his mention of those who preceeded him in the *genre*, we do know that some items from the early part of his chronicle were known to him as a result of his years spent studying in Constantinople, although, as shall be discussed in due course,¹³ his own eyewitness accounts may be far fewer than usually supposed.

¹²Hydatius Preface 2. See chapter two, n. 1 for full reference to the edition of the chronicle of Hydatius.

¹³See chapter three, p. 63.

Isidore of Seville also paid tribute to the influence of the Eusebius-Jerome chronicle tradition in his own *Chronica*. However, a wider range of eastern and African sources are identifiable in his chronicle than in those of his predecessors. In addition to Jerome's translation and continuation of the chronicle of Eusebius, Isidore drew on material from Augustine, Josephus, Justin and Eutropius and, in the latter part of the chronicle, on Victor of Tunnuna and the *Historia Tripartita*, a compilation under the direction of Cassiodorus of the three histories of Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret. In his *Historia Gothorum*, Isidore once again used the Eusebius-Jerome chronicle in the earlier chapters.

The preponderance of eastern models and sources in the Spanish historiography of this period is not really surprising. In the first place, some of our authors were Hispano-Romans who, one would expect, would still feel some cultural and intellectual connection with the Empire which, in this period, would mean the Eastern Empire. Additionally, as has already been noted, all our authors were bishops of the Catholic Church who would naturally turn to, and be influenced by, the writings of the early Church Fathers such as Eusebius, Jerome and Augustine. Also, it should not be forgotten that two of these historians, Hydatius and John of Biclar, had themselves travelled to the East and were greatly influenced by their experiences there. A third, Isidore, while not having visited the East himself, received his education from his older brother, Leander, who had visited Constantinople. Finally, the imperial forces occupying part of the peninsula were Byzantines sent by

Justinian. It is probably no coincidence that the works of the two later authors, Ildefonsus and Julian of Toledo, written after the expulsion of the last Byzantine forces from Spain, their authors never having traveled to the East themselves, were far less influenced by eastern models.

Western historiographical influences on the historians of Visigothic Spain are far less apparent. Histories written in the West in this period, such as that of Gregory of Tours, were much more ethnically and geographically limited than the historical models from the East and, as a result, would no doubt have been disseminated less widely and been of less general interest than their eastern counterparts. Apart from Jerome's continuation of the Eusebian chronicle, the main western historical text used by the Spanish authors was one of the continuators of Eusebius-Jerome, Prosper of Aquitaine. Prosper's chronicle may have been used as a source by Hydatius,¹⁴ and was used by Isidore for his chronicle after the end of the period covered by Jerome. Jerome's influence is also felt in the continuation of a literary tradition which he initiated among Christian writers, the *De viris illustribus*. The other western author who receives mention in these historical works is Gennadius of Marseille, although this results from his having been a continuator of Jerome's *De viris*, rather than from his own personal influence.

One of the major western influences on the Spanish writers

¹⁴While some historians cite Prosper as one of Hydatius' sources, it has been suggested that, rather, Hydatius and Prosper used a common source. See chapter two n. 17.

from the time of Isidore was Gregory the Great. Although he was not a historian, and his writings were not direct models for their historical texts, Gregory's thought had considerable influence on, among other things, the development of a theory of political theology in Spain, particularly in the *Sententiae* of Isidore.¹⁵

The final history in the series, the *Historia Wambae* by Julian of Toledo, seeks as its model none of the texts used by its Spanish predecessors but, rather, returns to the historiographical style of classical Rome. It does, however, owe a debt to its Spanish precursors in terms of the political theology of the Christian monarch.

The present study undertakes to consider the historical texts from the Visigothic period as a whole. Generally scholars have treated these texts as sources for historical facts rather than approached them from a historiographical perspective. Alternatively, they have been used, selectively, to support certain thematic arguments, such as Marc Reydellet's study of royalty in Latin literature or Suzanne Teillet's work on the emergence of the Gothic nation.¹⁶ While brief studies of some of the individual

¹⁵For Gregory's influence on Isidore and Julian of Toledo, see J.N. Hillgarth, "Eschatological and Political Concepts in the Seventh Century" The Seventh Century: Change and Continuity Proceedings of a Joint French and British Colloquium held at the Warburg Institute 8-9 July 1988, eds. Jacques Fontaine and J.N. Hillgarth. (London: Warburg Institute, 1992) 224-228; for his influence on the *De viris illustribus* of Ildefonsus, see Jacques Fontaine, "El *De viris illustribus* de San Ildefonso de Toledo: tradición y originalidad" Anales Toledanos III (1970): 59-96.

¹⁶M. Reydellet, La royauté dans la littérature latine de Sidoine Appollinaire à Isidore de Séville (École française de Rome, 1981); S. Teillet, Des Goths à la Nation Gothique: Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du V^e au VII^e siècle (Paris: Société d'Édition <<Les Belles Lettres>>, 1984)

histories have appeared,¹⁷ only one previous attempt has been made to produce a coherent picture of the nature and development of historical writing throughout Visigothic Spain.¹⁸

The texts will be approached, not so much for what they can tell us about the events they narrate, but for what they may reveal about the authors and their reactions to the times in which they lived. Not only the text, but the life of the historian will be examined in an attempt to understand why and for what purpose he wrote the history he did. In some ways, my method of approaching these texts resembles the approach of Eusebius to his *Chronici canones* in that I have attempted to break the texts down into their separate narratives with regard to the diverse subjects which they cover. By isolating the different components, I have tried to get a picture of each sub-narrative, unclouded by unrelated elements of the text, before restoring and relating them to each other in the more complex narrative of the complete text. In this manner I have tried to achieve a new perspective of the historical 'vision' of each author and of the historians of Visigothic Spain as a whole.

¹⁷Roger Collins, "Julian of Toledo and the Royal Succession in Late Seventh-Century Spain" Early Medieval Kingship, eds. P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood. (Leeds: School of History, University of Leeds, 1977); Francis X. Murphy, "Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom in Spain" Speculum 27 (1952): 1-27.

¹⁸J.N. Hillgarth, "Historiography in Visigothic Spain" Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi Sull'alto Medioevo XVII: La Storiografia Altomedievale, vol I. (Spoleto: Presso la sede del centro, 1970): 261-311. As I hope will become clear in the following chapters, the present study, in addition to being more detailed as a result of the relative length, also differs from Hillgarth's work in the approach taken to the texts and, at times, in the conclusions drawn.

Chapter II

Ut extremus plagae: The Chronicle of Hydatius

Any study of historical writing in Visigothic Spain must begin with the fifth-century chronicle of the Gallaecian bishop, Hydatius, covering the years 379 to 468.¹ Although the primary focus of this work is not the Visigoths and, indeed, throughout most of the account, the Iberian peninsula can hardly be described by the term "Visigothic" in the sense that we would think of it today, by the end of the *Chronica* the Visigoths had already secured some hold over Baetica, southern Lusitania and Carthaginiensis, and were poised to extend their dominion throughout the greater part of Spain under Euric (466-484) and his successors.² The record composed by this bishop in remote Gallaecia is almost the only

¹The *Chronica* exists in one almost complete manuscript, (Phillipps 1829 in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, c. 830; MS B), a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century copy of MS B (MS 1792 in the Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine, Carpentras, France; MS C) and a number of epitomes or excerpts in which there is a fair degree of corruption. The earliest editions (Canisius, 1602; Scaliger, 1606; and Schott, 1608) were based on an epitome (Paris, Bibliothèque National, Lat. 10910;715). San Llorente produced an edition in 1615 based on MS C which was republished in the same year by Sandoval in Pamplona. After Jacques Sirmond rediscovered MS B c. 1615 in Metz, he produced his own edition in 1619. MS B went missing in 1763 when the library at Clermont, in which it had been housed since Sirmond's death, was sold. Until it was located again between 1866 and 1875, subsequent editions were for the most part based on Sirmond. In 1894 a new edition based on B was produced by Theodore Mommsen. Since Mommsen, editions have been produced by Alain Tranoy in 1974, Julio Campos in 1984, and, most recently, by Richard Burgess in 1988. Fuller discussions of the manuscripts and editions can be found in Richard W. Burgess, "Hydatius: A Late Roman Chronicler in Post-Roman Spain," diss., University of Oxford, 1988, vol. II, 7-18; *Hydace Chronique*, ed. Alain Tranoy. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1974) 62-69; and *Hydatii Lemici Continuatio Chronicorum Hieronymianorum*, ed. Theodore Mommsen. *MGH* AA 11, 7-9. Citations from the *Chronica*, unless otherwise indicated, will be from the Burgess edition.

²Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400-1000* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1983) 24.

evidence we possess for the process of Visigothic expansion into the peninsula and of the effects it had on the inhabitants of Spain and on other interested parties. As such, it became an important source for subsequent historians in the Visigothic period, in particular, Isidore of Seville. Like Isidore, Hydatius was not a Visigoth, but a Hispano-Roman, observing the Goths from the point of view of an outsider. However, as we shall see, his reaction to the Visigothic presence in Spain was, not surprisingly, very different from that of his seventh-century successor.

Almost all we know about Hydatius is derived from the *Chronica* itself, and that information is meagre and often vague. This has led to a number of attempts to reconstruct some sort of biography for the bishop from the few clues which he provides. Hydatius was born in *Lemica ciuitas* in the Roman province of Gallaecia in the northwestern part of the Spanish peninsula.³ He does not furnish us with his date of birth, but this has variously been placed between 394 and 400, based on calculations made from an event a little later in his life, his trip to the East.⁴ Hydatius describes himself at the time of this journey as *infantulus*, that is, as a small child, and as *pupillus*, generally taken to mean an orphan.⁵ Although this information is given in the entry under the

³Hydatius Preface 1.

⁴ Mommsen dates Hydatius' birth in c. 394, *Hydatii* 4; Tranoy c. 395, *Hydace*, 13; Casimiro Torres Rodriguez between 393 and 395, "Hidacio, el Primer Cronista Español," *Revista de Archivos Biblioteca y Museos* LXII,3 (1956): 764; Burgess in c. 400, "Hydatius," vol. I, 6.

⁵Hydatius 40.

year 407 in connection with a discussion of the succession to the see of Jerusalem, it is not entirely clear whether Hydatius meant to imply that he had undertaken his *peregrinatio* in that year. This date has, however, generally been accepted by modern scholars as correct, although some have argued for dates as early as 403 or as late as 410.⁶

The term *pupillus* strongly suggests, although it does not conclusively prove, that Hydatius was orphaned as a small child. If this is so, and given his young age at the time, he would have travelled to the East under the care of a guardian of some sort, rather than with a parent or alone. During the course of his visit to the East, Hydatius saw bishop John of Jerusalem, Eulogius of Caesarea, Theophilus of Alexandria and, most importantly, Jerome in Bethlehem. It is unclear whether, as a small child, he would actually have had the opportunity to meet with the latter, or if he only saw him and perhaps heard him speak. In any event, the journey had a great effect on the mind of the young Hydatius that would last the rest of his life.

The very fact that Hydatius was able to undertake such a journey suggests certain other things about his background. First, he most likely came from a family background which was reasonably well-off in order to provide him both with the means to travel so

⁶Torres Rodríguez ("Hidacio," 764) and Tranoy (*Hydace*, 12) suggest 406-407 for the journey; Mommsen also places it in 406, (*Hydatii*, 4); Steven Muhlberger, in *The Fifth-Century Chroniclers: Prosper, Hydatius, and the Gallic Chronicler of 452* (Leeds: Francis Cairns Publications, 1990): 196, and Burgess ("Hydatius", vol. I, 9) agree on 407 while Collins (*Early Medieval Spain*, 14) places it as late as 410.

far and with the education of which such a journey was probably a part. In addition, one could conclude, as they saw fit to send him at such a young age on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and expose him to the Christian leaders of the great Eastern cities, that Hydatius was born into an orthodox Christian family.

We have no more information about the earlier part of the life of Hydatius until his election to the bishopric at a very young age in 428, most likely in Aquae Flaviae.⁷ The *Chronica* contains only three other personal notices about its author. In 431, in response to the pillaging of the Sueves in Gallaecia, Hydatius undertook an embassy to the *dux* Aëtius in Gaul and returned home the following year in the company of the *comes* Censurius, who had been sent by Aëtius as an envoy to the Sueves.⁸ He next appears in the *Chronica* in 445 when he and bishop Thoribus sent episcopal reports to Antoninus, the bishop of Emerita, regarding certain Manichees who had been hiding in the city of Asturica, in Gallaecia, for some years previously.⁹ Hydatius' final appearance in the *Chronica*

⁷Date of elevation to the bishopric: Hydatius Preface 1, 6 and 7. The date is calculated from Hydatius' statement that he used written and oral sources until the third year of Augustus Valentinian, and after that time, having been elected to the office of bishop, from personal knowledge. Valentinian was proclaimed Augustus in 425 (Hydatius 85). Location of see: Hydatius 201, 207. Hydatius reports that he was taken prisoner by the Sueves in the church of Aquae Flaviae in July 460 and returned to Flaviae three months later. There is no indication in these entries that he was only a visitor to that church and it is generally accepted that he was the bishop there.

⁸Hydatius 96, 98. This has been interpreted as an indication of the high esteem in which Hydatius was held by the Church in Gallaecia (Burgess "Hydatius" vol. 1, 18) that he was sent on such a mission. While this may well be true, there is no indication in the text that he was sent, rather than going on his own initiative.

⁹Hydatius 130.

takes place in the year 460, when he was taken captive by the Sueves in the church of Aquae Flaviae on the 26th of July and held in captivity for three months before his release and return to Flaviae.¹⁰

The year of Hydatius' death is unknown, but is generally believed to have been shortly after the date of the final entry of the *Chronica* in 468. In his preface to the work, Hydatius describes himself as *extremus vitae*, and in 468 he would have been approaching seventy years of age.¹¹ It is difficult to imagine that Hydatius would not have recorded the events of the following years, had he lived to see them.

The *Chronica* itself was inspired by the translation and continuation of the *Chronici canones* of Eusebius by Jerome, which had been preserved in a number of the provinces of Spain, and by the decline of *discriptio annorum* down to his own time. The chronicle of Hydatius was never meant to stand on its own, but to be a continuation of the *canones*, taking up the account in the year after Jerome left off in 378.¹² Hydatius intended his *Chronica* to be a Christian world chronicle in the tradition of his predecessors, but, as we shall see below, he was unable to be as successful in this as he may have wished, largely due to his

¹⁰Hydatius 201, 207. It is interesting that Hydatius reveals that Frumarius and his followers were urged on by the informers Dictynius, Spinio and Ascanius to take him captive. Although we have practically no information about Hydatius' activities within his own see, it would appear from this that he had made some enemies.

¹¹Hydatius Preface, 1.

¹²Hydatius Introductory note following Jerome; Preface, 5.

remoteness of location and difficulty in acquiring news of events outside of his immediate area. By his own account, Hydatius was living in the remotest region of the empire.¹³

As a historian, Hydatius demonstrates a certain amount of sophistication with regard to historiographical method and the tradition in which he was working, despite his relative isolation. He scrupulously delineates his intentions and methods of information-gathering in the preface of the chronicle. He begins by outlining the time frame of the chronicle of Eusebius, followed by that of Jerome. He then admits his inability to determine whether Jerome had continued the chronicle beyond the point at which the Spanish copies had ended, and summarizes his reasons for believing that Jerome had not done so.¹⁴ After modestly downplaying his own abilities and worthiness for the task, as convention dictates, he relates how he used written accounts or the reports of informants to supplement his own observations. From the third year of the *Augustus* Valentinian, when he became a bishop, Hydatius was able to add his own personal witness of events within Gallaecia to his other sources.¹⁵ Within the text, Hydatius occasionally discloses the identity of his informants for certain pieces of information or reports his inability to ascertain other details.¹⁶

¹³Hydatius Preface 1.

¹⁴Hydatius Preface 2, 3 and 4.

¹⁵Hydatius Preface 6 and 7.

¹⁶Hydatius 40, 61, on his inability to find out certain information about the succession of bishops in the Eastern churches; 106, the visit of the priest Germanus from the Arabian region and certain Greeks, who brought Hydatius news

The main written source¹⁷ used by Hydatius for his *Chronica* is the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, a consular list covering the years 509 BC to 468 AD, annotated with numerous historical entries,¹⁸ supplemented by two other annalistic sources of an imperial nature and an annalistic Gallic source. In addition, Hydatius appears to have been familiar with the proceedings of the Council of Toledo in 400 and the *Chronica* of Sulpicius Severus, as well as being the recipient of a number of episcopal letters and reports on the contents of others.¹⁹ His oral sources often came from embassies to the Sueves from the Goths, Vandals and Romans²⁰, as well as chance visitors such as the *presbyter*, Germanus, and certain Greeks.²¹ Given the remoteness of his native Gallaecia and the turmoil in the Iberian Peninsula in the fifth century, Hydatius

about the Eastern church and the council held to combat the Ebionite heresy; 109, a letter, written by Cyril of Alexandria to Nestorius of Constantinople, which was conveyed to Spain with other, unidentified, letters.

¹⁷A complete discussion of the sources used by Hydatius can be found in Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 33-72, and in Muhlberger, 204-211. Suzanne Teillet, in Des Goths à la Nation Gothique: Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du V^e au VII^e siècle (Paris: Société d'Édition <<Les Belles Lettres>>), 1984): 207, maintains that Hydatius knew and used Orosius' *Contra Paganos*. Muhlberger, on the other hand, expresses surprise that Hydatius did not use Orosius as a source for his chronicle (Fifth-century Chroniclers 206), while Burgess suggests that Hydatius would not have used Orosius' history as a source even if he had known it ("Hydatius" vol. I, 153). Teillet also cites the chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine as one of Hydatius' sources (Des Goths 216), but Burgess postulates instead a common source for both ("Hydatius" vol. I, 50-55).

¹⁸Mommsen, *MGH* AA 9, 196-247.

¹⁹For the annalistic sources, Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 57. For a discussion of the Council of Toledo, Sulpicius Severus and letters, see Muhlberger Fifth-century Chroniclers 206-208.

²⁰Muhlberger Fifth-century Chroniclers 211. Hydatius 177, for example, in which an envoy coming to Gallaecia brings news of the victory over the Vandals in Corsica.

²¹Hydatius 106. See n. 16, above.

appears to have been able to acquire in the circumstances a relatively large amount of information from the outside world, although this could not compare with the chronicles of his predecessors.

Although Hydatius attempted to write in the dispassionate form typical of the genre of chronicles, his personal involvement in some of the incidents recorded and his inability to keep entirely to himself his reactions to the tumultuous events going on around him, make it possible, to a certain extent, to discern his outlook not only on those events, but also on the general course of history, his "vision", if you will, of history.

It is generally agreed that Hydatius had an attachment to the Roman Empire. However, the strength of that attachment and how much hope he placed in it for the future is not a question easily resolved.²² Did Hydatius still hope that the authority of the Empire would be restored in the Spanish provinces, did he foresee the imminent collapse of the Empire as a whole or did he see the demise of Roman imperial rule only in the geographically more remote provinces of the Empire, such as Spain and Gaul?

By the time Hydatius was born, the Spanish provinces had

²²Muhlberger maintains that Hydatius' commitment to the Empire was such that he still held out hope for a restoration of Roman authority in Spain (Fifth-century Chroniclers 234, 262). Burgess, although he sees a strong commitment on the part of Hydatius to the Empire and the imperial family, suggests that Hydatius believed that the barbarian invasions presaged the imminent collapse of the Empire ("Hydatius" vol. I, 102, 108-109). As we shall see below, Burgess has another reason for thinking that Hydatius did not believe the Empire would survive. Teillet, while also recognizing Hydatius' strong attachment to the idea of Empire, sees an increasing disillusionment on his part with regard to the effectiveness of the Roman structures in Gallaecia, and foresaw their replacement by alternate forms of authority, such as the Church and the *regnum* of the Goths (Des Goths 208-209, 249-250).

enjoyed almost four centuries of relatively peaceful imperial rule. Although he was only a young child when the barbarian tribes first entered the peninsula, and although most of his life was spent as a witness to the disruption and turbulence that were to result therefrom, both the memories of his own early childhood and those of his elders who had lived much longer under the Roman administration must have provided him with a picture of a life which was in clear contrast to the barbarian kingdoms.

Gallaecia itself was effectively no longer a Roman province since the invasion of 409 and the establishment of a Suevic kingdom there in 411. Yet, it is apparent that Hydatius continued to consider the non-Suevic population of that province as well as of the other Roman provinces as Romans. He uses the term *Romani* to refer to the citizens of Bracara, Lugo and the inhabitants of Lusitania. *Plebs* and *populus*, two words strongly associated with the citizens of Rome, are used respectively for the people of Gallaecia and Bracara, and in respect of Gaul, the term *civis* is used specifically.²³ It is very likely that this view reflected that of the Gallaecians themselves. Indeed, how else could they think of themselves at this time? After four centuries within the Roman Empire, they would certainly have learned to consider themselves as Romans, politically, culturally and linguistically. Even if they did not believe that the Empire could ever recover real authority in their province, a change of political power within Gallaecia would not be sufficient to cause them to abandon

²³Hydatius 174, 199, 246; 113, 174; 217.

their Hispano-Roman identity, particularly when the only alternative would be to assume the identity of their new rulers, the Sueves. The Roman Empire remained the symbol of civilization and order in face of the turmoil and barbarism of the new *regnum*. This was the milieu from which Hydatius sprang, and whose values he continued to hold.

There can be little doubt that Hydatius was aware of the declining involvement and effectiveness of the Empire in Spanish, and in particular Gallaecian, affairs. Towards the end of the *Chronica* the role played by the imperial government in Spain has diminished considerably and direct involvement on the part of the emperors seems to have disappeared completely. While it is certainly arguable that the higher proportion of notices regarding the Empire and the activities of the emperors in the earlier part of the *Chronica* may be largely attributed to Hydatius' source material, especially the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, and to his following the example of Jerome in the *Chronici canones*²⁴, there are indications of a still active concern on the part of the Empire in the fate of its Spanish provinces. The Goths under Vallia entered Spain in 417 to combat the barbarians there *Romani nominis causa*, and Roman officials, such as the *comes Hispaniarum*, Asturius, the *vicarius* Maurocellus and the *magister utriusque militiae*, Vitus, were still being sent to Spain - although not always with happy results for the inhabitants - and Frederic, brother of Theoderic, attacked the *Bacaudae* of *Tarraconensis* in 453

²⁴Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 102, 105.

ex auctoritate Romana.²⁵ However, in proportion to the withdrawal of that interest throughout the chronicle, the amount of attention given to imperial business outside Spain decreases as well until it becomes little more than notices of the deaths and successions of emperors, indicating the regnal years.

There is no explicit indication in the *Chronica* that Hydatius blamed the Empire for allowing the barbarians to overrun the peninsula or for failing to come to the aid of the Spanish provincials. In fact, he specifically declares that the present troubles in Gallaecia are *ex furentium dominatione permixta iniquarum perturbatione nationum*.²⁶ While the *nationes iniquae* are undoubtedly the invading tribes, there is no reason to believe that *dominatio furentium* refers to the Roman administration. Given that this statement is placed within the context of what he refers to as a *deformis* ecclesiastical succession and the nearly universal decline of religion in Gallaecia, it is more likely that Hydatius is here referring to the heterodox clergy, and in particular to the Priscillianists, who were, apparently, still a problem in Gallaecia at this time.²⁷ Indeed, Hydatius seems deliberately to refrain from including any value judgements about the actions of the Empire as a whole and, with a few exceptions, about individual players in the imperial administration and military.

Hydatius employs terms of praise for only four Romans, all but

²⁵Hydatius 63, 74, 134, 158.

²⁶Hydatius Preface 7.

²⁷On Hydatius and Priscillianism, see p. 45f.

one of whom were military men. Cynegius, a *praefectus* of Theodosius, *factis insignibus praeditus*, is mentioned in connection with the overthrow of pagan idols in Egypt.²⁸ Asturius is described as *vir inlustris* upon his advancement to the consulate in 449. The only other entries concerning Asturius in the chronicle are his earlier defeat of a multitude of Bacaudae in Tarraconensis and as the father-in-law of Merobaudes, who is also mentioned in connection with a victory over the Bacaudae in Aracellus, although Hydatius' praise of this man is for his literary achievements.²⁹ The fourth Roman who receives praise from Hydatius is Aegidius, the *comes utriusque militiae* of Armorica, described as *virum et fama commendatum et deo bonis operibus conplacentem*. As this is the only mention of Aegidius in the chronicle, apart from that of his death shortly thereafter, it is not entirely clear why Hydatius felt he was so worthy of praise. Since, in the first entry, Hydatius inserts the above-mentioned laudatory expression in the middle of a report of an uprising of the Goth, Frederic, and the latter's defeat by Aegidius, and since, in the second, Aegidius' death results in the loss of the protection he had afforded Armorica and in the resulting invasion of the Goths into the regions he had been guarding in the name of Rome, it is possible that the reason for Hydatius' high opinion of him was his successful resistance to Gothic incursions.³⁰ However, it must be pointed out that other

²⁸Hydatius 18.

²⁹Hydatius 143, 125, 128.

³⁰Hydatius 218, 228.

Roman generals had successes against the barbarians without winning such acclaim from the author. It is possible that Hydatius had additional reasons for admiring this comes which he chose not to reveal in the chronicle.

As far as the Empire is concerned, Hydatius' censure is generally reserved for usurpers of imperial power. Maximus and Eugenius are both called *tyrannus*, and Jovinus, Sebastianus and Heraclianus were *pari tyrannidis inflantur insania*. The shared fate of all these usurpers is not only death, but death at the hands of the legitimate emperor or his agents.³¹ The inclusion of these incidents and the terms in which they are couched suggests that Hydatius felt very strongly about the legitimacy of authority and the imperial family. It is interesting that they occur during the rule of the Theodosian dynasty, a family originating from Gallaecia. It has been suggested that Hydatius had a particular attachment to the Theodosians for this reason, but, given his reticence in expressing personal opinions, either negative or positive, about the legitimate rulers of the Empire, such a suggestion is rather difficult to substantiate.³²

We have seen that Hydatius continued to think of himself and

³¹Hydatius 17, 22, 51; 24, 54.

³²Tranoy claims that Hydatius was above all loyal and attached to the Theodosian dynasty, and that this loyalty could be attributed in particular to Theodosius' Gallaecian origins (*Hydace* 18-19). Teillet follows Tranoy in this view (*Des Goths* 225). Burgess, on the other hand, does not see any evidence of any particular attachment on the part of Hydatius to the Theodosians, and maintains that the relatively large amount of information about them can simply be attributed to better sources ("Hydatius" vol. I, 118). It is possible that there was a better oral tradition in Gallaecia due to their roots in that province.

his compatriots as Romans, and to respect the Empire as a cultural entity representing the civilized world. On the other hand, he recognized the decline of imperial political power in the western provinces and its virtual disappearance in most of Spain. He continued to reserve most of the traditional imperial terminology for the Empire and its representatives, although he did transfer some terms to the barbarian kingdoms.³³ The question still remains, however, did Hydatius see in contemporary events the collapse of the Roman Empire as a whole? The phrase *in angustias imperii Romani metas...ruituras* is a pivotal one in this regard.³⁴ Richard Burgess translates this passage "the frontiers of the narrowly-confined Roman Empire that are doomed to perish" and sees in this an anticipation on the part of Hydatius of the imminent collapse of the Roman Empire.³⁵ This view is in contrast to that of Steven Muhlberger, who contends that Hydatius did not foresee the destruction of the Empire, and indeed, still believed in the possibility of a restoration of imperial power in Spain.³⁶ Although the use of *ruituras* seems to work against the latter interpretation, one can not entirely disregard the attention Hydatius pays in the final years of the *Chronica* to imperial

³³A more complete analysis of Hydatius' use of political terminology can be found in Teillet Des Goths 242-252.

³⁴Hydatius Preface, 7.

³⁵R.W. Burgess, The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 75; "Hydatius" vol. I, 157. Also, see n. 22.

³⁶Muhlberger Fifth-century Chroniclers 234, 262.

activity against the barbarians in other areas. He makes note of the arrival in Italy of a large, well-equipped army dispatched by the *Augustus* Leo from Constantinople, the abortive expedition against the Vandals in 466, and the launching of large imperial contingents against the Vandals by both Leo and Anthemius in 468.³⁷ These entries could be offered in support of the argument that Hydatius was indeed still hopeful of an imperial restoration in Spain, although they by no means could be considered as proof thereof. If, on the other hand, one were to take *metas*, as "extremities" or "limits", one could suppose that Hydatius was referring only to the furthestmost boundaries of the Empire, that is *ut extremus plagae*. To answer the question, one must look beyond Hydatius' imperial entries to those regarding the other contenders for control over the Spanish provinces, the *gentes barbarae*.

Despite his reluctance to express his personal opinions about the Empire, Hydatius shows no such reticence with regard to the barbarian tribes which invaded his homeland. Most of Hydatius' life was spent living amidst the turmoil and uncertainty caused by these invaders. It is hardly surprising then that the picture which emerges from the chronicle is one of gloom. The author himself maintains that he is living in *miserabile tempus*, and attributes this in part to the disruption caused by hostile tribes.³⁸ The presence and activities of these peoples in the Spanish provinces, and especially in Gallaecia, become the main focus of the chronicle

³⁷Hydatius 234, 236, 247.

³⁸Hydatius Preface, 7.

as it develops, but even early on, when Hydatius' sources enable him to include more material from outside the peninsula, barbarian actions in Spain appear to have an importance equal to those events taking place elsewhere in the Empire, even in Rome. The entry describing the first barbarian invasion of Spain in 409 is, in fact, slightly longer than that detailing the Gothic sack of Rome (which Hydatius dates to the same year). In Rome, the slaughter which took place *intra et extra urbem*, seems to have been mitigated, in the eyes of the author, by the fact that the Goths granted sanctuary to those who fled to the shrines of the saints. The barbarian invaders of Spain, on the other hand, had no such saving grace, ravaging and running wild throughout Spain. Their actions coincide with an evil pestilence which caused widespread famine. Hydatius evokes the biblical image of the four plagues of sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts to describe the events of the years 409 to 410.³⁹ The implication from the *Chronica* is that the invasion of Spain was far more horrific and devastating than the sack of Rome. It was also, for Hydatius, far more important.

During the period covered by the *Chronica* of Hydatius, the Spanish provinces were invaded by four different tribes, the Alans, Vandals, Sueves and Goths. However, for the purposes of understanding Hydatius' attitude toward these peoples, they cannot all be lumped together under the general term *barbari* and discussed as a single group, for he does not treat them as such. The invaders of 409 were the Alans, Vandals and Sueves, and are identified by

³⁹Hydatius 42, 43, 46, 47, 48.

these names in the earliest entry. Hydatius refers to them collectively as *barbari* during the subsequent period of unbridled pillaging. However, with only two exceptions, the term *barbari* is no longer applied to these peoples following the partition of Spain in 411 when the *Spani* submitted themselves to slavery under the *plagis barbarorum*. From this point onwards, Hydatius refers to the various peoples by the proper names of their tribal groups.⁴⁰

The Alans disappear from the chronicle very early on. After suffering heavy losses at the hands of the Goths under Vallia, they placed themselves under the protection of Gunderic, the Vandal king in Gallaecia, in 418, and Hydatius does not speak of them again.

The Vandals persisted a little longer, but by 429 they had left Spain for Africa.⁴¹ Unlike the Alans, the activities of the Vandals continue to receive the occasional notice from Hydatius, although these are brief and undetailed, partly, no doubt, through lack of information, but also because their activities no longer had a direct impact on Spain. Their only return to the peninsula occurred in 445 when they landed at Turonium in Gallaecia and captured the families of many people.⁴² As there is no follow-up to this piece of information, it is likely that the Vandals did not remain long and the incident was only mentioned because it occurred in Hydatius' own province. Certainly if Vandal attacks had

⁴⁰Hydatius 49. Also see Teillet 212 n. 30. The two exceptions will be considered below.

⁴¹Hydatius 90.

⁴²Hydatius 131.

continued there, he would have recorded them. With two exceptions, Hydatius makes no references to the character of the Vandals. The exceptions are Gunderic and Gaiseric, and in both instances the events involve an offense to the Church. Gunderic *cum impie elatus* tried to lay hands on the church of Hispalis but was prevented *dei iudicio*.⁴³ Gaiseric, reputedly an apostate from the orthodox faith, and also *elatus impie*, drove the bishop and clergy from Carthage, corrupted the ministries of the sanctuaries and transferred the Catholic churches to the Arians, thus, according to Hydatius, fulfilling the prophesy of Daniel.⁴⁴ The Alans and Vandals are, however, minor players in fifth-century Spain, and it is to the Sueves and Goths that Hydatius pays the most attention in the chronicle.

It is the Sueves who receive the harshest criticism from Hydatius. The Sueves received the westernmost portion of Gallaecia in the partition of 411 and, after the departure of the Vandals in 429, extended their dominance throughout that province and other areas of Spain until their defeat at the hands of the Goths in 456. Thus, the bishop of Aquae Flaviae spent the greater part of his life under Suevic rule. Hydatius had personal reasons for resenting the Sueves. In 460 he was taken prisoner by the Sueves in the church at Aquae Flaviae and held prisoner for three months. Interestingly, following this incident, Hydatius uses the word *gens*

⁴³Hydatius 89.

⁴⁴Hydatius 89, 118. I believe that the prophesy referred to here is Daniel 11: 30-31, although Daniel 7: 23-25 is also a possibility.

in reference to the Sueves, a term which, like *barbari*, he generally seems to avoid throughout the chronicle when referring to the barbarians within Spain.⁴⁵

The period of Suevic ascendancy is presented in the chronicle as an unending story of attacks, pillaging and broken treaties. The words Hydatius uses most often to describe their activities are *depredari*, *invado* and *perfidia*. On one of the few occasions that Hydatius expresses an opinion about the character of an entire people, he reports that when the Sueves pillaged Lusitania in 457 and part of Gallaecia in 458, they were acting *solito more perfidia*.⁴⁶ Broken peace treaties seem to have been such a consistent part of Suevic relations with the Gallaecians that Hydatius describes the treaty made between them in 460 as *umbra pacis*, a perhaps rather sardonic foreshadowing of its disintegration in 463. At this point, Hydatius' tone with regard to the Sueves appears to have become rather world-weary: *Suevi promissionum suarum ut semper fallaces et perfidi diuersa loca infelicis Gallaeciae <more> solito depredantur*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Hydatius 208. Hydatius uses this term only six other times in the chronicle. Of these, four occurrences refer to peoples outside of the Spanish provinces: the Greuthungi (12), the pagans in Egypt (18), the Huns (150), and the Heruli (171). He also uses *gentes* to describe Suevic individuals who opposed the succession of Rechiarius to the *regnum* of the Sueves (137). It is possible that here he is referring to members of Rechiarius' own family (*de gente sua*). The remaining use of the term is in connection with Valentinian's dispatch of envoys to the various tribes, and it is evident that here Hydatius simply needed a generic term for the different peoples, rather than listing them individually. Teillet further discusses Hydatius' avoidance of the term *gens* in *Des Goths* 245-246.

⁴⁶Hydatius 188, 190.

⁴⁷Hydatius 219.

And yet, there seems to have been a certain recognition of the Suevic kingdom on the part of Hydatius. After the Sueves settled in Gallaecia, Hydatius not only uses the term *rex* with regard to their kings, but also refers to the *regnum Sueuorum* and the *regni potestas* and *regale ius* of the Suevic kings.⁴⁸ Yet, the *regnum* of the Sueves is not equivalent in the mind of Hydatius to the province of Gallaecia. It is the *gens Sueuorum* under the leadership of a king. When Hydatius states that *regnum destructum et finitum est Sueuorum* in 456, it is because their king, Rechiarus, has been captured by Theoderic. When the remaining Sueves select Maldras as their new king, they once again become a *regnum*.⁴⁹ Also, although the Gallaecians were under the domination of the Sueves, they at no time formed a part of the *regnum Sueuorum*. This is apparent in the ability of the Gallaecians to negotiate peace treaties with the Sueves, both before and after the Gothic invasion in 456.⁵⁰

Hydatius' attitude toward the Goths seems to have been somewhat more complex than toward the other groups. In contrast to his treatment of the other *gentes*, he never applies the term *barbari* to the Goths - they are always referred by their proper name. The Goths are also the only *gens* about whom Hydatius says anything that could be perceived as positive. This is not to say that he refrains from recording the negative side of their actions, but he never characterizes the entire Gothic people in a negative

⁴⁸Hydatius 114, 123, 134, 137, 175, 187, 203, 223, et al.

⁴⁹Hydatius 181, 187.

⁵⁰Hydatius 113, 204.

light, as he did with the Sueves.

Compared with the Sueves, the entries in the chronicle representing their negative side are a relatively small percentage of the total entries about the Goths. Hydatius refers to the *infida pax* they made with the Romans after their surrender in 382 and their betrayal of the *magister militum*, Castinus, in Baetica in 422, and to the fact that both Theoderic II and Euric succeeded to the *regnum* via the crime of fratricide.⁵¹ Yet these are relatively few incidents given the space of time in which they occur and they are reported with little comment or show of emotion. It is only with the events of 456 that Hydatius shows some signs of indignation about the actions of the Goths, and this when those actions directly affect Gallaecia and its churches. The attack on Bracara in that year is portrayed as *maesta et lacrimabilis*, the desecration of the churches and indignities done to the clergy are described in detail. As with the invasion of 409, biblical references are invoked, comparing the sack of Bracara with the visiting of heavenly wrath upon Jerusalem.⁵² Again in the entry under 457, a Gothic attack against the city of Asturica is described in considerable detail, the slaughter of the people, the desecration of the churches and holy objects, and the abuse of the clergy.⁵³

Yet the picture of the Goths presented by Hydatius is not

⁵¹Hydatius 7, 77, 156, 238.

⁵²Hydatius 174.

⁵³Hydatius 186.

entirely negative. Although he notes that during the sack of Rome in 410 (409 in the *Chronica*) the Goths slaughtered Roman citizens, this is presented as almost incidental to the more important fact that they spared those who sought sanctuary in the shrines of the saints.⁵⁴ The Gothic respect for the saints is again noted when Theoderic heeds the warnings of St. Eulalia and refrains from pillaging Emerita, in contrast to the Sueve Heremigarius.⁵⁵ Even in reference to the attacks on Gallaecian cities in 456 Hydatius appears to mitigate the harm done by the Goths. In the attack on Bracara he takes care to note that it was accomplished without bloodshed and that although the *virgines* were abducted, they were not violated. The attack on Asturica is presented with no such redeeming acts on the part of the attackers, but it is of interest to note that the force dispatched to Gallaecia by Theoderic was made up of *variae nationes*, in effect, diluting the Gothic responsibility for the ensuing destruction. It is notable that Theoderic himself is distanced from this particular outrage.

It is also recorded to the benefit of the Goths that Theoderic refused to harbour the usurper Sebastianus, and Theoderic is elsewhere described as *fidus Romano imperio*.⁵⁶ Indeed, it may well be that this distinctive relationship between the Goths and the Empire, one which was never achieved by the Sueves, is the reason

⁵⁴Hydatius 43. *Cum intra et extra urbem caedes agerentur, omnibus indultum est qui ad sanctorum limina confugerunt.*

⁵⁵Hydatius 182, 90.

⁵⁶Hydatius 129, 170.

for Hydatius' ambiguous attitude toward the Goths. Although a number of battles between Goths and Romans are recorded, particularly in the earlier entries, throughout the greater part of the chronicle the Goths are allies of the Empire against the other groups. The major Gothic incursions into the Spanish provinces are made as agents of the imperial government, Vallia in 417 *Romani nominis causa*, and Theoderic in 456 *cum uoluntate et ordinatione Auiti imperatoris*.⁵⁷ The attack of Vallia in 417 is the only instance in which Hydatius refers to the other tribes in Spain as *barbari* after the partition of 411. This usage serves to set the Goths apart from the others, in a manner that is similar to, but not equal to, the opposition of *Romani* and *barbari*. As imperial activity in Spain diminishes, Gothic involvement increases. It is apparent that the Goths are coming, in the course of events, to see themselves, not as *federati* of the Empire, but as its allies and equals. When Avitus sent an envoy to the Sueves in 456, Theoderic sent his own envoy to ensure they kept the peace treaty *tam secum quam cum Romano imperio, quia uno essent pacis foedere copulati*.⁵⁸ While the Gothic army entered Spain later the same year under the orders of the Emperor Avitus, two years afterwards that same army a *Theudorico rege ad Hispanias missus* evidently no longer had need of the imperial authority.⁵⁹ By that point Avitus, who had been made emperor by the Gauls and the Goths, having been deprived of

⁵⁷Hydatius 63,173.

⁵⁸Hydatius 170.

⁵⁹Hydatius 192¹; Teillet Des Goths 221.

Gothic support, had lost his imperial power.⁶⁰

This is not to suggest that Hydatius also saw the Goths as the equals of the Romans. One indication of his attitude is the elevation of Avitus to the purple by the Gauls and Goths. Hydatius takes care to add that Avitus then proceeded to Rome to be acknowledged. Hydatius was unwilling to grant this concession to the Goths - the ability to create emperors was a prerogative still reserved to Rome.⁶¹ Although the Goths may have been more romanized than the other barbarians, they did not represent that symbol of civilization embodied by the Empire. What the Goths did represent was a real and tangible political and military force which could and would intervene in Spanish affairs to an extent which the Empire no longer seemed prepared to do. Within the context of political reality in Spain in the second half of the fifth century, the Empire was no longer a viable alternative, while the Gothic option may not only have seemed less objectionable to

⁶⁰Hydatius 183.

⁶¹Hydatius 163. I cannot agree with Suzanne Teillet that Hydatius progressively envisaged the emperor and the Gothic king on an equal footing (*Des Goths* 221-222). I must also differ with Richard Burgess' assertion that Hydatius presents Avitus as "obliged to send reports to the East looking for official recognition from Marcian" and his suggestion that such recognition was not received ("Hydatius" vol. I, 121). After being acknowledged as emperor by the citizens of Rome, Avitus sent legates to Marcian *pro unanimitate* (sic) *imperii* (Hydatius, 166), which could certainly be seen as an exchange between equal emperors, one being simply newer to the position. I should think that the subsequent description that the two *concordes principatu Romani utuntur imperii* (Hydatius, 169), indicates that Avitus obtained the harmony he sought between the eastern and western *Augusti*. Burgess further suggests that Marcian withheld his approval because Avitus had been proclaimed emperor by the Goths as well as the Gauls. However, Hydatius does not mention the Goths in the entry describing Avitus' proclamation as emperor (*ab exercitu Gallicano et ab honoratis*, 163), but only three years into the reign of Avitus does he mention that the latter was a *Gallis et a Gothis factus imperator* (183). Although Hydatius was obviously aware that the Goths were involved in Avitus' elevation to the purple, he did not chose to make it an explicit part of his account of that particular event.

Hydatius than the Suevic, it may have seemed inevitable.

As a high-ranking member of the Gallaecian clergy, Hydatius' historical view cannot be properly understood without a consideration of its religious aspects. Apart from brief notices of the successions of bishops of Rome and the various sees in the East, there is surprisingly little in the *Chronica* of a religious nature when one considers that the author was a bishop. Although Hydatius wrote in the preface that one of the principal focuses of his account would be the deformed state of ecclesiastical order and the downfall of religion based on divine teaching in Gallaecia, he provides very little information about ecclesiastical organization or affairs in that province or in the rest of Spain.

His chief concern seems to be heresies, and in particular, Priscillianism, which continued to be a problem in contemporary Gallaecia. He devotes two relatively long entries to the background of Priscillian as a prelude to the entry of his heresy into Gallaecia. He also makes special mention of the synod held in Toledo in 399 which condemned Priscillianism, the transcript of which he apparently had the opportunity to read.⁶² In one of his rare mentions of ecclesiastical succession in Spain, he reports the ordination of two bishops in *Lucus contra uoluntatem Agresti Lucensis episcopi*.⁶³ It is quite possible that these two were

⁶²Hydatius 13, 16, 31. In his thesis edition Burgess placed the entry regarding I Toledo under the year 400. However in his later (1993) publication of the edition it appears under the year 399. He discusses the difficulties surrounding this section on p. 42f. José Vives (*Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos* 1963) places the council between the years 397 and 400.

⁶³Hydatius 102.

Priscillianists, thus drawing the attention of Hydatius and meriting a mention in the chronicle in keeping with his stated intent in the preface. Hydatius himself was personally involved in the battle to eradicate Priscillianism from his own province at the request of bishop Thoribius, who was apparently responding to a letter written to him by Pope Leo.⁶⁴

Considering the important place held by Goths in the chronicle, Hydatius seems little concerned with their Arianism. Arianism is mentioned only six times in the entire chronicle and, of those instances, two refer to the East and three to the Vandals in Africa and Sicily. The final entry is the only one that is placed in Spain: the Arian Ajax *inter Sueuos regis sui auxilio...emergit*. Although Hydatius remarks that the heresy of Ajax came from the Gallic home of the Goths, he gives no indication of the extent of its spread among the Sueves or even if any of the Sueves were converted.⁶⁵ In fact, Hydatius seems to be very little interested in the religion of the barbarians. One of the most astonishing entries in the chronicle is that regarding the succession of Rechiarus as king of the Sueves. Hydatius dispassionately records that Rechila, a pagan, was succeeded by his

⁶⁴Hydatius 130, 135. Hydatius' activities in this regard were in response to a letter addressed to him and bishop Caepionius (otherwise unknown), requesting their help against the Priscillianists in Gallaecia (*S. Turribii Asturicensis Epistola* PL 54, 693-5). Entry 130 in the *Chronica* refers to Manichees, not Priscillianists, but the charge of Manicheism was frequently levelled against the followers of Priscillian.

⁶⁵Hydatius 37, 40 (the East); 89, 118, 120 (Vandals); 232 (Ajax).

catholicus son Rechiarius.⁶⁶ There is no mention of when or how Rechiarius, who was seemingly already a Catholic when he came to the throne, was converted, or whether other Sueves had followed his lead. What one would expect to have been a momentous matter to an orthodox bishop elicits no reaction from Hydatius. The reasons remain a puzzle.

Although much has been made of the role of divine intervention in the chronicle of Hydatius⁶⁷, there are actually only eight instances in the entire chronicle which can be seen as explicit interventions of the divine hand in human events. Of these, two involve victories over the Huns and two are directed towards individuals for specific offenses.⁶⁸ In the remaining three, the Lord turns the first barbarian invaders of Spain to peace, effects the release of Hydatius from Suevian captivity and assists the citizens of Coviacum in withstanding a Gothic onslaught.⁶⁹ With

⁶⁶Hydatius 137.

⁶⁷Muhlberger Fifth-century Chroniclers 214, 230. Burgess "Hydatius" 187-188. Although Muhlberger is correct in pointing to the large number of prodigies and signs in the chronicle, these are seldom directly connected to the events Hydatius recounts. His belief in Providence may be strong, but there is little evidence of a clear direction for that Providence. I cannot agree with the assertions of either Muhlberger or Burgess that Hydatius unambiguously showed divine favour for the Romans and the Roman Empire. I have rejected two examples of divine intervention from Burgess' list, which are not clear interventions with regard to specific events or in favour of a specific side. These are the reference to Augustine's works against the Donatists which he wrote *dei adiutorio* (Hydatius, 53), a convention often used when referring to the writings of the Apostles or Early Fathers; and the praise of Aegidius as a man pleasing to God (Hydatius, 218), this praise, as discussed earlier, is unspecified as to its cause, and cannot thus be read as a sign of divine intervention in a distinct event.

⁶⁸Hydatius 150, 154 (Huns); 89 (Gunderic is killed by a demon *dei iudicio* for trying to lay his hands on the church of Hispalis), 90 (Heremigarius was cast into the river Ana *diuino brachio* after he had offended the martyr Eulalia).

⁶⁹Hydatius 49, 207, 186.

the exception of the Huns, there is no real sense of divine displeasure with the barbarians. The last example is the only one in which active resistance to the barbarians in Spain is recorded to have received divine assistance, and this is also the only Gothic attack in which Hydatius seems unable to find any mitigating circumstances. Only once is the imperial army *deo ordinante directus*, when it is sent to Italy under Anthemius by the *Augustus* Leo.⁷⁰

The *Chronica* of Hydatius has been described as an exceedingly pessimistic document, full of gloom and destruction and very little hope.⁷¹ One must therefore question how, or whether, the author viewed the events recounted therein within the framework of Christian salvific history. Did Hydatius see the *miserabilia tempora* in which he lived as a prelude to the end of the world or as only one of a number of wretched times which mankind had to endure, and can the evidence of the chronicle give us a clear answer to this question?

For a possible answer to these questions Richard Burgess has suggested the *Revelatio Thomae*, an apocryphal letter surviving in fifth-century fragments, purported to have been sent by Christ to Thomas, in which the signs preceding the *consummatio mundi* are

⁷⁰Hydatius 234.

⁷¹Burgess "Hydatius" 155; Tranoy *Hydace* 58-60; Muhlberger *Fifth-century Chroniclers* 197-214; Torres Rodríguez "Hidacio" 756.

revealed.⁷² Burgess' reason for believing that Hydatius was aware of and acknowledged this text is a marginal note in MS B (Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Phillips 1829; c. 830) of the *Chronica* which he attributes to Hydatius. The *marginalia*, as it appears in the manuscript reads as follows:

In libro quodam apocrifo qui dicitur Thome apostoli scriptum est dominum Iesum ad eum dixisse ab ascensu suo ad celum usque in secundum aduentum eius nouem ioboleos contineri quos ab hoc loco qui legis distinctos per annos inuenies quinquagenos. Quinquaginta enim anni unius summa est iobolei.⁷³

Burgess has modified this passage by deleting the phrase *apocrifo qui dicitur*. He contends that the marginal note originated with Hydatius who could not have known that the letter was apocryphal since it was not deemed as such until 495-6 by Pope Gelasius. The *apocrifo qui dicitur* must therefore have been a later scribal interpolation. Burgess cites the presence of the Jubilee markers in the text and certain Hydatian stylistic characteristics in the note to support his contention. The date of the Parousia would, by these calculations, have been 27 May 482, and Burgess maintains that Hydatius fully expected the *consummatio mundi* to begin at that time.

If indeed Hydatius did accept the *Revelatio Thomae* as

⁷²Burgess more fully discusses the *Revelatio Thomae* and his reasons for accepting the marginal note as Hydatian in "Hydatius" vol. I, 160-167 and provides the full text in Appendix 5.

⁷³Eusebii Pamphili Chronici Canones Latine Vertit, Adauxit, ad sua Tempora Produxit S. Eusebius Hieronymvs, ed. Iohannes Knight Fotheringham. (London: Humpredum Milford, 1923): 256.

authentic and expected the end of the world to arrive about fifteen years after his chronicle ended, it would have a considerable impact on our understanding of the *Chronica*. This interpretation, however, is not without its problems. Certainly it would be germane to point out that Hydatius never explicitly mentions such a momentous event in his text. Burgess accounts for this by maintaining that the chronicle deals with the past and the Parousia is in the future.⁷⁴ This explanation is not entirely satisfactory. One would at least expect some mention of it in the preface, where Hydatius predicted the collapse of the borders of the Empire.

Burgess uses another passage from the preface to support his contention that Hydatius believed that he was living in the Last Days: *sed posteris in temporibus quibus offenderint reliquimus consummanda*. He reads *posteris* as "the next generation" and, combining this with *consummanda*, he takes this to mean that the chronicle, begun by Eusebius and continued by Jerome and Hydatius, and history itself, would be completed within the next generation.⁷⁵ This may be reading too much into the passage. There is no indication that *posteris* was intended to mean anything more than undefined future generations and although Hydatius, like his fellow Christians of the period, certainly expected the *saeculum* to come to an end, this passage gives no real intimation that he

⁷⁴Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 156.

⁷⁵Hydatius Preface, 7; Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 157-8. Burgess translates this passage thus: "but I have left it to my successors <to include an account of> the Last Days, at that time at which they encounter them." (Burgess *The Chronicle* 75). I think that the phrase "Last Days" is an inference which cannot be supported by the text.

anticipated that end in the immediate future.

Burgess cites further proof of Hydatius' apocalyptic view in the entry which records the marriage of Athaulf and Placidia. Here, Burgess maintains that Hydatius identified this union with the marriage of the king of the North and the daughter of the king of the South as prophesied in the Book of Daniel, and that he is "announcing that the sequence of events which are to lead directly to the *consummatio* has been set in motion."⁷⁶ Yet, an examination of the text, *in quo profetia Danihelis putatur inpleta, ut ait, filiam regis austri sociandam regi aquilonis, nullo tamen eius ex ea semine subsistente*, clearly reveals that this is not the case. Hydatius is reporting that it had been believed by some that this was a fulfilment of the prophesy, but he himself rejected it as such because there were no surviving offspring.

In Burgess' view, Hydatius was convinced that the signs and portents which he recorded in the chronicle, and which became far more numerous towards the end, foretold the imminent end of the world. Although he rightly attributes this increase in portents to the better sources available to Hydatius later on and to personal observation, his conclusion that this would not have occurred to the chronicler is perhaps an underestimation of the latter. His division of the signs into those that are *contra consuetudinem* and those that are *contra naturam* also has some problems. He contends that the first sign *contra naturam* does not occur until 462, when

⁷⁶Hydatius 57; Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 157; Daniel 11:2 - 12:3, 2:43.

the moon turned to blood. One fails to see how this portent differs from that of 451 when the northern sky turned red like blood, or how it is more "unnatural" than a second sun appearing in the sky in 453.⁷⁷

The *Chronica* ends with a number of prodigies in Gallaecia ranging from unusual climatic conditions to the appearance of fish inscribed with unusual signs and lentils falling from the sky. Burgess perceives these last signs as "not...identifiable Biblical portents, but...pagan-seeming, almost magical events". He supposes that the lentils may have been seen as "a perverted counterpart of the manna in Exodus", but is unable to find anything "in either orthodox or heretical belief which would give these fish meaning."⁷⁸ In fact, the fish may be one of the few portents in the *Chronica* which could lend credence to the apocalyptic view, the fish having been a popular early Christian symbol for Christ. However, the inscription which appeared on the fish, *Hebraeis et Grecis litteris, Latinis autem aerarum numeris insigniti, ita CCCLXV anni circulum continentes* remains a puzzle.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to interpret this last entry as a pre-apocalyptic grand finale to the chronicle. It seems odd, if this were indeed the case, that Hydatius would not have recorded all the portents in detail rather than ending with what amounts to

⁷⁷Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 178-179; Hydatius 214, 149, 159.

⁷⁸Hydatius 252, 253; Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 181. The equation of the bitter seeds with a version of the manna from Exodus seems to be stretching things a bit. Hydatius records a number of unnatural phenomena which do not have Biblical counterparts, so there is really no reason to suppose here that he is doing any more than recording an observed phenomenon.

a rather anticlimactic *et cetera*.⁷⁹ One is led to wonder if this rather abrupt ending was, in fact, the ending intended by the author. As discussed earlier, it is likely that Hydatius died soon after the completion of the *Chronica* as we have it. It is possible even that the chronicle was cut short by his death.

The *Chronica* as a whole does not seem to give any indication that the author was expecting the Last Judgement within a few years, and it seems odd that, if he were, we are left with the puzzling fact of the reference to the *Revelatio Thomae* in the margin of MS B and the Jubilee markers in the text. If Burgess is correct in suggesting that no scribe would have bothered to add them after they were deemed apocryphal in 495-6, and that Hydatius would not have known that they were apocryphal before that date, making them, therefore, of Hydatian origin,⁸⁰ their relation to the chronicle and the reason for the lack of intrusion of this view into the text remain unresolved.

The vision of history in the *Chronica* of Hydatius springs from two traditions: the culture of the Roman Empire as embodied in the provinces of Roman Spain, and the Christian world chronicle typified by that of Eusebius and Jerome. Within its fifth-century context, these traditions confront the new reality and new challenge of the barbarian *gentes* wielding real political power and disrupting the imperial organization which was the only one the Hispano-Romans had known for centuries. Hydatius, like many of his

⁷⁹...et multa alia ostenta quae memorare prolixum est.

⁸⁰Burgess "Hydatius" vol. I, 161.

contemporaries, was struggling to come to terms with this new reality. His identification with the imperial traditions and culture was the logical consequence of his heritage, and yet he was not blind to the disintegration of Roman effectiveness, both administrative and military, in the provinces and to the seeming lack of will on the part of the Empire to reassert control in the major part of the peninsula. Although he deplored the bloodshed and destruction brought about by the invading tribes, he seems, nonetheless, to have accepted not only the fact of their presence, but the possibility that it would be permanent. Unable to give his explicit approbation to any of the various *gentes*, he nevertheless appears to have made an implicit choice for what he considered the lesser evil. The Goths, albeit capable of committing outrages against the indigenous population, still had the advantage of being the most romanized of the barbarians, affiliated with the Empire as allies, and more often willing to come to the assistance of the Gallaecians against the attacks of the Sueves. No doubt Hydatius attitude towards the Goths was also influenced by the fact that, by the end of the chronicle, it was evident that the Goths were in the ascendancy and that the Hispano-Roman population would have to come to terms with them.

The Christian chronicle tradition, which Hydatius tried to continue, proved to be a difficult one for him, not because of a lack of historiographical skill or sophistication on his part, but because of the difficulty of acquiring sufficient information regarding the outside world. The *Chronica* gives the impression that

he included any and all such information which reached him, particularly with regard to the Eastern Empire, but after the end of his written sources, his knowledge of outside events diminished to such an extent that the chronicle became an almost purely local account. This was compounded by the tumultuous events which were taking place in Spain and especially in Gallaecia which must have occupied most of his thoughts. The *genre* of the Christian world chronicle as written by Eusebius and Jerome was essentially centred on the empire. They lived and wrote within the Empire and to a certain extent identified it with the Christian world. Hydatius' world was in the process of moving outside the Empire. He had to face the possibility and the problems of a part of the Christian Church which was no longer within the imperial political boundaries, but was still within the ecclesiastical structure headed by the bishop of Rome. This problem is not dealt with directly in the chronicle, yet Hydatius' references to the difficulty he had in obtaining information certainly point to a growing sense of isolation on his part.

The question of religion is not dealt with extensively in the *Chronica*. We have already seen that Hydatius did not discuss Spanish ecclesiastical organization or administration in much detail. His chief concern in religious matters, as far as the chronicle reveals, was with heresy, and in particular, Priscillianism, but even this does not constitute a very great part of the chronicle. His interest in the religion of the barbarians seems almost non-existent. He barely speaks about either their

paganism or their Arianism, and the one instance of an orthodox Christian king elicits little comment from him. It is difficult to know what to make of his silence on this matter. Is one to assume that Hydatius considered the barbarians as sub-humans, the saving of whose souls was of no consequence? Although this view was not unknown in late antiquity, there is no real evidence either to support or to refute it in the rest of the chronicle. If one were to accept the view that Hydatius was expecting the end of the world in a few years, such lack of interest in the saving of barbarian souls would argue in favour of a low opinion of them, but, as the author declined to make his thoughts on the imminence of the Last Judgement known in the chronicle, such a conclusion cannot be drawn with confidence.

Chapter III

Exemplum omnibus: The Chronicle of John of Biclar

When John of Biclar wrote his chronicle¹ a century after Hydatius, he confronted a far different set of circumstances from that which the earlier writer had faced. By the end of the sixth century, the Visigoths had established a kingdom of their own in Spain which encompassed almost the entire peninsula and had officially converted from Arianism to Catholicism. For any Spanish chronicler of the period the Visigoths had, of necessity, to take centre stage. In addition to the very different situation which existed during the period covered, two important factors separate

¹The extant manuscripts of the *Chronicle* of John of Biclar are based on two lost manuscripts which also contained the chronicle of Victor of Tunnuna and fragments of the chronicle of Caesaraugusta. One of these, called *Soriense*, written about 743 and mentioned by Juan Bautista Pérez (d. 1597), was lost in a fire at the monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial in 1671. The second, known as *Alcobacense*, dated to about the end of the 8th century, is preserved in only six folios, four in the Biblioteca Nacional of Madrid and two in the British Museum. Codices containing the chronicle, based on these or other unknown sources, include, among others, the 13th century *Matritense* manuscript in the Biblioteca de la Facultad de Derecho de Madrid, no. 116; the manuscript written by Juan Páez for Philip II of Spain and corrected by Ambrosio de Morales and Florián Docampo; the 16th century *Escorialensis* manuscript; the late 16th century *Leidensis Vulcanianus* (or *Velseranus*) no. 2.011; and the *Sylloge de Mariana* of Spanish chronicles, in the British Museum, cod. Egerton, no. 1.873. The first edition was published in Ingolstadt in 1600, edited by Henricus Canisius, based on the *Leidensis Velseranus*. A second edition was published in Leyden in 1606 by Joseph Scaliger based on Canisius, and re-edited by Scaliger in 1658. Andras Schott produced an edition in 1608 also based on Canisius. Two further editions based on Canisius were produced for Cardinal Aguirre in 1694 and by Jacob Basnage in 1725. Enrique Flórez based a new edition on the manuscripts in 1751, and in 1787, Thomas Roncallius and Andrea Galland also published editions, that of Galland based on Scaliger. More recent editions are found in the *Patrologia* of Migne (*PL.*, 72, 859-870, and in Mommsen (*MGH* AA XI 1893, 211-220). The most recent edition was produced by Julio Campos in 1960, based on a direct review of the manuscripts. A fuller discussion of the manuscripts and editions of the chronicle can be found in *Juan de Biclaro, obispo de Gerona: su vida y su obra*, ed. Julio Campos. (Madrid, 1960): 43-52. Citations from the *Chronicle* of John of Biclar, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Campos edition.

the study of the chronicle written by John of Biclar from that of Hydatius. The first of these is that the sixth-century author was himself a Goth. Unlike Hydatius, he could not view the Visigoths with the detachment of an outsider. The second factor is that, again unlike Hydatius, John of Biclar is not our sole authority for many of the events which he describes. An examination of other sources affords us the opportunity to speculate about the opinions which the author may have held with regard to the people and events which he describes.

Whereas Hydatius appeared on several occasions as an active participant in his chronicle, John of Biclar makes only one indirect appearance in his own work, under the year 573 when, describing the plague which broke out in Constantinople in that year, he uses the first person plural, *multa milia hominum vidimus defuisse*, thereby suggesting that the author was among those present in the city at the time.² Everything else we know about John of Biclar is derived from other sources, the most important of these being the brief biographical sketch which Isidore of Seville provides in his *De viris illustribus*.³

According to Isidore, John was born of Gothic parents in Scallabis in the province of Lusitania. As a youth, he travelled to Constantinople where for seventeen years he was *graeca et latina*

²John of Biclar 573,4.

³El "De Viris Illustribus" de Isidoro de Sevilla: estudio y edición crítica, ed. Carmen Codoñer Merino. (Salamanca, 1964) XXXI 151-152.

eruditione nutritus.⁴ Upon his return, again according to Isidore, after he had resisted the Visigothic king Leovigild's attempts to compel him to convert to Arianism, he was exiled to Barcelona for a period of ten years. Unfortunately, Isidore's account is rather short on detail. Although we know that John was both a Goth and a Catholic, it is not known whether he was born into a Catholic family or was himself converted. One might speculate that if John of Biclar had been a convert the bishop of Seville would have made some mention of this in the *De Viris Illustribus* as a triumph of Catholicism over Arianism. However, such a supposition goes beyond the available evidence.

John of Biclar's eminence within Visigothic Spain is suggested by the fact that the king apparently made a special effort to convert him to Arianism and sent him into exile when that attempt was unsuccessful. It is not clear, however, whether John's importance stemmed from his family background or from his position and activities within the Church. If, as has generally been taken to be the case,⁵ he was not released from his exile in Barcelona until after the death of Leovigild and the accession of his son Reccared in 586, his ten years of exile could not have begun earlier than 576. As we may also suppose that an apparently

⁴Codoñer Merino 151.

⁵Campos 21, and E.A. Thompson in *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford, 1969): 81, both place John of Biclar's release from exile in 586. Roger Collins in *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400-1000* (MacMillan Press, 1983): 42, suggests that the exile lasted from 579 to 589. As John founded the monastery at Biclarum before he became bishop, which was not later than 592, the earlier dates for the exile seem more likely.

important cleric of the Catholic Church would not long have remained in exile for refusing to convert to Arianism after the conversion of Reccared to the Catholic faith, or at the very latest, after the third Council of Toledo in 589, we can, therefore, with relative assurance, place the beginning of his exile in the period between 576 and 579, the earlier date being more probable.⁶

Calculating from the earliest year postulated for his death, 621⁷, and the latest probable year of his exile, John of Biclar lived for, at the very least, an additional forty-one years after he was sent into exile. Having, prior to that, spent seventeen years of his youth studying in Constantinople, it is likely that John's confrontation with Leovigild took place when the former was in his late twenties or early thirties, probably soon after his return from the East. This begs the question of why the religious adherence of such a young man was of sufficient importance to attract the notice of the king himself. Three possible answers suggest themselves: that this was part of a much wider persecution carried out by Leovigild against the Catholics; that John of Biclar was a prominent member of the Catholic Church who took an active anti-Arian stance; or, that John himself came from a sufficiently noble Visigothic family that his Catholicism would seem to

⁶This is, of course, assuming that John of Biclar was not released prior to the death of Leovigild. While this possibility cannot be entirely ruled out, neither is there evidence to support it. In his *Chronicle* John makes no reference to his own experiences with the king.

⁷ Campos places John of Biclar's death between 621 and 631. 28-29.

threaten, in the king's view, the unity and hegemony of the Visigothic elite.⁸ We possess insufficient information about the early career of John of Biclar to determine the answer.

Nothing is known of John of Biclar's activities during his years of exile, but, after his release, again according to Isidore, he founded a monastery *quod nunc Biclaro dicitur*⁹ for which he wrote a rule. It was probably about this time that John completed his chronicle which became known under the name of Biclar. Yet Isidore refers to John as the bishop of Gerona, a position which he did not yet hold at the Third Council of Toledo in 589, but to

⁸Each of these suggested answers has its problems. Although Leovigild is accused of carrying out extensive persecutions against the Catholics by both Isidore (*De Viris Illustribus* XXXI; *Historia Gothorum* 50, Rodriguez Alonso, 1975) and the author of the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* (Ed. A. Maya Sánchez, 1992, *Corpus Christianorum* 116, V.iv-vi, 54-71), it has been suggested that these were in reality minimal (Thompson *The Goths* 80-83; Collins "King Leovigild and the Conversion of the Visigoths" *Variorum Reprints* 1992, a translation by the author of his "¿Dónde estaban los arrianos en el año 589?" *El Concilio III de Toledo: XIV Centenario, 589-1989* Toledo: Arzobispado de Toledo, 1991. 1-12). In any event, according to these sources, the persecutions and exiles seem to have been directed for the most part against Catholic bishops, which John of Biclar had not yet become. If John of Biclar had been an outspoken opponent of Arianism in Spain, he must have become so very quickly upon his return from Constantinople to have come to the attention of the king in so short a time. Certainly Leander of Seville, according to Gregory the Great (*Dialogi* III, 31.6. *Grégoire le Grande: Dialogues* ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, *Sources Chrétiennes* no. 251, Paris, 1959, v. II, 388) was exiled, but not only was he a prominent churchman, but the exact circumstances of his exile are unknown to us. The exile of bishop Masona from Mérida appears to have a matter of personal conflict, since Leovigild appointed another Catholic bishop in his place. The importance of John of Biclar's family background is also not without problems. If he was not a convert, but born into a Catholic Gothic family, why would he, and not his family be exiled? On this point, indeed, we do not know the fate of his family. One could speculate that difficulties encountered by his family on account of their religion led to his being sent to Constantinople as a youth. This would also suggest that his family was reasonably well-off. However, all this must remain in the realm of speculation.

⁹The exact location of Biclaram has not been conclusively identified. For a discussion of the location, see Campos 23-24.

which he was appointed no later than 592.¹⁰ The final appearance of his name at a council is at Egara in 614, and his death has been variously placed between 621 and 631.¹¹

In the prologue to his chronicle, John of Biclar claims to be a continuator of the universal chronicle in the tradition of Eusebius, Jerome, Prosper of Aquitaine and, most recently, Victor of Tunnuna.¹² It is probable that the last chronicle, which John would have read while in Constantinople, was the initial inspiration for the undertaking, as he states his intention to begin at the chronological point at which Victor left off, using the same formula as Victor to open his chronicle.¹³ The preponderance of Byzantine material in the first part of the chronicle suggests that John of Biclar began writing it during his sojourn in Constantinople and had indeed intended it to be a universal chronicle in the manner of his predecessors, with notices of other peoples inserted into the central story of the Empire.¹⁴

John of Biclar identifies only two sources for the information

¹⁰At the Third Council of Toledo, Alicius signed as bishop of Gerona. John signed as bishop of Gerona at the Second Council of Zaragoza in 592. Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos, ed. José Vives (Barcelona-Madrid, 1963): 138, 155.

¹¹Vives 162, and n. 7 *supra*.

¹²John of Biclar *Praescriptio*.

¹³John of Biclar *Praescriptio* *Huc usque Victor Tunnennensis ecclesiae episcopus Affricanae provinciae ordinem praecedentium digessit annorum; nos quae consecuta sunt adicere curavimus. Victor of Tunnuna Chronica MGH AA 11:184 Huc usque Prosper vir religiosus ordinem praecedentium digessit annorum: cui et nos ista subiecimus.*

¹⁴Of the 44 entries about the Empire in the chronicle, 28 are dated in the years up to and including 576, while only 14 are in the years 577-588.

he includes in his chronicle. The first was those things which he witnessed himself and which he proposes to report faithfully. His second source was reports he received from others. None of the authors of these reports is identified and John does not tell us how he evaluated the accuracy of the information he received, other than to say that those reports he chose to include were *ex relatu fidelium*, of trustworthy people.¹⁵ At no point beyond the introduction does he refer to his sources and, with the exception of the plague in Constantinople mentioned above, he does not state which events he witnessed personally and which he heard about from others. We can, however, make certain suppositions about some of the material. Events in Spain before his return there, and events in Constantinople after that date must certainly have come to him at second hand. Of the twenty-eight entries about the doings of the Empire up to and including 576, all but nine occur outside of the city, in other parts of the Empire. As a youth studying in Constantinople, it is highly unlikely that John would have witnessed any of these personally. Of the remaining nine entries, five are simply notices of the imperial succession and one concerns Justin II's reconfirmation of Chalcedon.¹⁶ Of the remaining three, two are reports of the plague which struck the city, of which John would certainly have had first-hand knowledge. The last remaining entry pertains to the illness of the emperor Justin II. Although John is unlikely to have had access to the imperial sickroom, he

¹⁵John of Biclar *Introductio*.

¹⁶John of Biclar 567,1; 568,1; 574,3; 576,1&2; Chalcedon: 567;2.

would most probably have heard at first-hand the various rumours which were circulating with regard to the cause and nature of the illness.¹⁷ It would therefore seem that in the years before 577, very little information included in the chronicle would have come from the author's first-hand knowledge.

In the period from approximately 576 to 586, John of Biclar, exiled in Barcelona, would not have been an eyewitness to events in Spain beyond that city, although the sources of his trustworthy reports may very well have not only witnessed but participated in these events. The same may be true for the years 586 to 589 as we do not know for certain whether John was released from his exile before Reccared's conversion was made public, (although see n. 5 *supra*). In the last two years of the chronicle, John may well have been an eyewitness to some of the events he recorded. Although his name does not appear among the signatories of the Third Council of Toledo, it is possible that, as a prominent Catholic cleric and founder of a monastery, he was present. Upon close examination, it appears that, although the chronicle of John of Biclar is confined to events within his own lifetime, he himself was witness to relatively little that he wrote about in his chronicle. It may well be that, if the chronicle was begun some years before the reign of Reccared, entries regarding events about which he had direct knowledge were subsequently deleted as irrelevant to the larger events which came to direct the purpose of the *Chronica*, but this is a supposition which cannot be developed to any degree on the

¹⁷John of Biclar 573,3; 573,4; 574,4.

evidence available.¹⁸

John of Biclar's opinion of the Empire as evidenced in his chronicle is not as transparent as it might at first seem. Although he had lived and was educated for many years in the *urbs regia* where he was exposed to the thought and learning of the Empire, John of Biclar was not, nor did he think of himself, in the sense that Hydatius did, as a Roman.¹⁹ Although the first part of the chronicle is, rightly, seen to concern itself predominantly with imperial affairs, the selection of that material, and the manner of its juxtaposition with non-imperial matters, may shed some light on the author's intent.²⁰

Much like his predecessor Hydatius, John of Biclar is not given to expressing his personal opinions with regard to the personnel of the Empire who appear in the pages of his chronicle. One could certainly read approval of the emperor Justin II in the entry in which the latter reconfirmed Chalcedon, but this is to infer the author's approval of the emperor, based on our knowledge

¹⁸It has already been suggested by J.N. Hillgarth ("Historiography in Visigothic Spain," Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'alto Medioevo XVII: La Storiografia Altomedievale vol I. Spoleto: Presso la sede del centro, 1970: 267 n.17, 268 n.26.) that John of Biclar revised the earlier part of his chronicle after the conversion of Reccared.

¹⁹I cannot agree with Suzanne Teillet (Des Goths à la Nation Gothique: Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident du V^e au VII^e siècle. Paris: Société d'Édition <<Les Belles Lettres>>, 1984. 429) that John of Biclar wrote as a Roman and a Christian. He certainly was writing as a Christian, but I would suggest that his point of view was most definitely influenced by his Gothic birth.

²⁰Discussion of the structure of the Byzantine section of the chronicle must always bear in mind the timing of the authorship of the material. If John had indeed written the earlier imperial entries while he was still in Constantinople, it is probable that their original structure in many ways did not resemble the present text. The present structure was most surely influenced by subsequent events in Spain.

of the former's stand on the issue of the "Three Chapters". The only words of praise he has are in fact for the synod of Chalcedon which received the creed of the 150 fathers *laudabiliter*.²¹ At the same time, neither are the actions of the Roman Emperors and *duces* subject to censure in the chronicle. The only entries in this regard which may sound even faintly critical are those in which the emperor Maurice hired the Franks to attack the Lombards in 584, *quae res utrique genti non parva intulit damna*, and when the Romans *vastant* the Lombards with the help of the Franks in 587.²² If these are meant to be criticisms of the Roman actions, they are relatively gentle. It is perhaps interesting to note that in both cases, the Romans acted in concert with the Franks, between whom and the Visigoths there was little love lost. It is only with regard to Byzantine activity in Spain that the Romans are presented in a negative light in John of Biclar's chronicle. In the Spanish context, they are referred to simply as *milites*.²³ Interestingly enough, they are never specifically named as either Romans, Byzantines or imperial troops.

As noted above, the majority of the Byzantine entries in the chronicle do not deal with strictly internal affairs, but with the dealings, usually military, of the Empire with other peoples. Imperial victories, or victories by others which resulted in

²¹John of Biclar 567,2. Although our inference of John's approval of the action, and by association, of the emperor, is surely correct, the appearance of neutrality is maintained.

²²John of Biclar 584,4; 587,3.

²³John of Biclar 570,2; 571,3.

territory or tribute to the Empire are recorded,²⁴ but so are the imperial defeats.²⁵ With two exceptions, the enemies of the Empire are treated with the same lack of censure in these encounters as are the Romans. One such exception is the Persians, who broke their peace treaties with the Romans in 574 and in 575, and were the aggressors in the territory of the Romans.²⁶ Even here, the author does not specifically state his disapproval, but presents the facts in such a way that such disapproval is implied. At the same time, the Persian ruler, Chosroes, is given the title *imperator*, the only non-imperial leader to be so designated in the chronicle. Elsewhere, when another treaty between the Romans and the Persians is broken, although events suggest that the immediate cause of this was an action by the Romans, it is presented in such a way that the Romans are not specifically blamed.²⁷ The other people who are criticized for their actions by John of Biclar are the Avars, who blockaded the coasts of Thrace *captiose* in 576 and the following year devastated Thrace before besieging the royal city.²⁸ This relative neutrality which John demonstrates in regard to the

²⁴John of Biclar 571,1 *thesauri eius...Iustino imperatori Constantinopolim ad integrum perducti sunt*; 572,1; 573,1; 573,6; 575,1; 575,3; 576,2; 578,1; 580,1; 587,3.

²⁵John of Biclar 569,2; 570,2; 571,2; 576,1; 576,5; 577,1; 581,2; 586,1.

²⁶John of Biclar 574,1; 575,1.

²⁷John of Biclar 567,3. *quae res inter Romanos et Persas pacis foedera rumpit*. John's reluctance to blame the Romans in this case may be due to the nature of the action on their part which gave protection to the Christianized Armenians and Iberians.

²⁸John of Biclar 576,5; 577,1.

fortunes of the Empire outside of Spanish territory, and the negative terminology used with regard to the imperial presence in a part of Spain, lends support to Suzanne Teillet's contention that the Roman Empire had become, for the Visigoths in Spain, a foreign political entity, a Byzantine state separate from the lands under the dominion of the Visigothic rex.²⁹

Rather than the ultimate political authority, the Empire becomes, in the chronicle of John of Biclar, a paradigm for the ordering of an independent Christian polity. The author presents the Visigothic king as the Iberian parallel of the Byzantine emperor, both within his own realm and in his relationship with alien peoples. The most obvious example of this paralleling of the Visigothic king with the emperor is to be found in the method of dating. John follows the traditional form of the universal chronicle found in the works of his predecessors by dating his entries according to the imperial regnal years. However, beginning with the year 570, he departs from this tradition by coupling the regnal year of the Visigothic king with the imperial dating. Although the method of dating by imperial rule is never dropped throughout the remainder of the chronicle, the Visigothic regnal dating is also maintained to the end.

But this is not the only correlation between imperial and Visigothic practice. In 569, Liuva introduced an innovation to Visigothic royal practice by associating his brother, Leovigild, with him on the throne, assigning to him part of his kingdom. This

²⁹Teillet 431.

practice was continued by Leovigild himself, after he became sole ruler, when he made his two sons *consortes regni*.³⁰ The parallel with the imperial practice, duly recorded in the chronicle, of associating a second ruler, as Caesar or Augustus, is apparent.³¹ John of Biclar seems further to emphasize the equality of the Visigothic king in his own realm with the emperor in the repeated phraseology used to record the deaths of the respective rulers: *anno XI regni sui Iustinus diem clausit extremum* and *hoc anno Leovegildus rex diem clausit extremum*.³² Further evidence of the influence of the imperial model of sovereignty in the Visigothic kingdom found in the chronicle is the penchant of Leovigild to found cities, previously not a common interest among the Visigothic *reges*.³³ For some of these similarities, such as the dating and phrasing, the author of the chronicle must take responsibility, but others are surely the conscious choices of Visigothic kings who, aware of the changing nature of the relationship between *regnum* and sovereign, chose to imitate the only model they had outside of their own traditions which embodied the heights of power and civilization.

³⁰John of Biclar 569,4; 573,5. Isidore *Historia Gothorum* 48 *Leovigildum fratrem non solum successorem, sed et participem regni sibi constituit...sicque regnum duos capuit, dum nulla potestas patiens consortis sit.*

³¹John of Biclar 574,3; 587,1; 588,2.

³²John of Biclar 576,7; 586,2.

³³John of Biclar 578,4; 581,3. Further evidence of the adoption of the trappings of the Byzantine emperors is to be found in the coins issued by Hermenegild and Leovigild (J.N. Hillgarth "Coins and Chronicles: Propaganda in Sixth-Century Spain and the Byzantine Background" *Historia* XV Wiesbaden 1966 502-508) and in the archaeological evidence of grave goods (E.A. Thompson *The Goths* 151-2).

In international affairs, John of Biclar presents the Byzantine emperor and the Visigothic king in a series of parallels, beginning in 570, the first year in which the entries are dated by the Visigothic regnal years. In that year Leovigild, having been appointed co-ruler by his brother, invaded the region of Bastetania *et victor solio reddit*. Immediately following this entry is one in which Tiberius, later to be elevated to the imperial dignity, waged war against the Avars in Thrace *et victor...Constantinopolim reddit*.³⁴ The same phrasing is used again in 585 with regard to Reccared who, after doing battle with the Franks in Gallia Narbonensis, *et victor ad patrem patriamque reddit*.³⁵

The practice of bringing not only conquered territory, but also the treasure and frequently the family, of the conquered leader under the control of the Roman Emperor also finds its Visigothic counterpart in the chronicle of John of Biclar. After the Lombards defeated the Gepids in 572 and killed their king, *thesauri eius...Iustino imperatori Constantinopolim ad integrum perducti sunt*; after the death of the Lombard king, Alboin, *thesauri vero eius cum ipsa regina in rei publicae Romanae dicionem obveniunt*; Justinian defeated the Persians in 575 *exuviasque eorum pro triumpho Constantinopolim dirigit*; and in 576 Romanus captured the king of the Suani, *quem cum suo thesauro, uxore et filiis Constantinopolim adducit et provinciam eius in Romanorum dominium*

³⁴John of Biclar 570,2; 570,3.

³⁵John of Biclar 585,4.

redigit.³⁶ The similarities between these entries and the conduct of Leovigild are apparent. Leovigild, in 575, captured Aspidius, the lord of the region of the Aregensian mountains, and *cum uxore et filiis captivos ducit opesque eius et loca in suam redigit potestatem*, and, again, in 585 after he invaded Gallaecia and deprived King Audeca of his kingdom, *Suevorum gentem, thesaurum et patriam in suam redigit potestatem et Gothorum provinciam facit*.³⁷ These passages serve to support the view that it is in the chronicle of John of Biclar, rather than that of Hydatius, that the Visigothic king comes to be seen as the equal of the Byzantine emperor. It is the role of these rulers not only to conquer new territories and receive captives and tribute, but to preserve or restore the territory proper to their kingdoms. Thus, just as Justinian had sought to regain the western half of the Empire in the years before the chronicle opens, and in 587 the Romans brought part of the province of Italy back under their power³⁸, so Leovigild undertook to restore the territory of the Visigothic kingdom in Spain.³⁹

The one area in which John of Biclar had to tread carefully when drawing his comparison between the emperor and the king was in the religious role of the Empire. The emperor not only played a role in the ecclesiastical affairs within the Empire, as did Justin

³⁶John of Biclar 572,1; 573,1; 575,1; 576,2.

³⁷John of Biclar 575,2; 585,2.

³⁸John of Biclar 587,3.

³⁹John of Biclar 572,2; 574,2.

II in the chronicle, but also provided protection for Christians from outside of the Empire who, subject to persecution from others, sought refuge in the Empire.⁴⁰ The Visigothic kings could not be portrayed as defenders of the faith while they remained Arian. It was not until after the conversion of Reccared that John could give full play to this comparison.

The later part of the chronicle is dominated by the actions of two individuals, the Visigothic king Leovigild and his son Reccared. It was no doubt the events of these two reigns, and in particular of the latter, which determined the shape of the chronicle and, in all likelihood, the re-editing of the earlier material. Much ink has been spilt discussing the events which took place during the reign of Leovigild and his two sons Hermenegild and Reccared. The sparseness of the evidence and the disparate accounts of those events which survive make it unlikely that we shall ever know for sure the true nature of the events. Happily, the purpose of the present discussion is not so much to determine what happened as how John of Biclar chose to portray it.

It is John of Biclar's presentation of Leovigild which is perhaps the most intriguing, by virtue of its variance from the way this king was depicted by other authors, both contemporary and later. The two major contemporary sources, apart from John of Biclar, to mention the reign of Leovigild are Pope Gregory I and Gregory of Tours. The main event in the reign of Leovigild which was of interest to Gregory I was the conflict between the king and

⁴⁰John of Biclar 567,3; 569,1.

his son Hermenegild from 579 to 584, and his interest in this was centred on the friction between Arians and Catholics.⁴¹ Gregory attributed the dissention between father and son to the former's fury over the conversion of his son to Catholicism. Unable to change his son's mind, Leovigild deposed Hermenegild and deprived him of his possessions. When his son remained steadfast in his Catholic faith, Leovigild first had him imprisoned and then murdered. This is the account of the Spanish events of those years as they were presented by the pope. Leovigild is portrayed as such an ardent persecutor of Catholics that he preferred to have his own son murdered rather than see him become a Catholic. Hermenegild, on the other hand, is seen as a martyr for the faith.

Gregory I's version offers the most striking contrast to those of the Spanish sources with regard to these events. The accounts diverge in two important aspects. As has been observed,⁴² there is a clear distinction between the Spanish and non-Spanish sources with regard to the conversion of Hermenegild. The Spanish authors simply disregard the conversion, while to both Gregory I and Gregory of Tours, it is of primary significance in the conflict.⁴³ However, Gregory I's rendition differs from both the Spanish

⁴¹ Gregory I *Dialogi* III,31.

⁴²Hillgarth "Historiography" 275-6; Thompson *The Goths* 76-7.

⁴³*Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Historia Francorum* MGH SS. rer. merov. v.1 V,38 244. *coepit Ingundis praedicare viro suo <Hermenegild> , ut relictā heresis fallacia, catholicae legis veritatem agnosceret. Quod ille diu refutans, tandem commotus ad eius praedicationem, conversus est ad legem catholicam.* He goes on: *Quod cum Leuvichildus audisset, coepit causas querere, qualiter eum perderet. Ille vero haec intellegens, ad partem se imperatoris iungit, legans cum praefectum eius amicicas,* information which is not found in the papal account.

authors and from Gregory of Tours in that the pope makes no allusion to the rebellion of Hermenegild against his father. The versions of Gregory I and John of Biclar (and later Isidore of Seville), although diametrically opposed to each other, stem from the same concern. Neither wished to associate conversion to Catholicism with the rebellion of a son against his father or of a subject against the legitimate authority. Gregory, writing his *Dialogues* in Rome for a non-Spanish audience, could ignore the details of the rebellion which would probably not have been widely known beyond Spain and use the example of Hermenegild to illustrate the triumph of Catholic faith faced with Arian persecution.

For John of Biclar the matter was more complex. His chronicle was destined for an audience within the peninsula which consisted of contemporaries of the events he described. The rebellion of Hermenegild would have been more widely known within Spain than would the relatively private conversion of the man himself. Thus, to omit the rebellion completely would be to damage seriously his credibility in the eyes of his readers. For John, the task at hand was to dissociate the act of rebellion from the Catholic cause.⁴⁴

The situation was further complicated by the fact that the present king, Reccared, now a Catholic, had remained loyal to his Arian father throughout the conflict and succeeded to the entire

⁴⁴There has been much written about the timing of Hermenegild's conversion and whether or not it was the motivation for the rebellion. For John of Biclar's purposes, the timing of the conversion and its role in the rebellion are less important than the fact that in the aftermath the two would become associated in people's minds. This was what he was trying to counter.

kingdom after the deaths of his father and brother.⁴⁵ John was faced with the dilemma of how to portray a king who, on the one hand, was an Arian responsible for the exile of a number of Catholic bishops⁴⁶ and for attempts to lure Spanish Catholics to the Arian heresy,⁴⁷ but, on the other hand, was a strong king of John's own race who had expanded and consolidated Visigothic power in the peninsula. Furthermore, he had to do all this without offending or embarrassing the reigning monarch.

John dealt with the problem of Leovigild by emphasizing what he viewed as the positive aspects of the reign and downplaying the negative. Of the twenty-three entries devoted to Leovigild, fourteen relate the king's efforts to restore the former territories of the Goths, or to protect those territories already held.⁴⁸ Only five of the twenty-three entries are used to tell the story of the rebellion of Hermenegild⁴⁹ and the king's

⁴⁵Reccared is never depicted in John of Biclar's chronicle as taking direct action against Hermenegild, cf. Gregory of Tours and Gregory I, see n. 74. I think that J.N. Hillgarth's observation ("Coins and Chronicles" 499) that "Reccared's succession and reign were possible because of Hermenegild's murder the year before Leovigild's death" requires some qualification. Both sons had already been associated with their father on the throne and Reccared would have received part of the kingdom even if his brother had lived. We do not know how the division of territory would have taken place. If Reccared were the eldest son (we do not, in fact, know which brother was older) he might have succeeded to the remainder of the kingdom which had not already been given over to Hermenegild after his marriage.

⁴⁶Isidore *De Viris Illustribus* XXXI; Gregory I *Dialogi* III,31; *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* V, vi, p. 69.

⁴⁷John of Biclar 580,2.

⁴⁸John of Biclar 569,5; 570,2; 571,3; 572,2; 573,2; 573,5; 574,2; 575,2; 576,3; 577,2; 581,3; 585,2; 585,4; 585,6.

⁴⁹John of Biclar 579,3; 582,3; 583,1; 584,1; 584,3.

Arianism is mentioned only once.⁵⁰

We have already seen that John of Biclar viewed Leovigild's expansionist and defensive military actions as the admirable acts of a worthy ruler. It seems plain that when he described these activities he was not only trying to please Reccared, but was expressing his own admiration for a strong and effective Visigothic king. The manner in which the king dealt with the rebellion of Hermenegild is presented in a similar light, as a purely military action devoid of theological implications. By 578, John tells us, Leovigild had destroyed the tyrants and invaders of Spain and *sortitus requiem propriam cum plebe resedit*.⁵¹ It was this *quieta pax* and *adversariorum securitas* which were disturbed by the rebellion, causing greater destruction to the province of Spain than any external attack.⁵² The author offers no explanation as to why Leovigild waited until 582 to raise an army against his son. If, as E.A. Thompson has suggested, the king was too heavily engaged with the Basques to deal with the rebel before that date, the single entry in the chronicle under the year 581 gives no indication that he was still heavily involved in military actions throughout those three years.⁵³ However, John of Biclar was deliberately conveying the impression that Leovigild had created a stability and tranquility within the kingdom which his son's

⁵⁰John of Biclar 580,2.

⁵¹John of Biclar 578,4.

⁵²John of Biclar 579,3.

⁵³Thompson The Goths 69-70; John of Biclar 581,3.

actions threatened to destroy.

This is a recurring theme in the Spanish part of the chronicle: the importance of a strong, stable ruler, the threat to that stability created by rebellious subjects and the punishment by a legitimate authority of such would-be usurpers. Apart from the insurrection of Hermenegild, there are seven other examples in the chronicle of those intent on arrogating legitimate authority being discovered and punished. One of these in the early part of the chronicle takes place in an imperial context, in 568 when two patricians attempt to poison the emperor Justin II and are sentenced to brutal executions.⁵⁴ This motif recurs two more times in the reign of Leovigild, both very close in time to the rebellion of his son. The first, which is in fact interspersed with the account of the king's suppression of that revolt, is the deposition of the Suevic king in Gallaecia by Audeca in 584. This is preceded by two entries in which Leovigild finally moves his army against his rebellious son and followed by the account of Hermenegild's defeat and capture.⁵⁵ In the following year, John records that Leovigild moved into Gallaecia and deprived Audeca of his rule, tonsuring and exiling him. John here places particular stress on the cause of Audeca's suffering: *non dubium quod in Eborico regis filio rege suo fecerat, patitur*.⁵⁶ A second time in the same year

⁵⁴John of Biclar 568,1.

⁵⁵John of Biclar 584,2 (Audeca); 583,1; 584,1; 584,3 (Hermenegild).

⁵⁶John of Biclar 585,2; 585,5. While there are obvious problems with the Latin in the passage quoted, I think that Kenneth Baxter Wolf is correct in translating it thus: "He suffered no doubt because he had made himself king in

a usurper in Gallaecia, Malaric, was defeated on Leovigild's orders and presented to the king in chains.⁵⁷ Three more conspiracies appear during the reign of Reccared: that of the Arians in 588, of Bishop Uldida and Queen Gosuintha in 589, and of the *dux* Argimund in 589 or 590.⁵⁸

In the descriptions by John of Biclar of the seven attempts to seize power, including the rebellion of Hermenegild, which took place in the Spanish peninsula, the terminology employed by the author is, in most of these cases, both similar and unique in the chronicle. It is with regard to these rebels and usurpers that we find the only use of the term *tyrannus* in the chronicle of John of Biclar. The term first appears in the entry of 578 in which it is said that Leovigild had destroyed the tyrants and overcome the invaders of Spain. *Pervasores* no doubt refers to the Byzantine occupation of the southern part of the country, but *tyranni*, in light of the context in which the term is subsequently used, probably refers to the *rebelliones diversorum* referred to in an earlier entry.⁵⁹ This term recurs in the chronicle only six more times. It is used twice to refer to the actions of Hermenegild, once each in reference to Audeca and Malaricus, and in the context of two of the conspiracies in the reign of Reccared, those of the

place of Eboric, son of King Miro." This translation is supported by 584,2, in which John writes *Audeca...regnum cum tyrannide assumit...Eboricum regnum privat et monasterii monachum facit.*

⁵⁷John of Biclar 585,6.

⁵⁸John of Biclar 588,1; 589,1; 590,3.

⁵⁹John of Biclar 578,4; 569,4.

Arian bishops and of Argimundus.⁶⁰ The numerous instances of these rebellions and conspiracies, the language used to describe them, and the seemingly inevitable discovery and punishment of the culprits suggests that this theme played a major part in John of Biclar's conception of his chronicle. This theme will be discussed further when we turn to the part of the chronicle which deals with the reign of Reccared.

Leovigild's Arianism is mentioned in only a single entry in the chronicle, that in which he summoned a synod of Arian bishops in Toledo in 580.⁶¹ In contrast to our other sources for his reign, in which Leovigild is depicted as a persecutor of Catholics,⁶² John of Biclar never makes mention of any such persecution on the part of the king, even though Isidore would later claim that John himself was sent into exile by Leovigild for his refusal to convert to Arianism. The account of the Arian synod is quite mild in comparison, and there is no hint of coercion on the part of the king. The purpose of the amendment to the Arian doctrine, from the point of view of the king, as it is presented by the author, seems to be simply to remove those impediments to conversion to Arianism which may be holding back those Catholics who would otherwise be willing to convert. Although John refers to

⁶⁰John of Biclar 579,3 *tyrannidem assumens*; 582,3 *tyrannum filium*; 584,2 *tyrannide assumit*; 585,6 *tyrannidem assumens*; 588,1 *tyrannidem assumere cupientes*; 590,3 *tyrannidem assumere cupiens*.

⁶¹John of Biclar 580,2.

⁶²Gregory of Tours *Historia* V,38; for Gregory I, Isidore and Vitas *Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*, see n. 46.

this amendment as a *seductio*, he nevertheless blames the resulting conversion of *plurimi* Catholics on their own cupidity. There is no suggestion that those who did not convert would have suffered persecution. There is also no connection drawn between the accommodating nature of the synod and the rebellion of Hermenegild in the previous year. This, of course, would have been counter to John's purpose in removing any link between the rebellion and religious affiliation. In this single mention of his Arianism, Leovigild is portrayed as more misguided in his beliefs than as having deliberate malice against the Catholics.

We have seen that, during the reign of Leovigild, Visigothic monarchy increasingly took on the aspect of imperial rule. It has been suggested that Leovigild wished to imitate the Emperor Justinian,⁶³ and indeed, his efforts to restore the Visigothic kingdom do bear a resemblance to that emperor's campaign of reconquest in the West. Whatever Leovigild's own intentions in this regard, which remain unknown to us, one must wonder whether Justinian, the emperor responsible for the detested Greek military presence in Spain in the sixth century which Leovigild had spent so much time trying to eradicate, would have proved a conscious choice of role model for the Goth.

John of Biclar, also possessing a Gothic perspective, may have found a more suitable model for his portrayal of Leovigild, one which that king would not have considered himself. One cannot help but notice the parallels which exist between John's depiction of

⁶³Teillet Des Goths 441.

Leovigild and that of the Emperor Augustus by Orosius. Although John does not mention Orosius as a source, being a well-educated man he must surely have encountered Orosius' *Adversum paganos*. In it, Augustus, like Leovigild, began his reign by fighting civil wars against conspirators in the Empire, some of whom are also termed *tyranni*.⁶⁴ But more importantly, Augustus established the peace and security of the Roman Empire which was a prerequisite for the coming of Christianity.⁶⁵ It is the establishment of peace and stability which John of Biclar continues to emphasize in the reign of Leovigild. The *extinctis undique tyrannis et pervasoribus Hispaniae superatis sortitus requiem* which John writes of the Visigothic king is reminiscent of Augustus' return to Rome in triumph, *sopitis finitisque omnibus bellis civilibus*.⁶⁶ It was the *quieta pax* established by Leovigild that was disrupted by his son's rebellion and which had to be restored in order for Reccared to take up *cum tranquillitate regni eius ...sceptra*.⁶⁷ This is really the crux of the analogy. Just as Orosius' Augustus had, through military strength, established the *pax Romana* required for the advent of Christ, so Leovigild, by similar means, established what one might term the *pax Hispana*, to prepare for the coming of true

⁶⁴Pauli Orosii *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*, ed. Carolus Zangemeister. (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 1882): VI, 18 (410) *triumviri, ut non dicam tyranni, id est Lepidus Augustus Antoniusque*.

⁶⁵Orosius VI, 17 (407) *itaque opportune conpositis rebus Augusti Caesaris natus est Dominus Christus*; VI, 20 (421) *quam hunc occulto quidem gestorum ordine ad obsequium praeparationis eius praedestinatum fuisse*.

⁶⁶John of Biclar 578, 4; Orosius VI, 20 (418).

⁶⁷John of Biclar 586, 2.

Christianity, that is, the Catholic faith, to the Visigoths of Spain. Of course, the parallel could not be extended beyond the succession of Reccared without entering the dangerous waters of making the new king into a Christ-figure. John of Biclar had to turn to other models for the Catholic king.

The difference between Orosius' portrayal of the relationship of Augustus to the coming of Christ and that of John between Leovigild and the conversion of the Goths to Catholic Christianity is that the latter is not accompanied by miraculous signs and portents. Indeed, such things are noticeably absent from the entire chronicle, as is any mention of divine providence prior to the reign of Reccared. Apart from the Arian synod of 580, religion in Spain is not mentioned at all, with the exception of seven rather dry notices of the existence of eminent Spanish churchmen.⁶⁸ Religious events within the Empire, are also presented in a very matter-of-fact tone, recording the conversions of various peoples or the protection of Christians by the Romans against the Persians without assigning any special divine favour or providential protection to the Empire or its actions.⁶⁹ With the exception of Justin II's reconfirmation of Chalcedon, internal religious affairs in the eastern part of the Empire are disregarded completely. The Roman Church fares little better in the chronicle, with information about it being limited to notices of the ordination of three

⁶⁸John of Biclar 571,4; 572,4; 573,8; 578,5; 579,4; 584,5; 585,7.

⁶⁹John of Biclar 567,3; 569,1; 569,3.

bishops of Rome.⁷⁰

With the succession of Reccared, religious affairs in Spain take centre stage in the chronicle and divine providence is seen to be intervening directly in events there from the time of the king's conversion which *deo iuvante efficitur*.⁷¹ Also for the first time in the chronicle, God is seen to intervene directly in a military action. When Reccared's *dux*, Claudius, conquered the Franks who had invaded Gallia Narbonensis in 589, John claimed that *in hoc ergo certamine gratia divina et fides catholica, quam Reccaredus rex cum Gothis fideliter adeptus est, esse cognoscitur operata*.⁷² Divine assistance, in this case, seems to be given to the Goths as a sort of reward for the Gothic conversion to the Catholic faith, the author having conveniently forgotten that the Franks, too, were Catholic. The inequality of the two sides in the conflict, which John, no doubt with some poetic license, puts at 300 Goths against 60,000 Franks, allows the author to draw a comparason between this battle and that of Gideon against the Midianites *dei populo infestantium*. Thus John is able very neatly to identify the newly-Catholic Goths with the people of God - the chosen people.

Prior to Reccared's accession to the throne, John had been careful to keep him out of the limelight, so to speak. Before 587, he is mentioned directly only three times: upon his and his brother's association with their father on the throne; when his

⁷⁰John of Biclar 573,7; 576,6; 587,2.

⁷¹John of Biclar 587,5.

⁷²John of Biclar 589,2.

father sent him to fight the Franks in 585; and upon his taking up the royal sceptre after Leovigild's death in 586.⁷³ John seems determined not to have Reccared too closely associated with the activities of his father, and in particular, with the suppression of Hermenegild.⁷⁴ After the conversion, Reccared is portrayed as the ideal Christian king, not only one whose conversion was the work of God, but who was responsible for bringing his entire people under divine protection. Having converted the Arian priests to the Catholic faith *ratione potius quam imperio*,⁷⁵ he then summoned a council for the conversion of the whole Gothic people.

The Third Council of Toledo in 589 is, for John of Biclar, the high point of Reccared's reign, and it is here that he fully develops the role he envisages for the Visigothic king.⁷⁶ The king, who *intererat concilio*, is compared with Constantine the Great in Nicaea. John of Biclar uses the term *princeps* in reference to Reccared, the first time he applies this term to a non-imperial ruler, and he also refers to Constantine by this term, drawing a deliberate connection between the two. But the author goes on to demonstrate that Reccared is, in fact, superior to the first

⁷³John of Biclar 573,5; 585,4; 586,2.

⁷⁴*cf.* Gregory of Tours *Historia* V,38 *Leuvichildus, misit ad eum <Hermenegild> fratrem eius <Reccared>; qui, data sacramenta ne humiliaretur, ait: 'Tu accede et prosternere pedibus patris nostri, et omnia indulget tibi'; and Gregory I Dialogi III,31.6, p. 388 Reccharedum regem filium, quem in sua heresi relinquebat.*

⁷⁵John of Biclar 587,5. If Leovigild was, indeed, a persecutor of Catholics, this passage may have been intended as a subtle contrast to the methods of Leovigild which John deemed better left unrecorded, but would have been known to his audience nonetheless.

⁷⁶John of Biclar 590,1. Erroneously dated at 590 by John.

Christian Emperor because he was successful in eradicating the Arian heresy completely whereas Constantine's success had only been temporary. It seems that here, for the first time, the Visigothic monarchy truly becomes the equal of emperors in the eyes of the Catholic Church in Spain, something that it could never be while it remained Arian.

In his account of III Toledo, it was even more important that the author maintain the dissociation of the Catholic king Reccared from his immediate past. His father cannot be spoken of favourably because he died, according to the Spanish sources, an unrepentant Arian,⁷⁷ yet at the same time he cannot be publicly castigated because he was the father of the present king. However much John of Biclar tried to distance Reccared from Leovigild, those present at the council and the readers of the chronicle must have been aware that the two co-operated during the previous reign. Similarly, the king's brother Hermenegild presented the irreconcilable difficulty of having been a rebel son and subject as well as a Catholic convert. The only way to deal with these inconvenient characters was simply to omit all mention of them from the account of the Council. In this, John was following the lead of both Reccared and Leander of Seville, who themselves made no direct reference to

⁷⁷cf. Gregory I *Dialogi* III, 31 *Pater uero perfidus et parracida, commotus paenitentia, hoc fecisse se doluit, nec tamen usque ad obtinendam salutem. Nam quia uera esset catholica fides agnouit, sed gentis suae timore perterritus, ad hanc peruenire non meruit*; and Gregory of Tours *Historia* VIII, 46 *Post haec Leuigildus rex Hispanorum aegrotare coepit, sed, ut quidam adserunt, paenitentiam pro errore heretico agens et obtestans, ne huic heresi quisquam reperiretur consentaneus, in legem catholicam transiit.*

either at the council.⁷⁸

The Third Council of Toledo tends to overshadow other events of the reign of Reccared and it is sometimes viewed as the triumphal ending of the chronicle of John of Biclar.⁷⁹ In fact the chronicle does not end with the Council but with rebellion. The final entry relates the attempt of the provincial *dux*, Argimund, to assume tyrannical power from Reccared.⁸⁰ Once again, as in every other instance of this kind of action in the chronicle, the conspirators are detected and punished. It is interesting to note that in this entry, the crime is not only conspiracy against the king, but an *impia machinatio* against a king of the true faith. This is the only instance in the chronicle in which John describes the act of rebellion as impious.

However, the interesting question is why John of Biclar did not end his chronicle with the triumph of the Third Council, but rather on the comparatively minor note of a seemingly easily quelled rebellion. The answer may lie in the final line of the chronicle proper, in which, as Argimund was paraded sitting on an ass through the city of Toledo, *exemplum omnibus...dedit et docuit famulos dominis non esse superbos*. In view of the numerous examples throughout the chronicle in which servants attempt, unsuccessfully, to overthrow their lords, this last entry may give us an indication

⁷⁸Vives 107-145.

⁷⁹ Teillet (*Des Goths* 449) states that John of Biclar ends his chronicle in exalting the religious work of Reccared.

⁸⁰John of Biclar 590,3.

of John's real intent in writing the chronicle - to warn other of Reccared's subjects against taking similar action. Would he have thought that such a warning was necessary? In 587 John had claimed that by his conversion, Reccared *gentemque omnium Gothorum et Suevorum ad unitatem et pacem revocat Christianae ecclesiae*.⁸¹ However, in the following year he records an uprising of Arians, including a bishop, against the king, and in 589, the conspiracy of Bishop Uldida was uncovered.⁸² It becomes evident that some Arian Goths were not content to acquiesce silently in the conversion, and that resistance to the royal decision remained a problem. Although the rebellion of Argimund is not given any direct link with religious dissension, the fact that he was a Goth, and that the conspiracy was deemed impious by John, suggest that it, too, may have been an act of Arian resistance.

Whatever John of Biclar had intended his chronicle to be when he began writing, after 589 the purpose of the chronicle became directed by the conversion of the Visigothic monarchy to the Catholic faith and by the importance to the Catholic Church in Spain of maintaining the stability of that monarchy and the political and religious unity which it represented. When John finished his chronicle in about the year 590, that stability was not assured. The position of the king was still being challenged, both by those opposed to the abandonment of the Arian faith and, possibly, by members of the Visigothic nobility wishing to increase

⁸¹John of Biclar 587,5.

⁸²John of Biclar 588,1; 589,1.

their own power. The purpose of the chronicle, it would seem, was to reinforce, in the eyes of its readers, the legitimacy of the present monarchy, not only by right of conquest and legitimate succession on the model of the Empire, but by right of divine sanction of a Christian king. As we have seen with the rebellion of Argimund, challenges to that Christian king have become, not only political acts, but acts of impiety, in opposition to the divine will.

It has been suggested earlier that John of Biclar was personally witness to relatively few of the events about which he wrote. Yet, he seems to have had well-informed sources. One might well ask whether the agenda of the chronicle was set by the author or by those sources. Within two years of the completion of the work, John was appointed bishop of the see of Gerona, and one might wonder whether the publication of his chronicle had some influence on his appointment. If so, this would present the possibility that he had the co-operation and approval of people in high positions in its execution. It has been suggested that written history in Visigothic Spain occupied a place in the arsenal of royal propaganda.⁸³ If the incentive for the production of such propaganda came from the royal court, one might speculate that the source of information came from as high as Reccared himself.

On the other hand, although the chronicle was certainly in the best interests of the king, the Spanish Church also had a vested interest in the political stability which the author was trying to

⁸³Hillgarth "Historiography" 273.

promote. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that the impetus for the chronicle, in its final form, came from within the Church. The Catholic churchman who was most involved in the events which took place in Spain in the period covered by the chronicle was Leander of Seville. It has been observed that Isidore of Seville relied largely on the chronicle of John of Biclar for the reigns of Leovigild and Reccared in his own history, even though his brother, Leander, was actively involved in the events of these reigns.⁸⁴ The suggestion may be put forward that Isidore used John's chronicle because written in it was his brother's version of events, in other words, that Leander was John of Biclar's source and may even have been directly responsible for the final form of the chronicle.

The suggestion of Leander's possible involvement with the chronicle begs the question of why this articulate and well-educated churchman did not simply write a chronicle himself. The answer to this may lie in the message embodied in the chronicle and the audience to which that message was directed. As suggested, the work may have been intended as a warning to Reccared's subjects against rebellion for either political or religious motivations. The most obvious audience for this would be the Visigoths, particularly those of the nobility or the previous Arian clergy. Such a warning, delivered by a Hispano-Roman Catholic bishop would not have sat well with either group. Leander certainly was sufficiently intelligent to recognize this. His extant writings,

⁸⁴Hillgarth "Coins and Chronicles" 487.

especially the homily he delivered at III Toledo, are carefully non-political. John of Biclar, a Catholic but also a Goth, who had already begun a chronicle earlier, would have seemed an obvious choice to deliver the message.

Whether or not Leander, or even Reccared, was behind the chronicle is not, of course, a matter which can be determined with certainty at present, but the possibility does throw an interesting light on our consideration of the chronicle.

Chapter IV

Isidore I: Politics, History and Theory

The authors considered in the preceding chapters are known to us on the strength of single historical works from their own pens. Isidore, bishop of Seville, the best known of the historians from Visigothic Spain, although not known best for his historical works, was a prolific writer, not only in several of the historical genres, but also as the author of theological, liturgical, scientific and pastoral treatises. He was best known, both to the later Middle Ages and today as the author of the monumental, although incomplete, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, an encyclopedia or dictionary of predominantly classical learning on practically any topic which might be of interest to seventh-century scholars. His friend, and possibly disciple, bishop Braulio of Saragossa, who had requested the work, described it as a work which *omnimodo philosophiae conveniens quisquis crebra meditatione perlegerit, non ignotus divinarum humanarumque rerum scientia merito erit*.¹ The works of Isidore which most properly fall within the domain of a study of historical writing in Visigothic Spain - the *Chronica*, the *Historia Gothorum Wandalorum Sueborum* and the *De viris illustribus* - will be considered in a subsequent chapter. It would not, however, be prudent to undertake a study of those works

¹*Sancti Braulionis, Caesaraugust. episcopi, Praenotatio librorum D. Isidori PL 82, col. 67.*

without giving due consideration to some of his other writings in which his views on the theory and purpose of historical writing may be examined as the setting for his own experiences as a historian.

The triumphant political and religious reunification of the Spanish peninsula which was the presiding theme of the chronicle of John of Biclar did not ensure the continuing stability of the ruling dynasty or of the Visigothic kingdom which that earlier work seemed to anticipate.² It has already been noted in the previous chapter that opposition to Reccared, whether motivated by political or by religious considerations, existed and may even have been more extensive than contemporary accounts were willing to concede. According to Isidore, Reccared, following his conversion in 589, passed the rest of his reign in peace and tranquillity, administering the kingdom with fairness, generosity and moderation, required only to take military action against external enemies, such as the Franks, the Basques and the Byzantines, not against rebellious subjects.³

Upon his death in 601, Reccared was succeeded by his illegitimate teenage son, Liuva II. This attempt at a peaceful succession of father to son was not to be successful. Within two years the young king would be deposed by Witteric, quite possibly

²Our chief contemporary sources for the history of the period following the conclusion of John of Biclar's chronicle in 590 are the *Chronica* and *Historia Gothorum Wandalorum Sueborum* of Isidore of Seville, some letters written by the comes Bulgar of Septimania [*Epistolae Wisigothicae* MGH *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi* 1] and the minutes of the synods and councils of Spain [*Concilios Visigóticos e Hispano-Romanos*, ed. José Vives. (Madrid, 1963)].

³Isidore of Seville *Historia Gothorum Wandalorum Sueborum*, ed. Cristóbal Rodríguez Alonso. (León: Centro de estudios e investigación "San Isidoro", 1975): 54,55.

the same man who had been involved in the Arian rebellion in Mérida in 588.⁴ Witteric first had Liuva's hand cut off and soon after had him killed. Although Isidore considered Witteric a usurper,⁵ it has been suggested that succession from father to son, rather than by election, did not follow Gothic custom and Liuva himself could have been considered the usurper.⁶

After Reccared, the practice of direct succession from father to son had little success among the Visigothic rulers of Spain. Witteric, who received no flattering portrayal from those who have left any accounts of his reign,⁷ was assassinated by conspirators in 610, a fate which the bishop of Seville considered just in view of the manner in which he had gained the throne.⁸ Witteric's successor was Gundemar, apparently a former governor of the

⁴*Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* V.xi.1.

⁵HG 57 *Witticerus sumpta tyrannide*. Isidore follows John of Biclar in terming usurpers as *tyranni*.

⁶E.A. Thompson *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1969) 157. However, there is no evidence that Liuva had not been elected. The fact that he was Reccared's son would not have excluded him as a candidate for such election, although one must wonder whether, in the interests of political stability, the Gothic nobles would have chosen to elect so young a king. Roger Collins suggests that although Gothic kingship was purely elective in theory, in practice from the time of Alaric I (395-410) onwards, a son who was of age might be expected to succeed his father automatically (*Early Medieval Spain* 113). He questions why even the child heirs who were soon deposed were initially accepted if the elective principal were more than a formality. One must suppose that court factions which existed under the previous king would not only have sought to preserve their positions, but hoped to exercise more extensive influence over a minor, by supporting the underage heir. Unfortunately, we have virtually no information with regard to the role which election played, in practice, in the creation of new kings in this period. Canon seventy-five of IV Toledo, which sought to regularize succession by election, certainly suggests that abuses were wide-spread (See n. 25).

⁷HG 58; *Bulgar Epist. Wisig.* 15 and 16.

⁸HG 58 *in morte autem, quia gladio operatus fuerat, gladio periit, mors quippe innocentis inulta in illo non fuit.*

province of Narbonensis,⁹ regarding whose short reign Isidore's terse account mentions only that the king mounted a successful expedition against the Basques, besieged the Roman army and died a natural death.¹⁰ Count Bulgar also suggests that Gundemar waged wars against the Franks, although no other details of these have survived.¹¹

Gundemar was followed on the throne in 612 by Sisebut, with whom the bishop of Seville seems to have had a closer relationship than with any of the other rulers about whom he writes. In contrast to his account of Witteric, Isidore recounts not only the military victories of Sisebut against the Asturians, the Ruccones and the Byzantines, but also how the king's military might was tempered by mercy, using his own treasure to ransom many from the enemy army who had been captured as booty by the Visigothic army.¹² However, Isidore's approval of Sisebut was not untempered by gentle criticism of the king's policy of forcible conversion of the Jews in Spain: *potestate enim compulit, quos provocare fidei ratione*

⁹Bulgar *Epist. Wisig.* 14.

¹⁰HG 59 *hic Wascones una expeditione uastavit, alia militem Romanum obsedit, morte propria Toletum decessit.*

¹¹Bulgar *Epist. Wisig.* 14.

¹²HG 61. Isidore does not link this ransoming of soldiers with any particular group of enemies, simply mentioning it after the list of Sisebut's military victories. However, when Sisebut's attempts to save enemy soldiers reappears in the chronicle of Fredegar, it is directly linked to a victory over the Byzantines, *Cumque Romani ab exercitu Sisebodi trucidarentur, Sisebotus dicebat pietate plenus: 'Eu me misero, cuius tempore tante sanguis humanae effusio fietur!'* *Cuiuscumque potebat occurrere de morte liberabat.* The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar with its continuations, trans. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, 21-22.

oportuit.¹³

It has been suggested that Sisebut may have been a pupil of Isidore.¹⁴ Whether or not this had been a formal pedagogical relationship in Sisebut's formative years, it seems that the bishop continued to take an active interest in the guidance and education of the king. A letter to Sisebut, purportedly from Isidore, in which the bishop addresses him as his lord and son, accompanying his work *de origine quarundam rerum*, indicates that the work was requested by the king and annotated for him by the bishop.¹⁵ Sisebut himself is unique among the Visigothic kings in having established for himself a literary reputation, being the author of a poem on the eclipses of the moon, which he addressed to Isidore, a *Vita* of St. Desiderius of Vienne, and a number of letters.¹⁶

¹³HG 60.

¹⁴Kenneth Baxter Wolf, Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain (Liverpool University Press, 1990) 14.

¹⁵Isidore *Ep. XIV The Letters of St. Isidore of Seville*, trans. Gordon B. Ford, Jr. (Amsterdam, 1970). Although *filio* may be merely formulaic, the context of the letter suggests a teacher-pupil relationship. From the phrase *sicut pollicitus sum*, it does not necessarily follow that the work was commissioned by the king, but only that a copy was requested. Braulio indicates in his letter to Isidore (*Ep. X*) that the work was undertaken *ex parte* the bishop of Saragossa. However, apart from the letters to Braulio, the authenticity of a number of the letters attributed to Isidore, including this one to Sisebut, has been questioned. See J.N. Hillgarth "The Position of Isidorian Studies: A Critical Review of the Literature 1936-1975" *Studi Medievali*, 3^a Serie, XXIV, II, 1983: 838-39 and n. 33.

¹⁶*De libro rotarum Isidore de Seville: Traité de la nature*, ed. Jacques Fontaine. (Bordeaux, 1960): 329 f.; *Vita Desiderii* MGH *SS rer. Merov iii; Epist. Wisig.* 2,4,7-9. There has been some question regarding Sisebut's authorship of these works. Fontaine ["King Sisebut's *Vita Desiderii* and the Political Function of Visigothic Hagiography" *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980): 94, n.2.], while admitting an "incompatibility between the precious hermetic style of the poem and the laborious nonsensical grandiloquence of both the correspondence and the *Vita*", favours a "*via media*: composition by the king, followed by a prudent and limited rewriting by a chancery clerk." J.N. Hillgarth ["Historiography in Visigothic Spain" *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di studi Sull'alto Medioevo XVII*:

Isidore, on his part, dedicated his *De natura rerum* to Sisebut, and may also have written his *Historia Gothorum* at the king's request.¹⁷

This brief summary of the Visigothic succession takes us to the time when Isidore wrote the first recension of the *Historia Gothorum*, probably between 618 when he completed the *De viris illustribus*, and 621 which marked the end of Sisebut's reign.¹⁸ However, the history as we have it today continues on to the subsequent reign of Suinthila, a general under Sisebut. Once again, the apparent attempt of a Visigothic king to secure the succession for his heirs proved to be unsuccessful. Sisebut's small son, Reccared, according to Isidore, had been considered king for a few days after the death of his father until his own death intervened.¹⁹ The bishop provides no clue as to the circumstances of that death, nor does he suggest that Sisebut, following the example of some of his predecessors, had associated his son on the throne with him during his own lifetime. However, it seems likely, if dynastic succession to the throne from father to son had not yet become standard practice among the Goths, that if, for a brief time, a small boy was considered to be king, Sisebut must have at

La Storiografia Altomedievale Vol I (Spoleto: Presso la sede del centro, 1970) 286] suggests that "one must either conclude that all Sisebut's works were written by Isidore (or some other cleric) or, more probably, that Sisebut...was writing the same language as his friend and correspondent."

¹⁷Fontaine Traité 165,167. Hillgarth "Historiography" 287-88.

¹⁸Hillgarth "Historiography" 287 and n. 101.

¹⁹HG 61.

least indicated to his court circle that his son was his successor of choice. What is unclear, is whether the child was duly chosen king by the Visigothic nobility. Isidore states only that he *princeps habetur*. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Suinthila, or his supporters, had a role in speeding the young Reccared II to his death. For reasons which will be considered in due course, such a thing is not even suggested in the history of Isidore of Seville.

The new king, Suinthila, appears in the final entries before the *Recapitulatio* of the second recension of the *Historia Gothorum*, which ends in 625. Isidore describes him as *gloriosissimus*. In addition to subduing the ever troublesome Basques, Suinthila is credited with finally expelling the last of the Byzantine army from the Spanish peninsula, thereby securing Visigothic rule over the entire kingdom of Spain. The *Historia Gothorum* extols the virtues of this king and ends with a picture of the benevolent and peaceful reign of Suinthila and his son, Riccimir, whom he had made co-ruler.²⁰

This stable and peaceful scenario with which Isidore ended his history was soon to be disrupted by rebellion. Although our limited sources for the period preceding the rebellion give almost no hint of dissatisfaction or division among the Visigoths, E.A. Thompson maintains that, they "evidently conceal deep and disturbing undercurrents in the history of these years."²¹ In 631 Visigothic

²⁰HG 62-65.

²¹Thompson The Goths 157.

nobles, led by Sisenand and assisted by a Frankish army supplied by King Dagobert of Neustria, marched on Spain and forced Suinthila to abdicate, proclaiming Sisenand king in Spain.²² Two years later, in December of 633, the Fourth Council of Toledo recognized Sisenand as king, condemned the *scelera* and *iniquitas* of Suinthila and banished him and his family and confiscated their goods. The first signatory of the minutes of the council was Isidore, metropolitan bishop of Seville. In the same canon, the assembled bishops forcefully condemned usurpation, rebellion and the breaking of the oath of allegiance to the king, in spite of the fact that the new king had acquired the throne by an act of rebellion.²³ Thompson has suggested that the intention of the Council was in fact to condemn a rebellion led by an individual named Iudila against Sisenand after he had taken the throne, and that this rebellion would also account for the postponement of the Council which had initially been slated to take place in 632.²⁴

While Thompson may well be correct in his assessment, it is also possible that canon seventy-five was written in reaction to abuses of succession by previous occupants of the throne. Although Suinthila was condemned for his mistreatment of the poor, his 'crimes' may additionally have included the manner in which he acquired the throne. As noted previously, Suinthila may have had a

²²Fredegar 61-62.

²³IV Toledo canon 75, Vives 217-222.

²⁴Thompson The Goths 174-176. George C. Miles, The Coinage of the Visigoths of Spain: Leovigild to Achila II (New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1952): 321, dates Iudila's coins between 631 and 633.

hand in removing Reccared II from the throne. If the bishops believed this to be true, the perception of Suinthila as a usurper may have reconciled them to proclaiming the legitimacy of Sisenand's rule, the latter having been proclaimed king by at least some of the Visigothic nobility. The Council laid out what those assembled considered the correct procedure for succession, clearly excluding automatic succession from father to son, in favour of election by *primatus totius gentis cum sacerdotibus concilio communi*.²⁵ It would seem that the intent of the Council was to regularize a procedure which had become increasingly irregular since the reign of the first Liuva.

It also indicates the important role which the Catholic Church in Spain saw itself to have come to assume in the governing of the Visigothic kingdom. The election of a king was no longer to be solely a matter for the Gothic people. Its importance to the Church and the right of the bishops in council to take an active role in the selection was to be recognized, presumably without regard to the racial origins of those bishops. Since the reign of Reccared, the Catholic Church had become the sole and national Church of Spain, acting as counsellor to the king, both in council and privately, with varying degrees of influence. The Third Council of Toledo had represented a "constitutional innovation", introduced by the king, in which the bishops were directed to consider legislation on secular matters.²⁶ It was not, however, until IV

²⁵Vives 218.

²⁶Thompson The Goths 98, 278.

Toledo, forty-four years later, that their right to be full and active participants in the election to the highest secular office was enshrined in the conciliar canons.

From our sources it appears that Reccared, after his conversion, took an active interest in church affairs, returning the treasure of the churches which had been appropriated by his father,²⁷ as well as making his own lavish gifts, appointing bishops, dealing with individual cases of ecclesiastical discipline and initiating legislation dealing with relations between Christians and Jews.²⁸ He also had a close relationship with Leander, the bishop of Seville who was responsible for the conversion of the king, directed the proceedings of III Toledo and whom Pope Gregory I hoped would see that the king continued to remain on the right path.²⁹ However, while provincial synods continued to be held during Reccared's reign, no general council of the Spanish Church would again be convened during his reign, nor until 633.

During the seven years in which Witteric reigned, no council or synod was held in Spain. It is not clear whether Witteric was anti-clerical or even anti-Catholic, but he does not appear to have been popular with the clergy, and was certainly disapproved of by

²⁷HG 55.

²⁸Tarra, a monk of the monastery of Cauliana, to Reccared regarding his expulsion from the monastery *Epist. Wisig.* 10; III Toledo, canon 14; *Leges Visigothorum* 2.12 MGH *Legum* i.

²⁹*S. Gregorii Magni Registrum Epistularum* I.41 *Corpus Christianorum* 140: 47-49.

Isidore, although this may well have been for political as much as for religious reasons.³⁰ His successor, Gundemar, appears to have taken more of an interest in ecclesiastical affairs. During his reign a council of Carthaginian bishops met in Toledo in 610 to consider the primacy of Toledo, and the resulting statement was signed by the king. There is, however, no surviving evidence of the kind of close advisory relationship between this king and any of his bishops that had existed between Reccared and Leander and that Isidore was to develop with future rulers.³¹ Although Isidore had been bishop of Seville since the latter part of Reccared's reign, the short entry about Gundemar in the *Historia Gothorum* suggests that he did not know this king well, perhaps due to the brevity of the reign.

It is with Sisebut that the close relationship between a bishop of Seville and a Visigothic king seems to have been revived. Not only had Isidore been mentor to the king, but Sisebut took an active interest in the affairs of the Church and was known for his piety. Between 612 and 621, the king sponsored the building of churches, composed a work of hagiography, and wrote letters both to reprimand his clergy and to urge the conversion of his fellow

³⁰HG 58 *hic in vita plurima inlicita fecit.*

³¹It should not, however, be assumed that Gundemar, or any of the other rulers between Reccared I and Sisebut, did not develop close working relationships with any of their bishops. Roger Collins cautions against assuming that the bishop of Seville "enjoyed a monopoly of influence at court, even just in matters concerning the Church." The bishops of Toledo were, even in this period, prominent figures and, in addition, they had the advantage of being on the spot in the royal city (*Early Medieval Spain* 62). The Toledan bishops were not yet, however, leaving accounts of their relationship with the crown similar to those we have from the bishops of Seville and their friends.

monarchs.³² Although provincial synods were held during his reign, Sisebut called no general council of the Church.

The relationship between Isidore and Sisenand is less clearcut. As metropolitan bishop of Seville, Isidore presided over the Fourth Council of Toledo which legitimized the king's position but, as the bishop's historical works do not continue on into that reign, it is uncertain how close the association between them was. It is apparent, however, from a letter from Isidore to Braulio in 632 that the former did consult with the king on matters of ecclesiastical appointments. Isidore had been on his way to Toledo to attend the council when he received word from Sisenand that the council would not take place and advising him to return home. Apparently not considering himself obliged to follow the king's instructions, Isidore continued on to Toledo where he met with the king. In his letter, he informed his friend that, although the king did not agree with Braulio on an appointment to the vacant see of Tarraconensis, the king had not yet made up his mind.³³ While Isidore's position on the matter is unclear from his letter, it is apparent that the king, although willing to consult with the bishop, reserved to himself the final decision. It also seems apparent that the bishops accepted this state of affairs, whether or not they approved of it.

The lines of division between church and state in Spain were

³²Sisebut to bishop Cecilius *Epist. Wisig.* 2; Sisebut to Aduualdus, king of the Lombards *Epist. Wisig.* 9.

³³Ford Letters *Ep.* XII, XIII.

somewhat blurred, with each taking an active and interested part in the province of the other. The Catholic Visigothic kings, like their Eastern imperial counterparts, viewed their realm and the church within it as inextricably joined, with themselves as head of both, having the authority to appoint bishops and convoke general councils. The Church, on the other hand, having survived the divisions and uncertainties under the Arian kings, and perhaps also influenced by the Byzantine example, appeared to welcome this close connection with the monarchy, both for the protection it afforded and the opportunity it provided the bishops to influence the direction taken by the king and state. A.K. Ziegler compared the Spanish general councils to "national" assemblies, similar to the Witan in England or the Frankish *concilia mixta* under Charlemagne, although the Spanish clergy played a greater role in civil affairs than did their counterparts in other countries.³⁴

This then, was the milieu in which Isidore of Seville lived and worked. Of the life of Isidore, considering the importance he was to achieve in the ensuing centuries, we know relatively little. The chief seventh-century biographical sources include his own correspondence, which reveals few details about his life, the brief life of his brother Leander in his *De viris illustribus*, the *Praenotatio librorum Isidori* written by his friend and fellow-bishop Braulio of Saragossa, a letter written by the clerk Redemptus describing Isidore's death, and a life of Isidore by

³⁴Aloysius K. Ziegler Church and State in Visigothic Spain (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1930) 36-38.

bishop Ildephonsus of Toledo in his continuation of the *De viris illustribus*.³⁵

The family names, including the father Severianus, sister Florentina and another brother Fulgentius, indicate that this was a Hispano-Roman, not a Gothic, family. We know that the family moved to Seville from the province of Cartagena and were expelled from that province, some have claimed as a result of the imperial invasion in the mid-sixth century.³⁶ However, a persuasive argument has been made by Jacques Fontaine that the family had been expelled earlier, during the reign of Agila, by the Arian Goths who nervously anticipated a Byzantine attack in that region.³⁷ Although there is no concrete evidence regarding the social position of the family, Jacques Fontaine has suggested that the obvious quality of the education which Severianus was able to provide for his eldest son, Leander, suggests that the family came from the upper echelons of Hispano-Roman society and may even have

³⁵Letters: see n. 15 *supra*; El De viris illustribus de Isidoro de Sevilla: Estudio y edición crítica, ed. Carmen Codoñer Merino. (Salamanca, 1964): 128; Braulio, see n. 1 *supra*; Obitus beati Isidori a Redempto Clerico recensitus PL 82, col 68-70; El De viris illustribus de Ildefonso de Toledo: Estudio y Edición Crítica, ed. Carmen Codoñer Merino. (Salamanca, 1972): c. viii, p. 128.

³⁶Isidore *De viris illustribus* XXVIII; Leander *Regula* xxxi, San Leandro, San Isidore, San Fructuoso: Reglas monásticas de la España visigoda, Los tres libros de las Sentencias, ed. Julio Campos Ruiz and Ismael Roca Melia. (Santos Padres Españoles 2, Madrid, 1971): 73-76.

³⁷Jacques Fontaine "Qui a chassé de Carthaginoise Severianus et les siens? Observations sur l'histoire familiale d'Isidoro de Seville" Estudios en homenaje a Don Claudio Sanchez Albornoz en sus 90 años I (Instituto de Historia de España, 1983): 349-400.

been of the senatorial class.³⁸ The daughter, Florentina, entered the religious life and the three sons all rose to the position of bishop in the Spanish Church.³⁹ Isidore, the youngest of the family, was probably born c. 559 or 560.⁴⁰ It would appear that his parents died when he was still a child and the education of the younger children was probably entrusted to the elder brother, Leander. Practically nothing more is known of Isidore's life until he succeeded his brother as bishop of Seville c. 600. Little is known of his personal life beyond the friendship with his fellow-bishop Braulio to which their correspondence attests. Unfortunately, little of Isidore's personality is revealed in those letters. In his public life, as discussed above, he became a powerful figure in Spain, advising, and possibly even tutoring, kings, presiding over councils, including IV Toledo, and writing letters of advice to bishops and generals, in addition to being responsible for a considerable *corpus* of work. According to the

³⁸Jacques Fontaine Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1959 v.1) 6; "Qui a chassé" 369 f.

³⁹Braulio, *Praenotatio* PL 82, col. 67 *postulante Florentina germana sua proposito virgine; Fulgentium, episcopum Astigitanum.*

⁴⁰On Isidore's date of birth, Fontaine (Isidore de Séville 6, n.1) cites a contemporary canon which provides that clerics may not become bishops before they reach forty years of age. He therefore suggests, since Isidore succeeded his brother as bishop of Seville, and he places the death of Leander in c. 599, that Isidore must have been born before 559. We know from Isidore's *De viris illustribus* that Leander predeceased Reccared (d. 601), and from a letter to Leander from Gregory the Great, written in 598/99 (PL 77, col 1050-56), that Leander was still alive at that time. Given that Isidore lived until 636, it is unlikely that he would have surpassed the required age of forty years by very much when he succeeded his brother as bishop.

letter of Redemptus, he died in April of 636.⁴¹

The two chief sources, apart from his historical works, for an understanding of Isidore's political philosophy are the *Sententiae* and the *Etymologiae* or *Origines*. In the *Sententiae*, he outlined his particular conception of the role and responsibilities of Christian kingship, while in the *Origines*, in part derived from the *Sententiae*, he attempted to illustrate the relative meaning of various terms applied to rulers through an examination of their relative etymologies.

There are four principal chapters on rulers or *principes* in the *Sententiae*, those concerning justice, patience, the relation of the king to the law and prelates.⁴² Perhaps the most important point which Isidore makes, and he emphasises it over and over, is that, whatever the temporal means of gaining power, the king is in fact elected by God, all royal power is given by God, and the king is ultimately answerable to God for the manner in which he uses that power. The king is given his position by God for the purpose of regulating the people,⁴³ and the sins of the king may also lead the people into sin. The model Isidore uses for his kings is not that of the Roman emperors nor of the Gothic kings, but that of the

⁴¹Redemptus; Ildephonsus *annis fere quadraginta tenens pontificatus honorem.*

⁴²*Sententiae* San Leandro, San Isidoro, San Fructuoso: Reglas monásticas de la España visigoda, Los tres libros de las Sentencias, ed. Julio Campos Ruiz and Ismael Roca Melia. (Santos Padres Españoles Madrid, 1971) III.xlix *De iustitia principum*, III.l *De patientia principum*, III.li *Quod principes legibus teneanter*, III.xlviii *De praelatis*.

⁴³*Sententiae* III.xlix.3 *Dedit Deus principibus praesulatum pro regimine populorum.*

Old Testament kings. The divine election of kings is supported by the words of King David: *vilior apparebo ante Deum, qui elegit me*.⁴⁴ The higher the position the individual holds, the greater his responsibility and the greater the sin should he err. The king builds or destroys by his example, *sicut legitur de Ieroboam, qui peccavit et peccare fecit Israel*.⁴⁵ It is for this reason that the king may not consider himself to be above the law, but subject to the same laws as his people.⁴⁶ Rulers are not only subject to the law of the land, but also to the laws of God, so that Christian faith should direct their legislation and preserve their good character.⁴⁷ However, although princes are subject to religious law, Isidore also accords them a position of power within the Church, so that they may use their power to defend and enforce ecclesiastical discipline to the profit of the heavenly kingdom.⁴⁸

Isidore identifies two principal virtues of a good ruler: justice and piety. However, he considers piety the more praiseworthy of the two since justice in itself is severe and must

⁴⁴*Sententiae* III.xlix.1.

⁴⁵*Sententiae* III.1.5 *quanto splendoris honore excelsior quisque est, tanto, si delinquant, peccator maior est; L.6 Reges vitam subditorum facile exemplis suis vel aedificant, vel subvertunt.*

⁴⁶*Sententiae* III.li.2 *Iusta est enim vocis eorum auctoritas, si, quod populis prohibent, sibi licere non patiantur.*

⁴⁷*Sententiae* III.li.3 *sub religionis disciplina saeculi potestates subiectae sunt...ut et fidem Christi suis legibus praedicent, et ipsam fidei praedicationem moribus bonis conservent.*

⁴⁸*Sententiae* III.li.4 *Principes saeculi nonnunquam intra Ecclesiam potestatis adeptae culmina tenent, ut per eandem potestatem disciplinam ecclesiasticam muniant LI.5 Saepe per regnum terrenum caeleste regnum proficit.*

be tempered with mercy.⁴⁹ The man who acts rightly may be called king, but he who does not act rightly will not be a king.⁵⁰ This statement, contrary to appearances, does not seem to advocate rebellion against a bad king, but only to assert that such a man is not worthy of the title of king in its true, or ideal, sense. For, as Isidore points out, a good king is a gift from God, but a bad king is a divine punishment for the sins of the people.⁵¹ Thus, even the bad ruler has a role in providential history.

In the *Etymologiae*, Isidore contends that in Latin the term *rex* comes from *regendo*, that is, the act of ruling, but in Greek kings are called *basilei* because, like bases, they sustain the people. The Greeks also use the term *tiranni* in the same manner that Latins use the term *reges* and that among the ancients there was no difference between the two. However, contemporary usage applies the term *tiranni* to wicked kings who subject their people to cruel domination.⁵² As noted in previous chapters, the term had already come to be used in this sense by Isidore's literary

⁴⁹Isidore of Seville *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX* (Paris: Société d'édition <<Les Belles Lettres>>) IX.3.5 *Regiae uirtutes praecipue duae: iustitia et pietas. Plus autem in regibus laudatur pietas. Nam iustitia per se seuera est. Sententiae III.xlix.2 et quod iusta potestate a populis extorquere poterat, saepe misericordiae clementia donat.*

⁵⁰*Etym.* IX.3.4 *rex eris si recte facias, si non facias non eris; Sententiae III.xlviii.7 recte faciendo regis nomen tenetur, peccando ammittitur.* This is also repeated in *Etym.* IX.3.4.

⁵¹*Sententiae III.xlviii.11 Reges quando boni sunt, muneris est Dei, quando vero mali, sceleris est populi.* Isidore did not seem to follow this line of thinking at IV Toledo *vis á vis* Suinthila.

⁵²*Etym.* IX.3.6; IX.3.18-20 *Iam postea in usum accidit tyrannos uocari pessimos atque improbos reges luxuriosae dominationis cupiditatem et crudelissimam dominationem in populis exercentes.*

predecessors, Hydatius and John of Biclar, and it was perhaps these works which Isidore had in mind.

Perhaps the most comprehensive synopsis by Isidore of his theory of the discipline of history is to be found at the end of the first book of the *Etymologiae*, on grammar. History is defined here as the narrative of things done and the etymological origin of the term *historia* is identified in the Greek ἀπὸ τοῦ ιστορεῖν, which Isidore states is derived a *videre vel cognoscere*. Isidore expands on this with the statement that, among the ancients, no one wrote history unless he had been present and had seen the things about which he was writing, for then he could offer them *sine mendacio*.⁵³ According to Fontaine, Isidore's interpretation of history as eyewitness accounts conforms to the pagan grammatical tradition, particularly when he gives to the Greek term the meaning *videre*.⁵⁴

Isidore includes the writing of history under grammar because *quidquid dignum memoria est litteris mandatur*.⁵⁵ This statement also places Isidore within both the classical and the ecclesiastical traditions, that is, the culture and the religion of the book, in which the written word is considered to be of utmost importance and authority. This perhaps explains why Isidore felt it necessary to transpose Gothic history from its traditional oral

⁵³*Etym.* I.xli.

⁵⁴Fontaine *Isidore de Séville* 181, and n. 1.

⁵⁵*Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarvm sive originvm libri xx.* Ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911) I.xli.

nature to written culture.⁵⁶

The importance, in Isidore's view, of the tradition of historical writing to Judeo-Christian culture is apparent in his inclusion of Moses as the first universal historian in his list of the first authors of history.⁵⁷ The importance to Christians of keeping chronological records of the ages of the world is further acknowledged in Book V of the *Etymologiae*, on times, in which Isidore outlined the tradition of recording the passing of ages by generations and reigns from Julius Africanus through Eusebius and Jerome to Victor of Tunnuna.⁵⁸ For Isidore, the primary use of history was educative, not only in the use of past examples *ad institutionem praesentium*, but also so that the reckoning of past years and ages may be understood.⁵⁹

Isidore divides history into three types: the *ephemeris* or *diarium* for recording day-to-day activities, the *kalendaria*, which record events by month, and the *annales* in which entries are divided by year. The distinction which he makes between annals and history was that *historia est eorum temporum quae vidimus, annales vero sunt eorum annorum quos aetas nostra non novit*. He thus

⁵⁶The superiority, in Isidore's view, of the written word over oral traditions appears again in HG 35 in which the transition of customary Visigothic law to written statute under Euric is considered worthy of note: *sub hoc rege Gothi legum instituta scriptis habere coeperunt. nam antea tantum moribus et consuetudine tenebantur*.

⁵⁷*Etym.* I. xlii Moses was considered to be the author of the Pentateuch (Fontaine *Isidore de Séville* 183).

⁵⁸*Etym.* V.38.vi.

⁵⁹*Etym.* I.xliii.

identifies Sallust as a historian, while Livy, Eusebius and Jerome are among the ranks of annalists.⁶⁰ By this definition, the distinction which we tend to make between the *Chronica* and the *Historia* written by Isidore would not be shared by the author, but both would rather belong to the category of annals despite the very different nature of the two works.

Isidore's last comment on the nature of historical writing is meant to distinguish it from two other forms, the *argumentum* and the *fabula*. The chief difference between them is that histories are made of real deeds, arguments of things which are not real but are possible, and fables concern those things which are neither real nor possible because they are *contra naturam*. As Jacques Fontaine has pointed out, it is this "difference" in content rather than literary style which is, for Isidore, the real definition of the genre of history: the antithesis which he establishes between fable and history, between what is true and what is fictional. The middle ground of *argumentum* leads neatly into his next book, on rhetoric - the interpretation of the probable.⁶¹

This then is the theoretical, classically-based background within which Isidore understood the discipline of history. It would, however, be unwise to expect his own historical works to fall neatly within this theoretical mould without taking into account his involvement in the political situation of his times, his interest in creating or preserving political stability, and his

⁶⁰*Etym.* I.xliv.

⁶¹Fontaine Isidore de Séville 174-76.

deep commitment to the Catholic Church and particularly to that branch of it which existed in Spain, in other words, to separate the pure scholar from the pragmatist.

Chapter V

Isidore II: From Theory to Practice

The historical works of Isidore of Seville embrace three separate genres, a universal chronicle covering the history of the world from the Creation to the reign of king Suinthila in Spain, a collection of brief biographies of well-known or, in Isidore's view, important people, titled the *De viris illustribus*, and a history of the Goths with appended brief histories of the Vandals and Sueves. For the first two genres, there were models available to Isidore. In the prologue of his *Chronica* he acknowledged that he was continuing in a tradition begun in a simple style by Julius Africanus, used first by Eusebius and Jerome and later by, among others, Victor of Tunnuna.¹ Isidore placed his own chronicle firmly within this tradition, although, as will become apparent, he was to put his own stamp on the genre. The form of the *De viris illustribus* also had an illustrious predecessor in the *De viris* written by Jerome and continued by Gennadius, just as Isidore was to have his own continuator in Ildefonsus. It is for the *Historia Gothorum* that no clear model which would have been familiar to the author suggests itself. Although Isidore culled his material from previous histories, the resultant form was very much his own.²

¹Isidore *Chronica* 1.

²There is no evidence that Isidore was familiar with the previous Gothic history centred on the Amal kingdom written by Jordanes.

Each of these historical works of Isidore would appear to represent different areas of concern on the part of the author and to have been written with very different ends in view. It remains to be seen whether they also formed part of some coherent and transcending historical plan which Isidore had in mind.

Hydatius and John of Biclar had both claimed their positions as continuators of the chronicle of Eusebius-Jerome. Whatever the direction in which they chose to take their chronicles, they were, indeed, continuators, Hydatius picking up where Jerome had left off and John of Biclar following on from Victor of Tunnuna. Isidore, while acknowledging the tradition which preceded him in his *Chronica*,³ did not follow in the tradition of the continuators, nor did he claim to be doing so. Making free use of the material available in those chronicles, Isidore returned to the beginning and recast the world chronicle of his predecessors into a mould of his own choosing, adding material from other sources and introducing stylistic innovations into the *genre* where he saw fit.

Isidore was not the first to take his chronicle back to the beginning of the world. Prosper of Aquitaine, from whom Isidore borrowed, but whom he did not mention in his prologue, began his chronicle with the generations from Adam to Abraham, which had not

³The *Chronica* of Isidore has survived in numerous manuscripts, of which Mommsen has provided a detailed catalogue in the preface to his edition in the MGH AA 11, 396-419. For the *Chronica maiora* he has listed 64 *ordo prior* mss. and 15 *ordo posterior* mss. For the *Chronica minora* he lists 240 mss., spread throughout the libraries of Europe, an indication of the popularity of Isidore's work in the medieval period. Citations from the *Chronica* in the present work are taken from Mommsen's edition.

been included in the Eusebius-Jerome chronicle.⁴ Isidore went back one further step, beginning his chronicle with the six days of Creation, on the last of which Adam was created.⁵

Isidore's first major innovation in the genre of the Christian chronicle was the division of history into six ages, based on the formula of Augustine.⁶ The chronological divisions of the chronicles of Isidore's predecessors, from Eusebius to John of Biclar, were based on the scheme of imperial or regnal years devised by Julius Africanus, with the additional notation, by some Spanish authors, of the Spanish aeras.⁷ Although Isidore would return to the more conventional chronological divisions in his *Historia Gothorum*, these were generally ignored in the chronicle. While the reigns of emperors and kings were noted in the chronicle, they took the form of entries of historical facts rather than of chronological markers. Although the *Chronica* of Isidore began with the creation of the world, or rather the creation of light on the first day, the chronological framework of the work was based on the years calculated from the creation of Adam, the first such marker appearing in Adam's 230th year.⁸ Following Augustine, Isidore divided the ages by Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, the Babylonian

⁴A more extensive discussion of Prosper's additions to Eusebius-Jerome can be found in Muhlberger 61-63.

⁵Isidore *Chronica* 3.

⁶Isidore *Chronica minora* 3; Augustine *De civitate dei* XXII, 30.

⁷*cf.* the chronicle of Hydatius.

⁸Isidore *Chronica* 4.

captivity and the birth of Christ.⁹

Another modification introduced by Isidore into the Christian world chronicle was the integration of the histories of various peoples into a single narrative. This is in contrast to the organizing principle governing the *Chronici canones* of Eusebius and Jerome, which listed the chronologies of different peoples under a series of parallel columns entitled *Assyriorum*, *Hebraeorum*, *Aegyptiorum*, *Romanorum*, and so on. Although Hydatius and John of Biclar had also employed the single narrative form, theirs had been continuations which took up the narrative at a point where the parallel columns of peoples was no longer relevant. Further, their histories, while purporting to be continuations of the universal chronical, were essentially centred on the Iberian peninsula. Prosper of Aquitaine, who had also taken the chronicle back to the beginning in his version, loosely followed the *Chronici canones* by placing biblical history, for the most part, in his main text and relegating pagan notices to the margins.¹⁰

These innovations introduced by Isidore, as well as the content and purpose of the chronicle will be examined in more detail in due course. However, it may be of use first to consider the sources which Isidore used for his chronicle. Isidore did not

⁹Although Ernest Brehaut noted that Isidore began his sixth age with the death of Julius Caesar rather than the birth of Christ (*An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages: Isidore of Seville* New York: Columbia University, 1912, 175), this is true only for the *Chronica minora* (157) which was included in the *Etym*. In the *Chronica maiora* the sixth age begins after the birth of Christ (237a).

¹⁰Muhlberger 63.

identify his sources within the body of the chronicle.¹¹ However, many of the sources he used have been identified by subsequent scholars.¹² Although Prosper had rewritten the Christian world chronicle from Adam, for the period from Abraham to the birth of Christ the chronicle of Prosper is no more than an epitome of Jerome, and little more than that for the period from the Incarnation to the end of Jerome's continuation.

For the first period of his own chronicle, Isidore relied on the more detailed version of Jerome. While Jerome was the principal source for the first five ages, Isidore also drew considerably on the Book of Genesis and on Augustine, with occasional use of Josephus, Justin, Pliny and Eutropius. After the beginning of the sixth age, to which almost half of the chronicle is devoted, Jerome is increasingly supplemented by Eutropius and Rufinus and occasionally Festus and the *Historia Tripartita*, until the chronicle of Jerome runs out. The subsequent material is dominated by Prosper's continuation of Jerome. For the period after the end of Prosper's chronicle, Isidore relies heavily on the chronicle of Victor of Tunnuna followed by John of Biclar. For the *Chronica*, Isidore made little use of the chronicle of Hydatius, although he would use Hydatius extensively in his histories of the Goths and

¹¹Although Isidore discusses the chronicles of Julius Africanus, Eusebius-Jerome and Victor of Tunnuna in his preface, he does not precisely identify them as sources for his own work. The impression given is rather that they were predecessors or forerunners of his chronicle.

¹²I have largely relied upon the identification of Isidore's sources by Mommsen in his edition of the *Chronica*.

Vandals and use him almost exclusively for the Suevic history.¹³

One source of information regarding which Isidore makes no mention in the chronicle is that of oral or eyewitness accounts. This is not entirely surprising given that, unlike Hydatius and even, to a certain extent John of Biclar, Isidore does not discuss his historiographical methods within the works themselves. No doubt, he considered his general thoughts on the writing of history to have been dealt with sufficiently elsewhere, although the practical specifics of his own technique would be welcome to the modern student of his work. Nor does Isidore ever intrude himself into the chronicle, although he would certainly have been a participant in some of the events of the concluding section. While this may not seem very surprising in the sparse form of the chronicle, it should be noted that these elements are also absent in the *Historia* and would appear to be a deliberate stylistic choice on the part of the author in both genres.

The *Chronica* of Isidore survive in two forms, the longer version which stands on its own, and an abbreviated version which Isidore included in the second part of Book V of the *Etymologiarum*, concerning time. It is from this inclusion of the epitome that we may deduce that one purpose Isidore had in composing the chronicle was a scientific inquiry into chronology and the calculation of years from the beginning of the world. This was, to him, the meaning of the *series temporum* which formed and defined the genre

¹³Mommsen identifies Hydatius as the source of only two entries in the *Chronica* of Isidore: 373 and 382.

of the chronicle. To the more precisely measurable divisions of the series of times, from moments to years, Isidore also added the larger divisions of *saeculi* and *aetates*, and it is these that are the subject matter of the chronicle form.¹⁴

The course of the division termed *aetas*, when applied to the history of the world is properly traced by generations and reigns, as was done by Julius Africanus in his summary of times,¹⁵ but it should be noted that the chronicler uses generations and reigns as tools to calculate these ages, not to define them or set their parameters. It is this basic interpretation of the chronicle form and its purpose which dictated the placing of the discussion of the genre in Book V of the *Etymologiae* within the discussion of times, and not, as one might expect, in that section of the first book which considered historical writing.¹⁶ Slightly more than half of the 265 entries in the shorter chronicle deal with the listing of specific numbers of years, from the generations of the Old Testament to the length of the reigns of emperors and kings, by which the *aetates* are marked off. In his discussion of the chronicle of Bede, Charles Jones has suggested that, in the Middle Ages, the genre traditionally formed part of a textbook on chronology or *computus*, in which the chronicle provided the

¹⁴*Etym.* V, 28 *Chronica Graece dicitur quae Latine temporum series appellatur*; V, 29.

¹⁵*Etym.* V, 38, 6; *Chronica* 1.

¹⁶On this see Marc Reydellet, "Les intentions idéologiques et politiques dans la *Chronique* d'Isidore de Séville" Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'Ecole Française de Rome 82 (1970): 376-377.

practical application of the theoretical component.¹⁷ Just as Bede would later append his chronicles to his two works, *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*, so Isidore placed the shorter version of his chronicle where it would serve as an illustration of his own much briefer discourse on time. It is not clear whether Isidore intended the longer version of the *Chronica* to accompany a more detailed work of chronography, but one might argue that it, too, had an educational purpose.

The pedagogical aspect of the chronicles with regard to *computus* was not purely an abstract scientific inquiry. According to Isidore, the *disciplina numerorum* had three levels of importance. On a practical level, the ability to use numbers effectively was of use to reckon the hours, the course of the months and the returning of the year.¹⁸ Further, numbers were the basis of human understanding of the world and protection from ignorance, they were what differentiated humans from the other animals.¹⁹ On its highest level, the study of numbers was an

¹⁷Charles W. Jones "Bede as Early Medieval Historian" *Medievalia et humanistica* 4 (1946): 31-32. Jones traces this practice back to Hippolytus and Julius Africanus and suggests that it was carried on by Eusebius, Jerome and Prosper, although he notes that the theoretical texts which he supposes to have accompanied the chronicles of Africanus, Eusebius, Jerome and Prosper are no longer extant. He attributes this loss to the copyists of later ages for whom the theoretical texts were no longer of much interest. However, Jones' suggestion that theoretical texts often accompanied the chronicles is supported by the survival of such paired texts as that of pseudo-Cyprian, the Cologne Prologue, and the Carthaginian and Irish *computi*, in addition to the work of Bede.

¹⁸*Etym.* III, 4, 3 *Datum est etiam nobis ex aliqua parte sub numerorum consistere disciplina, quando horas per eam dicimus, quando de mensuum curriculo disputamus, quando spatium anni redeuntis agnoscimus.*

¹⁹*Etym.* III, 4, 4 *Toile numerum in rebus omnibus, et omnia pereunt. Adime saeculo computum, et cuncta ignorantia caeca complectitur, nec differri potest a ceteris animalibus, qui calculi nesciunt rationem.*

important part of scriptural exegesis, for the numbers which appear in the Scriptures had a mysterious meaning which could only be understood by those who were learned in the art.²⁰ While it is not our purpose here to undertake a detailed examination of Isidore's theory of numbers or how it is reflected in the *Chronica*, it is useful to bear in mind this aspect of the medieval view of the purpose of chronicles.

The longer version of the chronicle, or *Chronica maiora*, is rather more complex and contributes more to our understanding of Isidore as a historian than does the epitome. The scientific aspect of the chronicle has been discussed briefly above and we shall now consider other facets of the work from the theological and political points of view. However, before moving to the content of the chronicle, it may be useful to consider the innovations of form introduced by Isidore.

For the first of these, the return to the beginning rather than merely continuing the chronicles of his predecessors, two perhaps rather obvious explanations spring to mind. As the *Etymologiae* have made us well aware, Isidore held that an understanding of the origins of words led to a better, or truer, understanding of those things which they signified. Jacques Fontaine suggested that the character of Isidorian culture is manifested in his faith in etymological revelation, that is, in

²⁰*Etym.* III, iv, 1 *In multis enim sanctarum scripturarum locis quantum mysterium elucet; III, iv, 3 in scripturis sacris numeri existunt, quorum figuras nonnisi noti huius artis scientiae solvere possunt.* A further discussion of Isidore's interest in the meaning of numbers can be found in Fontaine *Isidore* I, chapter 3.

Isidore's view, one could find in *origine veritas*.²¹ One might conjecture that Isidore extended this belief that understanding could be enhanced by a study of origins beyond the study of words to the understanding of human history, and that it therefore seemed, not only natural, but necessary, to him to write his chronicle from the beginning of the world. Furthermore, as has already been remarked, Isidore's predecessors in the genre had not taken their chronicles back to the very beginning, but only to Abraham, in the case of Eusebius, and to Adam by Prosper, whereas Isidore began with the Creation itself.

The second explanation for Isidore's having rewritten the early part of the chronicle has to do with his second innovation, the introduction of the six ages scheme of division into the chronicle literature. The introduction of a new method of dividing and defining historical periods called for a recasting of the material. It also gave Isidore a further reason for including the Creation in his chronicle, for the six days of Creation are reflected in the six ages of the world into which Isidore divided the *Chronica*. It is no doubt due to the association with the six days of Creation, as well as from mathematical considerations, that the number six was regarded as a perfect number, one in which Isidore saw reflected the perfection of the world.²² Although the

²¹Fontaine Isidore II, 871.

²²*Etym.* III, 4, 2 *Senarius namque [numerus] qui partibus suis perfectus est, perfectionem mundi quadam numeri [sui] significatione declaret.* In view of this, it is of little wonder that the Augustinian division of six ages should have appealed to Isidore for his own historical composition.

direct inspiration for the six-age scheme undoubtedly came from Augustine, it is rooted in Scripture, in the genealogy at the beginning of the Gospel of St. Matthew.²³ The decision to use chronological divisions based on a scriptural source bestows on the whole of human history a sense of being part of a divine plan which a chronology based on the secular, that is imperial or "national", divisions used by earlier chroniclers could not impart. This would lead one to suppose that the intent of the author in composing the chronicle had a largely theological component.²⁴

The final innovation in the Isidorian chronicle which should be considered is the inclusion of the various chronological columns used by Julius Africanus and Eusebius-Jerome into a single universal narrative of history. It has been suggested that Isidore consciously used this framework to demonstrate the unity and universality of history by integrating the pasts of all peoples and to present history as the movement of all men toward the final Judgement.²⁵ One might add to this that the division of history into separate columns may no longer have seemed relevant to Isidore, for two reasons. First, with the spread of Christianity among the non-Roman *gentes*, history could no longer be seen as the parallel stories of Christian or, if one were to include Hebraic

²³Reydellet "Les intentions" 380; Paul Merritt Bassett "The Use of History in the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville" History and Theory 15 (1976): 281; Matthew I, 17.

²⁴This is not to suggest that the earlier chroniclers such as Eusebius and Jerome were not very concerned with theological matters, but only that the divisions they used were less effective in suggesting this.

²⁵Bassett 282, 289.

history, of Judaeo-Christian, and pagan peoples. With the conversion of the *gentes* to Christianity, their pasts, even though pagan, had, of necessity, to become part of the Christian world chronicle.

The second reason why the separated form of the chronicle may have seemed irrelevant to Isidore has to do with the division of world history into six ages. If chronology is to be accounted for according to a divine plan, it must be all-inclusive, in accordance with the plan of the creator of all, that is to say, everything created by God is included within the ages of history in accordance with the divine plan, whether or not its significance is clear to human understanding. One might suggest that the choice of chronological divisions governing the chronicle dictated an alteration in format.

In content, as opposed to form, the *Chronica* of Isidore is generally considered to be far less original. The entries are largely derived from earlier sources, but it is through an examination of the selection and arrangement of the material borrowed from those sources that a picture begins to emerge of Isidore's vision of universal history. Such an examination may be approached from two directions. On the one hand, there is the theological intent of the author in placing the unfolding of human history within the framework of a salvific plan designed by God. We have already considered how the division into six ages may be seen to conform to this. On the other hand, there is the secular or political aspect, that is, Isidore's attitude toward the various

kingdoms and empires of which he writes and the relations between them. This leads to the question of which aspect, theological or political, was of primary interest to the author in composing the chronicle.

Although the history of Christianity and the Christian Church does not begin until the sixth age, with the birth of Christ, one must see it, as Isidore presents it within the chronicle, as part of the the larger Judaeo-Christian context of history. In the second and third ages Isidore traces the origins of the tribes of Israel and the establishment of the kingdom of Judea following the end of the Egyptian captivity. From Joshua to the end of the third age, almost all the entries regarding Hebraic history are merely a listing of the reigns of the kings of Judea. The fourth age, as already established by Augustine, opens with the reign of David, followed by Solomon, which might also be considered the high point of the kingdom of the Hebrews. This age opens with the building of the temple at Jerusalem and ends with the capture of the temple by the king of Babylon.²⁶ These three ages, the second to the fourth, may be seen as the rise and fall of the kingdom of the Israelites. The fourth age is also marked by the proliferation of prophets. Of the forty entries on Jewish history recorded within the fourth age, twenty comprise a list of the reigns of Hebrew kings. Of the remaining twenty, nine, or almost half, are records of the various prophets.²⁷ Isidore seems here to place emphasis on the fact that

²⁶Isidore *Chronica* 112, 164.

²⁷Isidore *Chronica* 110, 120, 122, 124, 141, 144, 149, 159, 162.

the era of prophesy coincides with the approaching end of the Hebrew kingdom.

The fifth age opens with the seventy-year captivity of the Hebrews, at the end of which the kings of Judea are replaced by princes.²⁸ After a brief period of restoration, the remainder of the fifth age represents the successive defeats and repressions of the Jews, by Alexander, Ptolomeus Filopater, Antiochus and Pompeius.²⁹ Isidore ties the birth of Christ at the end of the fifth age with the cessation of the kingdom and priesthood of the Jews and the fulfillment of the prophesy of Daniel.³⁰ Thus, just as the age of prophesy corresponded with the decline of the Hebrew kingdom, the advent of Christ marked the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophesies and the end of the age of the prophets. It would seem that it is at this point that the Judaic kingdom has lost its utility and significance within the divine scheme. The kings and priests of the Jews are supplanted by the new king and priest, Christ.³¹ For Isidore, the Old Testament had come to an end, and Judaism belonged to the Old Testament.

The sixth age of the *Chronica* contains only six notices of

²⁸Isidore *Chronica* 167 *Hebraeorum captivitas ann. LXX, in quibus ignis ab altario sublatus et absconditus in puteo post LXX regressionis annum adsumitur inventus vivus; 171 a quo tempore in Hierusalem non reges, sed principes fuerunt.*

²⁹Isidore *Chronica* 177 *Esdras sacerdos legem renovavit, 178 Neemias muros Hierusolymorum restituit; defeats 193, 207, 213, 227.*

³⁰Isidore *Chronica* 236 *LXVIII ebdomades in Danihelo scriptae conplentur, 237 et cessante regno ac sacerdotio Iudaeorum.*

³¹Marc Reydellet, La royauté dans la littérature latine de Sidoine Apollinaire à Isidore de Séville (École française de Rome, 1981): 563.

Jewish history, beginning with the subjugation of Jerusalem by Titus and the death or enslavement of thousands of Jews.³² However, it is the second entry regarding the Jews in the sixth age which may be most telling. Isidore records that Domitian ordered that all who were of the line of David were to be killed, so that no Jew of royal origin survived.³³ While the impression given by the passage is that this was done by the emperor for reasons of political expediency, it is interesting that Isidore, who had so little to say about the Jews in this period, should choose to record this particular event. It may be that he intended it to give emphasis to the fact that the the Hebrew kingdom was at an end and there could be no hope of a restoration of the line of David, that the kingdom of Christ had truly and perpetually supplanted that of the Jews. It is interesting to note that when the Jews subsequently rose up against Hadrian, Isidore referred to them as *rebelles* whereas before the beginning of the sixth age, even in defeat they had been given the name *armati*.³⁴ With the beginning of the era of the New Testament, the Jewish resistance had lost its legitimacy. Its participants had gone from being considered soldiers to being called rebels.

The penultimate appearance of the Jews in the *Chronica* occurs when the Emperor Julian gives them permission to rebuild the temple

³²Isidore *Chronica* 251.

³³Isidore *Chronica* 261 *cunctosque qui de genere David erant interfici iussit, ut nullus Iudaeorum ex regali superesset origine.*

³⁴Isidore *Chronica* 269 *Hic Iudaeos secundo rebelles subiugat; 207 Ab isto Iudaei proelio victi: LX milia armatorum conruerunt.*

in Jerusalem.³⁵ The seeming purpose of this entry is twofold. First, the brief resurgence of the Jews is associated with an apostate emperor, both representing a temporary falling away from the new order introduced into the world by Christianity. The second purpose lies in the reference to the destruction of the foundation of the new temple by fire and earthquake and the subsequent conversion to Christianity of those Jews present. Although Isidore makes no mention of divine intervention or the miraculous in this event, one can read in it the implication that such attempts to revive the ascendancy of the old religion cannot succeed.

The Jews appear a final time in the chronicle with their conversion to Christianity in Spain by King Sisebut.³⁶ Isidore gives no indication in the chronicle that the conversion was forced, although he certainly knew otherwise.³⁷ It may well have been that at the time he composed the chronicle, the heavy-handed measures taken by the king to convert the Jews in his kingdom met with Isidore's approval in light of the attitude towards the role of the Jews which emerges in this early work. One might also suppose that Isidore was showing some discretion in withholding criticism of the policies of the reigning monarch, but the general tenor of his treatment of the history of the Jews in this work

³⁵Isidore *Chronica* 345 *Qui etiam dum in odio Christi templum in Hierusolymis Iudaeis reparare permisisset.*

³⁶Isidore *Chronica* 416 *et Iudaeos sui regni subditos ad Christi fidem convertit.*

³⁷ cf. HG 60 on Sisebut's forced conversion of the Jews.

suggests that he viewed Sisebut's decree with some equanimity.³⁸

Before pursuing Isidore's examination of the position of Christian history within world history, it may be of some interest to take a brief look at his presentation of pagan elements in the chronicle. Isidore includes notices of paganism in the second to the end of the fourth age. It has already been noted that, as with all other historical material, the pagan entries have been incorporated into a single all-inclusive narrative in a departure from the model of Eusebius and Jerome.³⁹ Although this was certainly an innovation in the chronicle form, it is possible that Isidore was in this regard influenced by Augustine, from whom he derived a good amount of his material on the pagan gods. Albeit Augustine was not writing a chronicle, in his *De civitate Dei* his inclusion of the pagan beliefs which coincided with the events of biblical history took the form of a single narrative rather than being placed in separate chapters reminiscent of the separate columns used in the chronicles.⁴⁰ This may have been seen by Isidore as a stamp of authority for such a presentation of the material.

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of Isidore's treatment of paganism in the chronicle is its apparent lack of importance. In

³⁸Isidore's subsequent disapproval of Sisebut's actions may have resulted from the failure of the decree as much as from any disapproval on his part of forcible conversion. On the failure of Sisebut's measures against the Jews, see Roger Collins *Early Medieval Spain* 131f.

³⁹Bassett 279-80.

⁴⁰Augustine *De civitate Dei*, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb. *Corpus Christianorum* 47-48 (1955): XVIII, 8.

seventh-century Spain Greco-Roman paganism was no longer considered the threat to the security of Christianity that it had been in the time of Jerome or Augustine. It had become little more than a curiosity, a relic of a past culture that could be included for its historical interest or entertainment value with little fear that it might have an adverse influence on the audience.⁴¹

While the language used by Isidore to describe pagan myths is generally designed to indicate the fictional character of those events,⁴² the distance between him and his sources can perhaps best be seen in his less conscientious observance of this practice than his predecessors. Two examples of this are the transference of the Egyptian king Serapis to the gods, which Isidore simply states as *Serapis Iovis filius Aegyptiorum rex moriens in deos transfertur*, while his source, Jerome, retains the qualifying language, *in Aegypto primum deus putatus est, quem quidam Serapim uocauerunt*.⁴³ Again, in Isidore, *Mercury nepos Atlantis...peritus*

⁴¹Although it would appear that Isidore did not consider the myths of the classical world to be a threat to Christian belief in Spain, there is no doubt that some pagan belief survived in Spain into the sixth and even the seventh centuries (See J.N. Hillgarth "Popular Religion in Visigothic Spain" *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James. Oxford, 1980: 11-18). It is unclear to what extent these surviving practices in Spain still bore any relation to the Greco-Roman myths which do not seem to trouble the bishop. It is also of interest to note that Isidore included no mention of Visigothic paganism in his historical works. Might one conclude from this that the old pagan beliefs of the Goths were still to some extent present and troublesome in Spain as well? If elements of Hispano-Roman paganism had survived for so long in Christian Spain, it would not be surprising to find remnants of the old Gothic beliefs surviving among the Goths after their general conversion to Christianity, whether Arian or Catholic.

⁴²The phrase most commonly used for this in the chronicle is *fabula ficta est* (66, 75, 85, 100). This is occasionally varied with such terms as *describitur* (38), *scribitur* (45, 80), *habitus* (46) and *fertur* (76).

⁴³Isidore *Chronica* 40, *Eusebii Pamphili Chronici Canones*, ed. J.K. Fotheringham (1923): 33.

et ob hoc post mortem in deos translatus, whereas in his source, Augustine, *Mercurius fuisse perhibetur, nepos Atlantis...quo merito eum post mortem deum esse uoluerunt siue etiam crediderunt*.⁴⁴

In general Isidore appears to be more meticulous in insisting on the fictitious nature of pagan stories when they involve fabulous beasts such as the Hippocentaurs or Minotaur, or unnatural events such as the flight of Daedalus and Icarus,⁴⁵ than the human-like figures of the gods. This may be connected with his contention in the *Etymologiae* that those individuals who were considered gods by the pagans were in fact prominent men who, having provided some benefit to humanity, were given divine honours.⁴⁶ We thus find in the *Chronica* an emphasis in the entries of classical mythology on the contributions which these individuals were said to have invented or provided for humanity.⁴⁷ In this way, Isidore divests pagan religion of its mystical or supernatural aspects, reducing it to two basic categories, *fabula* and *historia humana*. The former is identified as the fictional stories told in former times. The latter, as strictly human history, becomes eligible for inclusion into the single narrative of human history under the auspices of divine providence.

⁴⁴Isidore *Chronica* 47; Augustine *De civitate dei* XVIII, 8.

⁴⁵Isidore *Chronica* 67, 85, 75.

⁴⁶*Etym.* V, xxx, 11 *de quorum nominibus appellati sunt hi dies, homines fuisse: et propter beneficia quaedam mortalia, quia plurimum potuerunt et eminuerunt in hoc saeculo, delati sunt eis ab amatoribus suis divini honores.*

⁴⁷For example, *Chronica* 38 (Minerva), 46 (Atlas), 74 (Apollo), 77a (Mercury), 97 (the nymph of Carmentis).

Christian history proper begins with the sixth age, which accounts for approximately half of the *Chronica*. The breakdown of these entries into various categories clearly demonstrates which concerns were foremost in the mind of the bishop as he composed his chronical. Of the eighty-seven entries which may be considered to deal directly with ecclesiastical matters, twenty-nine, or about one third, concern heresy. The next largest category, comprising twenty-six entries, consists of notices of prominent orthodox churchmen and authors. Other categories, by comparison, are considerably smaller. There are eight entries dealing with the discovery of gospels or the discovery or translation of relics, seven entries recording persecutions of Christians or Catholic Christians, and five entries regarding the conversion of either emperors or non-Roman peoples to Christianity. The remaining few entries are either taken from the New Testament regarding the Incarnation, Crucifixion and the Apostles, or single entries on such things as the discovery of Gothic letters or the building of the church of St. Leocadia at Toledo.

From this basic categorization we may deduce that in ecclesiastical matters Isidore's primary preoccupation appears to have been with heresy, which continued to be the principal threat to the Church long after the dangers of paganism became negligible.⁴⁸ This is counter-balanced in an almost equal number with the presentation of eminent orthodox men. He seems to be

⁴⁸Isidore was himself involved in the battle against heresies in Spain, as the Second Council of Seville in 619 attests (c. xii *De quodam Azefalorum episcopo* Vives 171-172). See Hillgarth "Historiography" 294.

creating in parallel a history of the Catholic Church on one hand and the history of its heretical enemies on the other. Both histories are infused with supernatural elements: the orthodox with the miraculous, the heterodox with the demonic.⁴⁹ It is here that the providential cast of the chronicle is evident. The triumph of the Catholic church is, throughout its history, supported by divine guidance. We shall return to the consideration of Isidore's vision of Christian history as it appears in the chronicle. However, a consideration of his presentation of secular history may be of use here to help determine the proper context of the ecclesiastical material.

Although Isidore includes information about the development of a number of kingdoms and empires, the two that are of real importance to his concept of historical development, apart from the Hebrew, are the Roman Empire and the Visigothic kingdom in Spain. That the Roman Empire should occupy a major place in the chronicle of Isidore is not surprising. It was, after all, the dominant political and cultural entity throughout the Christian era and imperial policy had a greater impact on the development of Christianity and the Christian Church than did that of any other state. This is not to say, however, that Isidore made any connection between the empire and the Church in any providential sense. The empire was a state among states, although first among

⁴⁹eg. *Chronica* 355, 367, 399c, 400 (orthodox); 247, 392, 393 (heterodox).

them in terms of political and military power.⁵⁰ The founding of the kingdom of Rome is recorded in the chronicle with no more attention than that given to the beginning of any other kingdom. The bare statement, *huius temporibus Romulus Romam condidit*, contains nothing to set it apart from the corresponding *Scytharum regnum exortum est, ubi primum regnavit Tanus, Aegyptiorum regnum sumit principius, ubi primus regnavit Zoes*, or the equally laconic *Hoc tempore regnum Graecorum inchoat, ubi primus regnavit Inachus*.⁵¹

The Roman Empire takes on importance in the chronicle as it gradually assumes prominence in the world. In the first part of the chronicle, the history of Rome is one of expansion and conquest over neighbouring peoples from the capture of Sicily by Marcellus to Caesar's triumph in Britain.⁵² Marc Reydellet has suggested that Isidore's interest in the history of the Roman Republic is limited to Roman conquest and the mention of a few great writers.⁵³ However, a close look at the relatively few entries on

⁵⁰Isidore also gives Rome pride of place in the *Etymologiae* along with the Assyrian kingdom, to which it was successor. However, neither of these kingdoms are given here any mystical significance. One might speculate that Isidore gave Assyria equal status with Rome to reinforce the purely secular nature of the glory of the latter. He emphasizes that all nations have had their *regnum*, that they are not necessarily provinces of the large empires, but *appendices*, a term which is less precise in its definition. *Etym.* IX, 3, 2-3 *Regnum universae nationes suis quaeque temporibus habuerunt...Inter omnia autem regna terrarum duo regna ceteris gloriosa traduntur: Assyriorum primum, deinde Romanorum ut temporibus et locis inter se ordinata atque distincta...Regna cetera ceterique reges uelut appendices istorum habentur.*

⁵¹Isidore *Chronica* 146; 26, 28, 36.

⁵²Isidore *Chronica* 208, 233b.

⁵³Reydellet "Les intentions" 389.

Roman history from its foundation to the end of the Republic, shows that Isidore recorded the foundation of the senate, the establishment of the Vestal virgins, the first census and use of the purple, the banishment of kings, the first manufacture of silver coins at Rome, the first teaching of Latin rhetoric and the consulship of Julius Caesar.⁵⁴ There are in fact about the same number of references to internal developments as to external conquests. It is true that Isidore largely ignores the internal politics and civil strife of the Republic, but this is also the case in his treatment of the other kingdoms of which he writes. His interest in this period seems to be twofold: the founding and cultural and legal development of the kingdoms, and relationships of those kingdoms with each other.

With the beginning of the sixth age and the coming of Christianity, the story of the Roman Empire seems to take a different direction under Isidore's pen. Whereas the earlier period had been one of almost uninterrupted expansion and development, the Empire now seems to enter a decline, both politically and morally. The succession of Roman Emperors which follows Augustus appears, with a few exceptions, like a rogues' gallery of ineffectual or morally corrupt individuals; it has been described as being on the brink of caricature.⁵⁵ The cupidity and excesses of Tiberius and Nero lead to the loss of *gentes* and *provinciae* for the Empire, the dissipations and cruelty of some emperors are emphasized, as is the

⁵⁴Isidore *Chronica* 150, 152, 156, 172, 203, 224, 233a.

⁵⁵Reydellet "Les intentions" 389.

ineffectiveness of others.⁵⁶ Although subsequent emperors would restore the lost provinces the recovery was never complete nor permanent. The Empire is at one point reduced to having to buy off its enemies rather than conquering them by arms.⁵⁷ The history of the Empire, as portrayed by Isidore, takes on in this period a sense of chaos which is lacking in the preceding republican period.⁵⁸

Nowhere in the chronicle of Isidore does one find a mystical or providential conception of the empire or of its emperors in the role of moral leaders or heads of the Church, such as is found in the Eusebian presentation of Constantine. The emperors who are persecutors of Christians or defenders of heretics outnumber those who are defenders of the orthodox faith. In the case of one persecutor, Aurelianus, Isidore intimates that divine providence has acted against the emperor when he is killed by lightening while persecuting Christians.⁵⁹ Although Isidore does have some positive things to say about certain emperors, most particularly Trajan, the point he appears to wish to emphasize is that the emperors have no particular spiritual authority over or within the Church and the

⁵⁶Isidore *Chronica* 238a, 246d; 241, 246a-246c, 278a, 288a; 288b, 307a, 319, 328.

⁵⁷Isidore *Chronica* 409.

⁵⁸Reydellet, in "Les intentions" 389, suggests that the tone of the chronicle changes with the beginning of the sixth age from one of serenity to one of discreet but efficacious polemic against the Eastern Empire, the Jews and heretics.

⁵⁹Isidore *Chronica* 317 *Hic persecutionem adversus Christianos efficiens fulmine corripitur et nec mora occiditur.*

empire has no special providential place in Christian history. Marc Reydellet has suggested that the empire had lost its moral prestige since the proliferation of heresies under the emperors.⁶⁰ One might rather suggest that, in Isidore's eyes, it had never possessed any particular prestige in that regard. The protection of heretics goes back to Constantine himself, and although Isidore commends that emperor for his military successes and the freedom he gave to Christians within the empire, he nonetheless treats Constantine's later conversion to Arianism very severely.⁶¹

In the final entries of the chronicle the amount of attention Isidore devotes to events in Spain increases abruptly. There may be, however, a danger in overestimating this attention.⁶² Of the thirty-two notices which cover the period from the entry of the Byzantine forces into Spain at the behest of Athanagild to the end of the chronicle, only ten relate events in Spain.⁶³ While this is a significant increase over the mere five notices of Spain in the entire preceding section of the chronicle,⁶⁴ one cannot, I think, automatically conclude from this that the chronicle is a

⁶⁰Reydellet "Les intentions" 399.

⁶¹Isidore *Chronica* 329a, 330, 334.

⁶²cf. Reydellet in "Les intentions" 397, who suggests that "La Chronique nous apparaît donc tout aussi marquée par le patriotisme hispanique que l'*Histoire des Goths*", and Teillet in *Des Goths* 465, argues that both the *Chronica* and the *Historia Gothorum* have a strongly ideological intent and are put to the service of the nationalism of the Goths in Spain.

⁶³Isidore *Chronica* from 399a to 418; Spain: 399a, 403, 405, 407, 408, 415, 416, 416a, 416b, 417.

⁶⁴Isidore *Chronica* 216, 354, 373, 373a, 382.

work of Spanish nationalism. Nor can one conclude that the chronicle is an exultation of Gothic history in the same vein as would later appear in the *Historia Gothorum*. In the earlier part of the chronicle, Gothic history is not given a significantly preponderant place among the histories of the other barbarian peoples.

It would certainly seem natural for Isidore to focus more attention in the last part of the chronicle on Spain and the Visigoths. It was, after all, the country in which he lived and also, one might assume, the country of his intended audience. In addition, with the decline of imperial importance in the West, events in the new kingdoms would naturally come to the forefront of the western perspective of historical development. It should be noted that the latter part of the chronicle also contains items regarding the Lombards, Gepids, Huns and Avars, among others. This is not, however, to downplay the important place which Isidore saw the Visigothic kingdom occupying in the West, particularly after the conversion of Reccared. The chronicle ends on an optimistic note, both in the entries regarding the reign of Sisebut and the later addition with respect to Suinthila, of a Spain securely under the domination of a strong, *religiosissimus* Catholic monarchy.⁶⁵

The final question which must be asked of the chronicle is whether there emerges from it any sense of an overall design or progression in history, an Isidorian vision of world history. If we return for a moment to the entry in the *Etymologiae* cited

⁶⁵Isidore *Chronica* 415-417.

earlier regarding the rise of the Assyrian and Roman kingdoms (*supra* n. 50), we may be provided with a clue. Here Isidore discusses the rise of two kingdoms more glorious than the rest, to which all other kingdoms were appendages. Further, these two kingdoms did not co-exist, but rather the one succeeded the other: *denique in illius fine huius initium confestim fuit*. We have here a succession of dominant kingdoms to which all other are in some manner attached. Looking back over the chronicle, we have seen two kingdoms arise and decline, one in the secular and one in the spiritual realm, the Roman Empire and the Hebrew kingdom. With the beginning of Christianity in the sixth age, both of these kingdoms experienced a loss of prestige or prominence, the Roman Empire in the West, and the Hebrew kingdom with regard to both its kings and priests, replaced by Christ as both king and priest. Might one not speculate that in Isidore's vision, a subsequent more glorious kingdom has replaced them, both temporally and spiritually, the kingdom of the people of God? To this Christian kingdom, which has no spatial boundaries, the new Catholic kingdoms have become the appendages. In this way, these kingdoms, such as Visigothic Spain, in no way lose their secular autonomy as states while at the same time maintaining a connection with and duty to the larger kingdom of Christ.

Isidore's second work which may be included in his historical corpus is his *De viris illustribus*,⁶⁶ a collection of brief

⁶⁶In her edition of the *De viris illustribus* of Isidore of Seville (*El De viris illustribus de Isidoro de Sevilla: Estudio y edicion critica* Salamanca, 1964. References to the *De viris* are from this edition.), Carmen Codoñer Merino

lists thirty-six extant manuscripts of the work. The earliest of these is Montpellier H 406 which Codoñer Merino dates to the ninth century, although H. Koeppler suggests a late eight-century date in his article "*De viris illustribus* and Isidore of Seville" The Journal of Theological Studies 37 (1936): 20. A major difficulty in the editing or study of Isidore's *De viris* has been that the text survives in two recensions, a shorter one containing thirty-three chapters and a longer version containing forty-six chapters and a preface. The long version has thirty-two chapters in common with the shorter recension. The thirty-third chapter of the latter, dedicated to Osius, which is in fact chapter 1, is divided in two to provide the base for two chapters of the longer version, chapter 5 on Osius and chapter 14 on Marcelinus. Also, nine other chapters common to both versions have had interpolations added to the text in the longer version. These are chapters 6 (John Chrysostom), 12 (Julian), 13 (Eugipius), 15 (Eucherius), 18 (the emperor Justinian), 20 (Justinian of Valencia), 21 (Justus), 25 (Victor) and 26 (John of Constantinople). These additions, complete chapters and interpolations, have generated considerable discussion, both with regard to the identification of the genuinely Isidorian material and the authorship of the additional material. The divergence of early opinions on the matter (Dzialowski accepted all forty-six chapters as Isidorian, the longer version being Isidore's own revision of his earlier work; Schütte attributed only twenty-five to Isidore, eight to Braulio and thirteen to an African bishop Pontianus) has been summarized by Koeppler (20-22) and Codoñer Merino (22-25). Koeppler refuted Schütte's suggestion by showing that the sole manuscript upon which he based his argument (Escorial MS J. 2. 10.), an eighteenth-century copy of the ninth-century León Cat. 22) was only an excerpted copy of the earlier manuscript which had, in fact, contained all the thirty-three chapters (Koeppler 20-22). Further, Codoñer Merino has used an examination of the differences of style and use of sources to demonstrate that the additional chapters of the longer version were written not by Isidore but by another author. Based on the dominance of the African sources and the preponderance of prominent defenders of the 'Three Chapters', Koeppler agrees with Schütte that the thirteen non-Isidorian chapters probably originated in Africa in the second half of the sixth century, although he does not accept Schütte's identification of the African bishop Pontianus as the author. Koeppler has given the thirteen chapters the useful working title of *appendix africana* (26-28). One of the reservations which Schütte had with regard to accepting an African author for the *appendix* was the inclusion of the chapter on Peter of Lérida. According to Codoñer Merino (32), in supporting the theory of the triple redaction, he was seeking to overcome this difficulty. She further suggests that Koeppler's attribution of the *appendix* to an African author simply sidesteps the problem rather than offering an explanation. Codoñer Merino offers the convincing explanation that the *appendix* was transmitted to Spain as a separate work where it encountered a Spanish redactor who added the chapter on Peter to the African work before it became joined with the work of Isidore in, she suggests, the eleventh or twelfth century in Italy (33,40).

The other addition to the *De viris* was the interpolations of the nine chapters noted above. Although the additional chapters do not appear in any manuscript earlier than the two thirteenth century manuscripts in the Biblioteca Laurentiana mentioned by M. Ihm in his article "*Zum Isidors viri illustres*" (Codoñer Merino 35), many of the interpolations, usually associated with the longer recension of the *De viris*, appear in the ninth-century manuscript León 22, either as part of the chapter or as marginal notes (Codoñer Merino 26). As these appear in a manuscript of the shorter version prior to the likely date of conflation of Isidore's work with the *appendix africana*, it is reasonable to conclude that these interpolations were by a different author than the additional chapters. The question is, who might that author have been? Codoñer Merino suggests that it would be an acceptable hypothesis that these amplifications were written by Braulio, and that one could not even exclude the possibility that they were written by Isidore himself (28). However, J.N. Hillgarth points out ("Position" 836-37) that this is inconsistent with her later contention that the

accounts of a selection of notable men. The chapters of the *De viris* cannot properly be called biographical since, for most of the entries, Isidore includes little or no information about the lives of his subjects beyond their rank and location. It is rather literary biography, the record of the important written contributions which these men made, for the most part, to the body of theological or religious literature. Although the *De viris* has no extant preface in which the author discusses his purpose in creating the work or the models on which he based it, there can be little doubt that he was influenced by the *De viris illustribus* begun by Jerome and continued by Gennadius, although perhaps with a different purpose in mind. H. Koeppler has suggested in his article on the *De viris* of Isidore, that Jerome had composed his work as "a propaganda pamphlet for the vindication of Christian learning" and Gennadius had intended his continuation to be a guide to Christian works which were free from heresies on theological questions for the purpose of monastic education.⁶⁷ Koeppler further suggested that there are a number of indications in the *De viris* that Isidore did not compose this work according to any particular plan, but simply included writers because he associated

additions must be later than the seventh century due to their hostility to Justinian and his supporters on the question of the Three Chapters. As he also notes, Isidore took sides against Justinian in his *Chronica*, and this position in favour of the Three Chapters taken in the interpolations would not argue against Isidorian authorship. However, as these additions make their earliest appearance in the manuscripts only in the ninth century, there remains the possibility that they were written at any time between the composition of Isidore's thirty-three chapters and the production of León 22 in the ninth century, and were not necessarily written by either Isidore or Braulio.

⁶⁷Koeppler 16, 18.

them with someone he had mentioned in an earlier chapter.⁶⁸ Although Isidore worked mainly as a compiler rather than an original author, one finds in his other works that these compilations generally had some governing purpose other than a meandering and aimless collection of data. It would seem odd to suppose that this busy prelate and prolific writer would, in this one case, spend his time composing a work to no purpose. The difficulty lies in determining what that purpose was.

With the exception of three histories, all the works listed by the various authors are on religious subjects, and even the histories mentioned contain considerable material on theological matters and disputes.⁶⁹ This in itself is hardly surprising, as the great majority of literary output in this period was produced by clerical or monastic authors. However, there are some aspects of Isidore's choices which may give an indication of both the aim and the intended audience of the work. In the first place, as J.N. Hillgarth has pointed out, almost half of the chapters are concerned with heresy, the most numerous being those concerned with Arianism, followed by the anti-Chalcedonians. The second largest area of concern, although this is a distant second, involves asceticism and monasticism.⁷⁰ Works of biblical commentary,

⁶⁸Koeppler 32.

⁶⁹The historians mentioned in the *De viris* are Victor of Tunnuna (25), John of Biclar (31) and Maximus of Caesaraugusta (33). Although only fragments of the last history have survived, it is probable, as the author was a bishop, that his chronicle also dealt considerably with religious matters of the time.

⁷⁰Hillgarth "Historiography" 293; n. 129 & 130.

theological questions such as baptism, Easter, the Incarnation and Christology also seem to figure largely among the selected writings.⁷¹ There are two aspects of the *De viris* which may have some bearing on our understanding of what Isidore had set out to accomplish with the work. The first is the fact that in the thirty-three chapters which are generally accepted as being genuinely Isidorian, twenty-eight of the *viri* were bishops. Second, only about a third of the individuals written about were Spanish, the rest being Italian, Greeks, Africans, and Gauls.⁷²

From these observations about the *De viris*, we may perhaps draw certain conclusions. First, given the last observation made above, we may reject the suggestion that Isidore's purpose was to extol or publicize Spanish men of distinction. Second, we may agree with the suggestion made elsewhere that the primary concern of the *De viris* is with heresy,⁷³ but more importantly with recording tracts containing arguments against heresies. Many of the other entries seem to be directed either towards works which outline the orthodox position on disputed issues or offer advice on monastic education. Further, the elevated position of the authors within the Church suggests that these works had the weight of authority behind them.

From this, might one find in the *De viris* of Isidore a similar

⁷¹Isidore *De viris* 7, 17, 21, 27 (biblical commentary); 3, 20, 32 (baptism); 10, 11 (Easter); 18 (Incarnation); 20 (Christology).

⁷²Koeppler 33.

⁷³Hillgarth "Historiography" 293, 297.

purpose to that attributed by Koeppler to Gennadius, that is, to supply a guide to those interested in finding Christian works for a specific purpose? In the case of Isidore's *De viris*, that purpose would seem to be to arm his readers with a sort of catalogue of authoritative arguments against heresy. Koeppler suggested that the fact that Isidore left out a number of great names from his work supports the argument that he compiled by association.⁷⁴ However these omissions may possibly be explained in two ways. On the one hand, he may not have considered their writings to be of especial importance for this particular purpose, or, on the other hand, he may have been writing for a very specific audience which he knew would already be familiar with certain of these authors. The first explanation seems more probable.

There is, however, another aspect of the *De viris*, observed by Marc Reydellet, that may be a better indicator of the intended audience for this work. Reydellet pointed out that the referents which Isidore used to place the authors chronologically vary depending on their geographical location. For those living in imperial territories, he identified the contemporary emperor, for those in Visigothic Spain, only the Visigothic king is noted, for Vandal Africa, the name of the king and the emperor is supplied, while the entry for Martin of Braga identifies the Suevic king, the Visigothic king and the emperor.⁷⁵ One might conclude from this that Isidore supplied the minimum amount of information which he

⁷⁴Koeppler 33.

⁷⁵Reydellet "Les intentions" 395.

considered necessary so that his audience would be able to apprehend the chronology.⁷⁶ A Spanish audience would be the obvious target, familiar with the chronology of imperial or Visigothic reigns on their own, but possibly with need of multiple indicators when it came to other barbarian kingdoms. This, combined with the nature of the material included, strongly suggests that Isidore wrote the *De viris* as a guide for the Spanish clergy in amassing the best and most authoritative arguments against heretics.

While one might argue that the *Chronica* of Isidore is not particularly centred on the Goths and is more concerned with discovering a Christian interpretation of historical development, there can be no doubt that the *Historia Gothorum* has the Goths as its main concern.⁷⁷ The *Historia* survives in two redactions, a

⁷⁶An interesting aspect of the interpolations found in León 22 (see n. 66), is that six of the nine additions (8, 12, 13, 15, 20 and 21) provide additional material for the identification of the individual writer or the location of his see or abbey. Two of these, Justinian (20) and Justus (21), who were previously identified only by the names of Spanish cities, are, in the interpolations, further identified as Spanish bishops. This would suggest either that Isidore had underestimated the information required for his audience to identify some of these writers or that the *De viris* was being disseminated to a wider audience, making further identifications necessary in some cases. This still does not, however, settle the question of whether they were written by Isidore or a later annotator.

⁷⁷In his 1975 edition of the *Historia Gothorum* (León: Centro de estudios e investigación "San Isidoro"), Cristóbal Rodríguez Alonso lists 21 extant mss. and 5 lost mss. of the longer redaction of the history and 2 extant mss. of the shorter redaction. For a full description, see Rodríguez Alonso 123-138. Also see Mommsen MGH AA 11, 256-265. Four editions of the histories were produced in the 16th century, by Petrus Pittheus in 1579, Margarin de la Bigne in 1580, by B. Vulcanius in 1597, and an edition of the longer redaction by Gómez Pérez Grial in 1599. The 17th century produced a further six editions: Jacques du Breul (1601), F. Lindenbrog (1611), Aguirre (1694), and of the longer redaction, Andreas Schott (1606), Hugo Grocius (1655) and Phillipe Labbe (1657), and the 18th century a single edition by Enrique Flórez (1751). Faustino Arévalo's edition appeared in 1803, followed by that of Mommsen in 1893. Since Mommsen, only one new edition has been produced, that of C. Rodríguez Alonso in 1975 (see Rodríguez Alonso, 138-146 for a fuller description of the editions). Citations

shorter version ending during the reign of Sisebut, and a longer version carried forward to the year 625 in the reign of Suinthila.⁷⁸ There has been some debate over which version appeared first, that is whether the shorter version was written during the reign of Sisebut and later amended to include Suinthila, or whether the longer version was composed during the latter reign, with the praise of Suinthila deleted after his overthrow by Sisenand in 631.⁷⁹ Although the question has not been conclusively

of the *Historia Gothorum* in the present work are from Alonso's edition.

⁷⁸HG 61, 65.

⁷⁹See Mommsen 254f.; Hillgarth "Historiography" 287-88; Luis Vázquez de Parga "La obra histórica de San Isidoro" *Isidoriana* (Leon: 1961) 99-106; Rodríguez Alonso 26f.; et al. In a recent article, Roger Collins has put forward the suggestion that the shorter version of the *Historia Gothorum* may be, if not actually the *historiola* of Maximus of Zaragoza which Isidore refers to in his *De viris illustribus*, in very large part "the nearest that can now be come to recovering Maximus." ("Isidore, Maximus and the *Historia Gothorum*" *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter. München, 1994: 345-358). While Collins' argument is intriguing, and, at times, persuasive, in accounting for the discrepancies between the shorter and longer rescensions of the history, some of the evidence he presents in support of it is open to other interpretations than those he gives it. While it is not my intent here to embark upon a detailed critique of the article, two points may serve to illustrate why I was not completely persuaded. The first is Dr. Collins' comparison of the two versions of the chronicle with those of the history (p. 353-4). The point that nothing was discarded from the shorter version of the chronicle in the expansion to the longer form does not, in my opinion, argue that the omission of material from the shorter history in the longer version indicates that the latter is not the author's revision of his earlier work. To expand the shorter chronicle, which was little more than a basic chronological framework, into a much more detailed chronicle is quite a different matter from revising a history, which is not only a question of expansion, but of reconsideration. When the history is as politically motivated as Isidore's was, a few years between versions can make a difference. For example, Isidore may have considered Leovigild's use of imperial-style regalia (p. 351) as superfluous in the longer version, written after the Byzantine presence had been eliminated from the peninsula, or even impolitic if written in the reign of the king who had expelled the Byzantines. In another example, the elimination of the account of the conspiracies against Reccared (p. 351) may have seemed consistent with the idealized picture Isidore tried to draw of the post-conversion reign of Reccared (see page 160f). My second point concerns Collins' suggestion that the fragments identified by Mommsen as the chronicle of Maximus of Zaragoza could not have been written by Maximus because it is organized by consular dating which was used in the fifth century but was very rare in the mid-sixth century (p. 355-56). However, as Collins notes, these fragments exist only as marginalia in a sixteenth-century copy of the chronicle of Victor of Tununna. I would suggest that the scribe who entered such marginalia did not necessarily copy the entries

settled, the first order of publication seems the more likely. If Isidore had amended his history during the reign of Sisenand, it is surprising that he added no mention of that monarch to the history. The dedication to Sisenand would seem to support the second view. However, it has been suggested that this dedication, if authentic, simply suggests that Isidore sent the king a copy of his work.⁸⁰ If such is the case, it would seem even odder that there is no mention of Sisenand in the history if it were being revised specifically for that king.

While it is probable that there was no clear model for the history,⁸¹ Isidore may have drawn some inspiration from his two predecessors and chief sources for the Spanish period, Hydatius and especially John of Biclar, whose chronicles, while purporting to be continuations of world chronicles, tended, at least in the later portions, to shift their *foci* to, respectively, Spain and the Goths. However, these works cannot truly be considered models for the *Historia Gothorum*. Isidore's intention was clearly to write a history specifically of the Goths, beginning with the earliest information he could discover about this race of people. In the history we can see again an echo of the Isidorian fascination with

verbatim but adapted them to correspond to the consular dating system of Victor's chronicle. This does not prove that the marginalia are from Maximus' chronicle, but neither does the evidence cited prove that they are not. While Dr. Collins may well be correct in his suggestion that the shorter version of the *Historia Gothorum* represents Maximus' *historiola*, it would seem that further evidence is needed to make the case.

⁸⁰Hillgarth "Historiography" 287. If the dedication is indeed authentic, it is probable that it was a copy of the shorter version, with no mention of Suinthila, that was sent to Sisenand.

⁸¹See Hillgarth "Historiography" 295.

beginnings or origins that is suggested in the *Chronica* and is manifest in the *Etymologiae*. The Goths in Spain are to be understood within the context of their origins and their journey through history to their ultimate destination.

As with his chronicle, Isidore does not provide the reader with any indication of his method of collecting information or his sources. Most of his sources for the history have been identified.⁸² For the early history of the Goths he relies most heavily on Orosius and Jerome, with some additions from Prosper and Hydatius. The Spanish portion, as noted above, relies for the most part on Hydatius, followed by John of Biclar and supplemented by the Caesaraugustus chronicle. The *Historia Gothorum* has often been dismissed as a mere compilation of earlier works with little new added to them, with the exception of the period following the end of the chronicle of John of Biclar. However, as with the *Chronica*, so in his history, Isidore, by means of judicious editing of his sources, recast the material he found there into a story which fitted his own preferred version of the events and served his own purposes.

For the chronology of the *Historia*, Isidore forsakes the six ages of his chronicle and returns to the calculation by imperial reigns and Spanish aeras of the chronicle of Hydatius. It is interesting to note that he does not follow John of Biclar in coupling the regnal years of the Visigothic kings in Spain with the imperial years, although he does give a calculation of the total

⁸²See Mommsen 268-303, marginal notes; Rodríguez Alonso 69f.

number of years of the Gothic kingdom from Athanaric to Sisebut.⁸³ The history is prefaced by the *De laude Spaniae* in which Isidore celebrates the beauty and richness of Spain, and concluded by the *Recapitulatio* in which he extols the virtues of the Goths. These two passages, which bracket the history itself, appear to provide the context within which the story is to be read and understood.

The two main participants in the *Historia Gothorum* are the Gothic people and the Roman Empire. The two principle themes are the interaction between Goths and Romans and the political and religious development of the Goths. A further "subplot", which is really only thrown into relief within the context of the *De laude Spaniae* and the *Recapitulatio*, is the relationship between the Goths and Spain.

Isidore begins by establishing the great antiquity of the Gothic people, a consideration which was of importance both in the classical world and to early Christian apologists in providing validation for the respectability of a people or tradition.⁸⁴ He offers different views held by various peoples regarding their origins derived from linguistic evidence which links them with Magog, the son of Japheth, without, however, personally attesting to the accuracy of these traditions.⁸⁵ Isidore prefers to emphasize the meaning of the name of the Goths in the Latin

⁸³HG (shorter version) 61 *Hii sunt anni Gothorum regum ab exordio Athanarici regis usque ad istum Sisebutum anni CCLI aera DCLXVI.*

⁸⁴See Robert W. Hanning, The Vision of History in Early Britain From Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth (New York, 1966): 24.

⁸⁵HG 1; also see *Etym.* IX, 27.

language, *tectum*, which is equated with strength or fortitude. It is interesting that he straightaway places this characteristic of the Goths within the context of their relationship with the Roman Empire and defines the strength of the Goths by their ability to exhaust the Empire as *nulla gens in orbe fuit*.⁸⁶ The reader has immediately placed before him the outcome of the story which Isidore plans to tell: the triumph of the Goths over the Roman Empire.

From the beginning, the early story of the Goths is told in terms of their relationship with the Empire. Of the first twenty-one entries, up to and including the entry of Wallia into Spain, only two make no mention of their interaction with the Empire.⁸⁷ Of the thirteen entries from Wallia to Euric's invasion of Spain in 466, only four fail to make any allusion to the Empire.⁸⁸ After Euric, the importance of the Empire to the story of the Goths declines dramatically. Apart from the dating of events by imperial reigns, the Empire does not appear in the history of the Goths until Athanagild requests military assistance from the Emperor Justinian in 554.⁸⁹ Thereafter, the Empire represents no more than a nebulous military presence against which successive Visigothic kings from time to time wage battle until the Byzantines' final

⁸⁶HG 2.

⁸⁷HG 1 on the derivation of the name of the Goths, 8 on Gulfilas and Arian beliefs.

⁸⁸HG 26 a list of prodigies taken from the chronicle of Hydatius; 28, 29 on the destruction of the Huns; 30 Thorismund.

⁸⁹HG 47.

expulsion by Suinthila. While there continues, throughout the latter part of the history, an awareness of and concern about that presence, the empire as an institution no longer interests Isidore and, by implication, the Visigoths. It is only the military threat which remains of concern.

Although the relationship between the Goths and the Empire changes throughout the history, from the beginning the Goths are imbued with an aura of independence and a position of strength *vis-à-vis* the Empire. Before beginning the history proper, Isidore makes a point of establishing the respect in which the Greeks and Romans held the military abilities of these people.⁹⁰ Further, he demonstrates that those abilities were on a par with, or rather exceeded, those of the great nations of the ancient world when the Goths, along with those peoples, came to the aid of the consul Pompey against Caesar in the civil war of 49-48 B.C.E.⁹¹ So great was the reputation of the Goths as fighters that emperors won fame if they were able to defeat them.⁹² The inherent sense of autonomy and love of liberty of the Goths is also emphasized in the early part of the history. When they surrendered to Valens in 378, they did so *non depositis armis*, and when the emperor oppressed them

⁹⁰HG 2 *quos etiam Alexander vitandos pronuntiavit, Pyrrhus pertimuit, Caesar exhorruit.*

⁹¹HG 3 *ubi dum Aethiopes Indi Persi Medi Graeci Scythae ac reliquae Orientis gentes vocatae adversus Iulium dimicassent, isti prae ceteris ei fortius restiterunt.* Reydellet suggests that Isidore may have invented this episode (*La royauté* 511).

⁹²HG 4 Claudius; 5 Constantine.

contra consuetudinem propriae libertatis they were forced to rebel.⁹³

In order to enhance the prestige of the Goths in relation to the Empire, Isidore slightly altered his sources. A few examples may be sufficient to illustrate this point. With regard to the death of Athanagild in Constantinople, the passage in Hydatius reads *XV die ex quo a Theodosio fuerat susceptus interiit*. Isidore changed this to *quintodecimo die quam fuerat a Theodosio honorabiliter susceptus, interiit*, emphasizing the honour which the emperor showed to the Gothic leader.⁹⁴ Elsewhere, Gothic actions are represented with an independence which does not coincide with the sources. Whereas in Hydatius, *Ataulfus a patritio Constantio pulsatus, ut relictis Narbona Hispanias peteret*, in the version of Isidore, the Gothic king's decision to leave Gaul appears to be voluntary: *Athaulfus autem dum relictis Galliis Spanias peteret*.⁹⁵ Theodoric's entry into Spain with his army is changed from an order of Avitus to an offer of imperial support in exchange for previously supporting the emperor's bid for the imperial throne.

Hydatius:

*Mox Hispanias rex Gothorum
Theodoricus cum ingenti
exercito suo et cum
uoluntate et ordinatione
Auiti imperatoris ingreditur*

Isidore:

*Theudericus...quod imperatori
Avito sumendi imperialis
fastigii cum Gallis auxilium
praeuisset ab Aquitania in
Spanias cum ingenti multitudine*

⁹³HG 9.

⁹⁴Hydatius *Chronica* 6; Isidore HG 11.

⁹⁵Hydatius 52; HG 19.

*exercitus et cum licentia
eiusdem Aviti imperatoris
ingreditur*⁹⁶

Occasionally, the leadership of the combined forces of Goths and Romans is given by Isidore to the Goths, as in the following passage.

Hydatius:

*Gens Vnorum...Aetio duci et
regi Theodori, quibus erat
in pace societas...superatur*

Isidore:

*Theuderidus cum Romanis inita
denuo adversus Hunos...
auxiliante Aetio duce Romano*⁹⁷

In spite of his description in the *De laude Spaniae* of Rome as *aurea Roma* and the *caput gentium*, there is in fact little that is "golden" in Isidore's presentation of the Empire in his *Historia Gothorum*. Even Constantine, who had held an exalted position among earlier Christian historians, receives little praise from Isidore. His main claim to fame in the history was the fact that he had been able to defeat the Goths in battle, and even the phrase *de diversis gentibus virtutis gloria clarus* is included only to emphasize the fact that he was most honoured by the senate for his Gothic victory.⁹⁸ What is perhaps most surprising in view of the early Christian historiographical tradition with regard to this emperor, is that Isidore makes no mention of Constantine's conversion to, and official recognition of, Christianity. This may be explained in part by Isidore's disapproval of the later conversion of

⁹⁶Hydatius 166; HG 31.

⁹⁷Hydatius 142; HG 25.

⁹⁸HG 5.

Constantine to Arianism,⁹⁹ but there seems to be a deliberate refusal on the part of Isidore to present the empire in a favourable light. The only emperor about whom anything which may be considered even slightly positive is said is Theodosius, who received Athanagild honourably and viewed the Goths with *benignitas*.¹⁰⁰

However, it is important to take note of the fact that Isidore's portrayal of the Goths is not one of unalloyed praise. Marc Reydellet has suggested that Isidore may have intended his depiction of the successive reigns of Gothic kings to be a sort of mirror of princes.¹⁰¹ While this may well be the case, there is also, in the history, a sense of the progress of the Gothic people as a whole from their beginnings as allies and *foederati* of the Empire to their present status as an independent kingdom. This sense of progress is also apparent in the spiritual evolution of the Goths.

Isidore traces the movement of their history from the Goths acting as military auxiliaries of the republic through the various stages of their becoming the recipients of military assistance from the Empire, a surrendered people settled on imperial territory, a protected people through a mutually negotiated treaty, and finally emerging as the conquerors of the city of Rome which, captive and

⁹⁹Isidore *Chronica* 334. Also on this, see Reydellet *La royauté* 528.

¹⁰⁰HG 11. This is not to say that all the emperors are presented in a negative light in the history; the accounts of some are merely neutral.

¹⁰¹Reydellet *La royauté* 530.

subjected, served them.¹⁰² There seems in this period to be a growing self-awareness on the part of the Goths regarding their position and dignity as an autonomous people. The initial rebellion against the Empire had been undertaken in reaction to Roman oppression of their liberty, they later rejected the treaty they had made in friendship with Theodosius *indignum iudicantes Romanae esse subditos potestati*.¹⁰³ In this second passage the Goths are asserting their unwillingness to acquiesce in a role subordinate to that of the Empire.

From the time of Wallia's military expedition into Spain, the relationship between the Goths and the Romans changed. Prior to that event, the Gothic position remained to some degree subordinate. In the treaty negotiated with the Emperor Honorius, Wallia acknowledged his military obligations to the republic, launching his attack against the barbarians in Spain in response to the summons of Constantius.¹⁰⁴ Following the success of the expedition, although the Goths received territory from the Empire, this was, in Isidore's version, in recognition of the military assistance that the Goths had rendered to the Empire, rather than the settlement of a subject people.¹⁰⁵ From this point on Isidore

¹⁰²HG 3, 7, 9, 12, 15 *capta subiugataque servivit.*

¹⁰³HG 9, 12.

¹⁰⁴HG 21 *promittens imperatori propter rem publicam omne certamen inplendum. itaque ad Spanias per Constantium patricium evocatus.*

¹⁰⁵HG 22 *data ei ab imperatore ob meritum victoriae secunda Aquitania.* cf. Hydatius 61 *Gothi intermisso certamine quod agebant per Constantium ad Gallias reuocati sedes in Aquitanica a Tolosa usque ad Oceanum acceperunt* and Prosper 1271 *Constantius patricius pacem firmat cum Wallia data ei ad*

presents the Goths as virtually equal allies of the emperors. When next the Goths and Romans are seen fighting together, it is not only as equals, but with the Roman commander cast in the role of auxiliary to the Gothic king.¹⁰⁶

While this development of the relationship between the Goths and the Roman Empire does not explain the negative portrayals which Isidore presents of some Gothic leaders, it does support the image given in the history of the evolution or maturation of a people throughout the course of time. However, it is in the realm of their religious evolution that the negative portrayals seem to have some relevance. Although the Goths are presented from the beginning of the history as a brave and noble people, the perception throughout is that their innately superior qualities can only be refined and take their proper form when they are subjected to the influences of Christianity and, ultimately, of the Catholic faith. The first negatively portrayed Gothic leader is Athanaric who, as a pagan, cruelly persecuted Gothic Christians and forced them into exile.¹⁰⁷ It is in this period that an indication of the working of providence enters the history in a form to which Isidore seems rather partial: the fitting of the punishment to the crime. The Goths under Athanaric, who had expelled the Christian Goths from

inhabitandum secunda Aquitanica et quibusdam civitatibus confinium provinciarum. The recall of the Goths by Constantius, found in Hydatius was included in the shorter version of the HG, *per Constantium Romanum patricium ad Gallias revocatur*, but did not appear in the longer version where it is made to appear that the decision was Wallia's alone.

¹⁰⁶HG 25.

¹⁰⁷HG 6.

their homeland, were themselves expelled by the Huns.¹⁰⁸

The Gothic king who receives perhaps the harshest treatment from Isidore is the pagan Radagaisus who, having vowed to offer the blood of the Romans to his gods, is described by Isidore as savage and barbaric.¹⁰⁹ It is by Christianity that the harsher side of the Gothic nature is ameliorated, even to some extent when it is in the form of Arian heresy. It is the Arian Goths who show clemency to the Christians in Rome in 410, having taken an oath beforehand to spare those whom they found *in locis Christi*. This is set in contrast to the preceding entry about the savagery of the pagan king Radagaisus. What we encounter here is a juxtaposition of three levels of religious attainment, the lowest or pagan in Radagaisus, the intermediary in the misguided Christian, Alaric, who was *nomine quidem Christianus, sed professione haereticus*, and the highest in the orthodox Christians of Rome who are personified by the consecrated virgin of the sanctuary of St. Peter.¹¹⁰ The Arian Goths under Alaric have already been elevated beyond the level of the pagan, but they are further ennobled by their contact with the true faith, if only temporarily. The theme which Isidore seems to be developing here is that of an innately noble people who can fulfill the potential of their true nature only within the context

¹⁰⁸HG 9 *Gothi, qui primum Christianos a sedibus suis expulerant, rursus ipsi ab Hunis cum rege suo Athanarico expulsi sunt.*

¹⁰⁹HG 14 *barbaricae inmanitatis feritate saevissimus*. It is interesting to note that Isidore strengthened this condemnation from that of the shorter version, *belli feritate*.

¹¹⁰HG 15, 16; cf. Radagaisus HG 14.

of the true faith. That fulfillment was tragically, but not irrevocably, sidetracked by the Emperor Valens who sent them heretical priests when they sought instruction in the faith.¹¹¹ The Gothic Catholics whom Athanaric had expelled, although appearing in the history only briefly, seem to have attained the refinement which their fellow Goths were still lacking. Choosing martyrdom or exile for their faith, they lived in peace within the empire and in concord with the Romans.¹¹² It is interesting that Isidore not only described the Arian beliefs of the Goths and how they acquired them through no fault of their own, but also very early in the history made a point of the fact that they would eventually reject this heresy for the true faith.¹¹³ The reader is directed to understand the rest of the history in light of this one fact, that the Goths would in time become members of the orthodox church. Thus, in spite of the periodic persecutions of Catholics by Gothic kings and the transgressions or wicked characters of individual kings, the triumphs of the Goths are to be celebrated in view of their ultimate destiny.

It is in the conversion of Reccared that the Visigoths achieve their destiny. It has been remarked that the succession of Reccared

¹¹¹HG 7. Again in the death by fire of Valens in HG 9, we see the predilection of Isidore for suiting the punishment to the crime, *ipse ab eis vivens (shorter version temporali) cremaretur incendio, qui tam pulchras animas ignibus aeternis tradiderat.*

¹¹²HG 6, 10.

¹¹³HG 8 *cuius blasphemiae malum per discessum temporum regumque successum annis CCXIII tenuerunt. qui tandem reminiscentes salutis suae renuntiaverunt inolitae perfidiae et per Christi gratiam ad unitatem fidei catholicae pervenerunt.*

marks a significant modification in the style of the *Historia Gothorum*, that one moves from historical recitation to panegyric or eulogy.¹¹⁴ In view of the progression that we have seen in the development of the Gothic character as they moved closer to the true faith, it is not surprising that Isidore should wish to depict the newly Catholic monarch as the ultimate refinement of those early *praeclarae gentes* and *pulchrae animae*.¹¹⁵ Just as the episode of Alaric in Rome was set against the acts of Radagaisus in that earlier stage of development, so the reign of Reccared is contrasted with the reign of his father Leovigild. The contrast in the latter case, however, is not quite as black and white as the preceding one. Whereas Leovigild is castigated for being *perfidiae furore repletus*, his great contribution towards the political reunification of Spain is recognized.¹¹⁶ If one notes that Isidore did not follow his source, John of Biclar, in presenting Reccared as the new Constantine in his account of III Toledo, one might also notice the similarities between his depictions of Leovigild in the *Historia Gothorum* and Constantine in the *Chronica*. In both cases we have rulers who are admired for their military victories but are ultimately condemned in the eyes of Isidore for adhering to the Arian heresy. It was no doubt Constantine's acceptance of Arian baptism at the end of his life

¹¹⁴Reydellet La royauté 534-35.

¹¹⁵HG 7, 9.

¹¹⁶HG 49 *studio quippe exercitus concordante favore victoriarum multa praeclare sortitus est.*

that led Isidore to reject John of Biclar's depiction of Reccared as a new Constantine.

Isidore's depiction of Reccared is the most truly eulogistic of all his royal portraits. It is as if he wished to present this king as the standard against which all others were to be judged. One of the interesting aspects of Isidore's presentation of Reccared is that this king does not appear in the history prior to the death of his father, with the sole exception of the naming of the city of Recopolis after him by Leovigild, although even then, Reccared is not explicitly named.¹¹⁷ Whereas in the chronicle of John of Biclar Reccared is shown to have been active against the Franks during his father's reign, and in the history of Gregory of Tours he appears as his father's agent in dealing with his brother Hermenegild,¹¹⁸ Isidore completely ignores this part of Reccared's life. Perhaps more importantly, he omits the fact that Leovigild had associated his sons with him on the throne prior to his death.¹¹⁹ Isidore had already indicated his disapproval of this practice with reference to the association of Leovigild on the throne with his brother Liuva,¹²⁰ but the impression given in the *Historia Gothorum* is that this practice had not been repeated with

¹¹⁷HG 51 *condidit etiam civitatem in Celtiberia, quam ex nomine filii sui Recopolim nominavit.*

¹¹⁸John of Biclar 585, 4; Gregory of Tours V, 38 (see *supra* chapter three, n. 74).

¹¹⁹*cf.* John of Biclar 573,5.

¹²⁰HG 48 *sicque regnum duos capuit, dum nulla potestas patiens consortis sit.*

regard to the sons of Leovigild. Reccared is crowned after the death of his father.¹²¹

Marc Reydellet has suggested that, since Reccared and Hermenegild had been associated on the throne with their father since 573, the phrase *regno est coronatus* must have been meant to be only a symbolic confirmation of the title.¹²² Might one not, in view of Isidore's disregard of Reccared's earlier elevation to the throne, consider that this passage was meant to be taken literally in that Isidore wished to create the impression that this was the beginning of Reccared's reign? Such a conjecture gathers support from another passage in which Isidore, writing of the death of Reccared, states that the king had held the true faith from the beginning of his reign.¹²³ Yet we know from John of Biclar that Reccared did not become a Catholic until ten months after he had become sole king following his father's death.¹²⁴ Isidore seems deliberately to have suppressed the information that Reccared had been associated with his father on the throne. One might wonder whether he had done this because he did not approve of such an arrangement, or because he wanted Reccared's reign to stand alone

¹²¹HG 52 *Levvigildo defuncto filius eius Recaredus regno est coronatus.*

¹²²Reydellet *La royauté* 536f.

¹²³HG 56 *fidem enim rectae gloriae, quam initio regni percepit, novissime publica confessione paenitentiae cumulavit.*

¹²⁴John of Biclar 587, 5 *Reccaredus primo regni sui anno mense X catholicus deo iuvante efficitur.*

and in no way to be affiliated with that of the Arian king.¹²⁵ If Reccared's reign was to be the standard against which Christian kings were measured, there could be no apparent taint on it.

Isidore begins his portrait of Reccared with the most important fact of his reign, the conversion to the Catholic faith, from which stem all the positive elements of his reign. By his conversion, the king had elevated his people to a new level, *hic gloriosius eandem gentem fidei tropaeo sublimans*.¹²⁶ In Reccared is found the fulfilment of the theory of kingship Isidore had outlined in his *Sententiae* and based on the Old Testament model, the king whose character and piety determine the fate of his people for better or worse.¹²⁷ The balance of the entries describing the reign of Reccared not only serve to pay tribute to the excellent qualities of that king, and to establish an example for subsequent Christian kings to follow, but also to remind the people of the benefits they receive from being ruled by a consummate Christian

¹²⁵With regard to Isidore's ability to play fast and loose with the circumstances of Reccared's reign, one must remember that when Isidore began writing his history more than forty years had elapsed since Leovigild had associated his sons on the throne in 573, and it was almost thirty years since Reccared had become the sole ruler of the kingdom in 586. With the distance of time, Isidore had more room to alter the perceptions of these facts than did John of Biclar. Regarding Isidore's opinions on the sharing of royal power, such a situation is mentioned only once in the history after Liuva, that being Suinthila and his son Riccimir at the end of the longer version (HG 65). Although Isidore praises the virtues of both this king and his son, and does not criticize the practice of association in this passage, neither does he express approval of the arrangement, merely stating the fact of its existence: *Huius filius Riccimirus in consortio regni adsumptus pari cum patre solio conlaetatur*. If Isidore wrote the longer version during the reign of Suinthila, he could hardly either ignore the fact of the association or express his disapproval. In this case, one suspects the bishop of discretion.

¹²⁶HG 52. Isidore uses the verb *sublimo* twice with regard to the effect Reccared had on his people. See also, HG 56 *plurimos sublimavit honoribus*.

¹²⁷See chapter four, n 43, 45.

king. It is *fidei susceptae auxilio* that the Goths won a glorious victory over the Franks which surpassed any victory ever won by the Goths in Spain.¹²⁸ It was by this new Catholic king that the wealth of citizens and treasure of churches was restored, the tribute of the people was often reduced and the poor were cared for.¹²⁹ It is this role of the king as the custodian of the well-being of his people which seems here to be of primary importance to Isidore, it is for this reason that kingship is conferred.¹³⁰

Until the reign of Suinthila, the subsequent kings in the history do not live up to the *exemplum* of Reccared. The reign of Liuva II, although he himself showed promise, is negligible due to its brevity.¹³¹ Witteric, the usurper, was obviously not of the same mould as Reccared, and his reign, although lasting for seven years, is treated as an aberration. The short reign of Gundemar, whom Isidore may not have known well, is summarily dismissed.¹³² Isidore makes no mention of religion or royal piety with regard to these reigns.

What is, however, more surprising, is that he is equally silent about these matters when he comes to the character of Sisebut, the king whom he perhaps knew better than any other.

¹²⁸HG 54 *nulla umquam in Spaniis Gothorum victoria vel maior vel similis extitit.*

¹²⁹HG 55 *ut opes privatorum et ecclesiarum praedia...restauraret; HG 56 opes suas in miseris, thesauros suos in egenis recondens.*

¹³⁰HG 56 *sciens ad hoc illi fuisse conlatum regnum.*

¹³¹HG 57 *sed virtutum indole insignitus.*

¹³²HG 58, 59.

Sisebut is praised in the history for his eloquence and learning and for his military successes and clemency.¹³³ However, of the king who was *religiosissimus* in the *Chronica*, who had himself written hagiography and shown in his other writings a great concern for matters of faith, there is no mention in the history of his personal piety, of his relationship with the Church, or of any divine favour being shown to him.¹³⁴ Whereas Suinthila ascends the throne by *gratia divina*, Sisebut simply *regali fastigio evocatur*.¹³⁵ The only mention of a religious matter in Sisebut's reign is the forced conversion of the Jews, for which he is criticized by Isidore.¹³⁶ However, given the complacency which Isidore displayed with regard to this in the chronicle, it hardly seems sufficient reason for his disregard of the pious aspect of Sisebut's character. It is one of the puzzling aspects of the history.

One might suppose that, if Isidore were writing the first version of the history during the reign of Sisebut with the intention of having it read by the king, he may have wished to avoid excessive praise of Sisebut in order to promote humility in the latter. However, this does not explain the excessive praise of Suinthila in the longer version, if this too was meant to be read by that king. Is it possible that the discrepancy lies in the

¹³³HG 60-61.

¹³⁴Isidore *Chronica* 417; see also *Chronica* 416a.

¹³⁵HG 62, 60.

¹³⁶HG 60.

different attitudes which Isidore had towards the two kings, that he saw himself still in the role of teacher and mentor to Sisebut? However, Isidore did not show the same reticence in the chronicle, which having been written early in Sisebut's career, would seem the more likely place for this attitude to be evident. There seems, at present, to be no satisfactory explanation for the omission.

Even if we were not aware of the subsequent condemnation of Suinthila at IV Toledo, over which Isidore presided, the passages later added to the history regarding this reign would strike a jarring note.¹³⁷ Suinthila is treated with an almost panegyric style which Isidore had displayed for no one since Reccared. Suinthila's ascension to the throne is by *gratia divina*, a formula Isidore used for no other monarch, including Reccared. Apart from that, the portrait of Suinthila so closely parallels that of Reccared that one must see the resemblance as deliberate. Isidore begins by celebrating the king's military victories over the Romans and Basques, just as he had acclaimed Reccared's victory over the Franks. There follows what amounts to a catalogue of the king's virtues, with special emphasis on his care of the poor, the same quality for which Isidore stated that kingship had been conferred on Reccared.

The oddity of this excessive praise for Suinthila, which represents him as having reached the standard of perfection set by Reccared, is that in the earlier version of the history, Isidore seems to have taken care to place no subsequent king on a par with

¹³⁷HG 62-64.

Reccared, not even Sisebut who might have been a more obvious candidate. When we add to this the evidence of IV Toledo, the impression that one gets from these passages is one of insincerity, that they were perhaps written at the behest of the reigning monarch and couched in terms which were politically expedient. On the other hand, one might speculate that it was at IV Toledo that Isidore was exhibiting his pragmatism in the face of a *fait accompli*. However, one must wonder whether he would have been willing to condemn a king he thought to be truly an example of the exemplary Christian monarch for the sake of expediency. The answers to such questions, of course, cannot be definitive and must come down, in the end, to speculation.¹³⁸

One of the underlying themes of the *Historia Gothorum*, which, as noted earlier, really becomes apparent only within the context of the *De laude Spaniae* and the *Recapitulatio*, is the 'marriage' of the Goths and Spain. This, as much as the move towards independence from the Empire and the embracing of the Catholic faith, is a part of the ultimate destiny towards which history is moving the Gothic people. The imagery of a marriage between the land and the people is strongly suggested by the author, not only in his reference to the earlier betrothal of Spain to Rome,¹³⁹ but also in the gender roles assigned to Spain and the Goths within the context of this

¹³⁸ Although so far I have not encountered any argument to support the suggestion, I cannot help but wonder whether the passages on Suinthila were indeed written by Isidore, or added at the king's request by another author, following the *exemplum* of Isidore's portrait of Reccared.

¹³⁹ HG *De laude Spania licet te sibimet eadem Romulea virtus primum victrix desponderit.*

union. Spain is the bride, the *principum gentiumque mater*, the female element juxtaposed to the *conscientiae viribus freti, robore corporis validi, staturae proceritate ardui* nature of the Goths in the *Recapitulatio*.¹⁴⁰ Spain is taken by the Goths, and also loved by them, but in the final analysis, serves them, a scenario which would not be much at variance with the expected relationship within a marriage of the period.¹⁴¹ The relationship is not an equal one, yet one can see in it a similarity with the relationship between king and *gens* which Isidore develops in the portrayals of Reccared and Suinthila, the king as caretaker of those placed under his care. Just as the king has a responsibility to protect and care for the poorest and most disadvantaged of his subjects, so the Goths have a responsibility to protect and care for the land which has been placed under their charge.

The *Historia Gothorum* is perhaps a more complex work than its brevity and simplicity of composition may at first suggest. Isidore appears, on the one hand, to be attempting to tie several themes of Gothic history together in order both to create a composite picture of the Gothic past from the perspective of its present position and, on the other hand, to create an *exemplum*, or standard, to which contemporary Gothic princes should aspire, a sort of mirror of princes. The past is presented as a sort of journey toward a destiny which is clearly identified very early in the history. The

¹⁴⁰HG 139.

¹⁴¹HG *De laude Spaniae rapuit et amavit; 70 quibus servire tot gentes et ipsam Spaniam videt.*

naturally superior qualities of the Goths have destined them to become rulers in their own territory as independent and equal counterparts, if not supplanters, of the Empire. However, the most important destiny of the Goths which emerges from the history is to become part of the Christian kingdom, embodied in the Catholic Church. Without this, they cannot achieve the fulfillment of their potential. The Catholic king also acquires, along with the gift of divine favour, the responsibility of exhibiting the characteristics required of a Christian monarch, for which Reccared is presented as the standard. It would seem that the history is designed not only to support the position of the Gothic kings in Spain, but to instruct them in the proper way to conduct themselves in that role.

The historical works of Isidore of Seville seem to be independent of each other, both in their style and in their purpose. They were written in response to the needs of the situation and the intended audience. If there is any common element that runs through all of them, it must be the support and stability of the Catholic Church, particularly in Spain. As I have attempted to demonstrate, the *Chronica* offers a rejection of the claims of the Empire, the Jews and the heretics to possess any providential place in the Christian era of the divine scheme of history, the *De viris* strives to provide the Spanish clergy with the necessary tools to refute the heretical threat to the hegemony of the Church, and the *Historia* seems designed to stress that the Gothic rulers in Spain not only owe their position and their right to it to their adherence to the true faith, but also that they have a

responsibility to uphold and protect that faith and its institutions. The Catholic monarchy is supported insofar as it bolsters the Catholic Church.

CHAPTER VI

Post Isidorum: Ildefonsus and Julian of Toledo

From the death of Isidore of Seville in 636 to the Arab invasion in 711, historical writing in Spain came very close to being non-existent. From this period only two works which may be considered in the nature of historical writing have survived: the continuation of the *De viris illustribus* by Ildefonsus, bishop of Toledo, and the *Historia Wambae Regis* by Julian, also a bishop of Toledo.¹ Not only did the quantity of historical writing experience a decline in these years, but the nature and focus of those works which were written changed significantly. All pretense of continuing in the genre of the Christian world chronicle was abandoned. The chronicle of Isidore would not be taken up and continued until more than a century after his death.²

Although the *De viris* of Ildefonsus was intended by its author as an addendum to the successive works of Jerome, Gennadius and Isidore,³ the focus of the work, in the hands of Ildefonsus, had become almost exclusively Spanish, with an unmistakably Toledan emphasis. The *Historia Wambae* of Julian of Toledo narrowed the focus of historical writing even further. In contrast to Isidore's

¹I have not included in this the *Laterculus Regum Visigothorum*, written in the late-seventh and early-eighth centuries, which consists of a brief list of the Visigothic kings and their regnal dates.

²See n. 51 below.

³Ildefonsus *De viris Praefatio*.

Historia Gothorum, the *Historia Wambae* concerns itself with the reign of a single Gothic king and, moreover, is restricted to only two events of that reign. It would appear, then, that written history, to the extent that it existed at all in the latter half of the seventh century in Spain, had become highly localized, both geographically and with regard to its subject matter. Although it would be tempting to suggest that this reflected a greater localization and insularity with regard to the concerns of the Visigothic church and kingdom in Spain in general, such a generalization cannot be sustained on the evidence of only two texts, the authors of which shared both occupational and regional points of view. One can, however, inquire why works of wider scope, such as those of our previous historians, were apparently no longer considered a priority by the Spanish authors. It is perhaps by attempting to answer this question that one can better judge how typical the works of Ildefonsus and Julian were of the historical vision of the second half of the seventh century in Spain.

The histories of our previous authors, especially those of John of Biclar and Isidore, had at their centre two primary concerns: the political relationship between the Visigothic kingdom in Spain and external political entities, in particular, the empire, and the state of the Catholic Church in Spain in its struggle to triumph over heresy and convert the entire Iberian population to Catholicism. By the time that Ildefonsus and Julian were writing in the second half of the seventh century, the official conversion of the Goths to Catholicism was almost a

century old and there remains no record of any attempt to overthrow the Visigothic monarchy in the interests of a return to Gothic Arianism since the concluding chapters of the chronicle of John of Biclar. In the intervening years, there is little evidence that the Arian threat survived in such force as to occupy the pens of busy clerics to the extent that they felt the necessity of composing histories designed to reinforce the conversion. Similarly, the Byzantine Empire, in relation to which the earlier chronicles and histories had devoted so much effort in establishing the legitimacy and equality of the Visigothic kingdom, had, some decades before, been eliminated as a political factor in the peninsula by Suinthila. With the exception of the Basque territory to the north, Spain seemed to be firmly under the control of the Goths. The Basques themselves, while continuing troublesome, would never present the kind of threat to Gothic dominance that the empire had. Isidore, in his chronicle and even more effectively in his history, had incorporated the Goths into the written world chronicle of Christian history. So long as that place was not challenged by external forces, the need to continue in the same vein must not have seemed urgent to the Spanish clerics.⁴ It was with the internal situation of the kingdom that they now were preoccupied.

Although the Visigoths had firmly established themselves as the rulers of Spain and, with the aid of the Church, had to all

⁴It is interesting, in this respect, to note that the chronicle form was again taken up following the Arab conquest of the peninsula.

intents and purposes secured the Catholic monarchy from the Arian threat, they had not been able to eliminate the so-called "Gothic disease", the penchant of the Goths, in the absence of a hereditary monarchy, to challenge and overthrow their rulers. Even the enshrinement of the rules of election in the canons of the Fourth Council of Toledo could not ensure a peaceful succession.⁵

In ecclesiastical affairs, the seventh century was marked by the emergence of Toledo as the dominant see in Spain. Although Seville had held an important place in the Spanish Church in the sixth and early seventh centuries, its prominence in that period was largely due to the character and stature of its bishops, Isidore and, before him, his brother Leander. Both had established close relationships with the kings of their times and Leander had been responsible for the conversion of the Gothic monarchy to Catholicism, playing a leading role in the Third Council of Toledo. Isidore, his immediate successor, in addition to presiding over the Fourth Council of Toledo, appears to have had considerable influence at the royal court, particularly during the reign of Sisebut.⁶ However, the privileged position of the see of Seville seems to have died with Isidore. As the city of Toledo became more firmly established as the seat of monarchy in Spain, as the *urbs regia*, the importance of the see of Toledo likewise increased. Seville, without its renowned bishops, could not compete. At the Twelfth Council, Toledo was given the right of episcopal ordination

⁵See chapter four, pg. 99.

⁶See chapter four, pg. 94.

throughout the Visigothic kingdom in Spain, giving the metropolitan of that city *de facto* primacy.⁷

These, then, were the conditions under which historical writing, such as it was, was undertaken in the later seventh century. Our two authors, as bishops of Toledo, the see most connected with the monarchy, would, in undertaking any addition to the historical record, be most concerned with the issues raised above - the internal stability of the monarchy and the position of Toledo within the Spanish Church.

Our main contemporary sources for the life of the earlier of the two, Ildefonsus, are a brief life written by Julian of Toledo, entitled *Beati Hildefonsi Elogium*⁸, his own *De viris illustribus*, and two letters from Ildefonsus addressed to Quiricus, bishop of Barcelona.⁹ Later biographical accounts are largely embellishments of the *Elogium*, emphasizing miraculous occurrences.¹⁰ Any material of historical value they might contain regarding the bishop's life may also be found in Julian's more contemporary account.

The *Elogium* gives us little concrete information about

⁷XII Toledo VI. *Unde placuit omnibus pontificibus Spaniae et Galliae, ut salvo privilegio uniuscuiusque provinciae licitum maneat deinceps Toletano pontifici quosquumque regalis potestas elegerit et iamdicti Toletani episcopi iudicium dignos esse probaverit, in quibuslibet provinciis in praecedentium sedium praeficere praesules et desidentibus episcopis eligere succesores* Vives 394.

⁸PL XCVI 43-48.

⁹PL XCVI 493-496. For the *De viris illustribus* see n. 22 below.

¹⁰Later accounts of Ildefonsus include the eighth-century *Vita* by Cixila, bishop of Toledo (PL XCVI cols. 43-48) which was the first to add the miracles to Julian's account and the twelfth-century *Vita* by Herman the Monk (*Acta Sanctorum ordinis S. Benedicti* II 498-500) and the thirteenth-century *Vita* by Rodericus Cerratensis (PL XCVI cols. 47-50) which expand on Cixila's account.

Ildefonsus' life, and none at all about the early part of that life. Julian does reveal that Ildefonsus became bishop of Toledo in the ninth year of the reign of Recceswinth and, after holding that position for nine years and almost two months, he died on the tenth Kalends of February.¹¹ From this we may calculate that he became metropolitan of Toledo in 657, probably in November or early December, and that he died on the twenty-third of January, 667. We do not know where his birth-place was, although one modern biographer, citing the fact that Julian makes mention of only two places - the monastery at Agali, and the city of Toledo - in his account of Ildefonsus' life and uses the verb *reducitur* to describe his move from the monastery to Toledo, is persuaded that Ildefonsus was born in Toledo.¹² While this may, in fact, be correct, it is not a certainty. Julian's words can only confirm that Ildefonsus resided in Toledo before going to Agali, not that he was born there.

Concerning Ildefonsus' family background we are reliant more upon conjecture than upon fact. Julian's praise of his eloquence suggests that he had received a high standard of education, although where this was acquired is unknown.¹³ The quality of

¹¹*Elogium PL XCVI 44 Ascitus autem in pontificatum nono gloriosi Reccesvinthi principis anno, novem annis et duobus fere mensibus clarus habitus...expletoque octavo decimo praedicti principis anno, sequenti die, decimo Kalendas Februarii, domicilio carnis exuitur.*

¹²Sr. Athanasius Braegelmann, The Life and Writings of Saint Ildefonsus of Toledo (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1942): 5.

¹³*Elogium PL XCVI col. 43 eloquendi facultate praecipuus, linguae flumine copiosus, tantoque eloquentiae cothurno celebrer habitus.* Cixila claimed that Ildefonsus had been sent to study with Isidore at Seville but there is no evidence that this was not a further embellishment by the later biographer PL

education received suggests a wealthy or noble family background, and his Germanic name indicates that the family was Gothic.¹⁴ A further indication of his personal or family wealth is found in Julian's statement that Ildefonsus built a convent for virgins and adorned it from his own wealth.¹⁵ While it cannot be certain at what age Ildefonsus entered the monastery at Agali, Julian's phrase, *hic igitur sub rudimentis adhuc infantiae degens*, suggests that he was still quite young, although the remainder of the sentence indicates that he was of an age when he could make his own decisions.¹⁶ Although Ildefonsus' date of birth is unrecorded, a *terminus post quem* may be tentatively established from his own statement in the *De viris illustribus* that he was made a deacon at the monastery near the end of the life of Bishop Helladius.¹⁷ Sr. Braegelmann makes the convincing suggestion that, Helladius having died early in 633, placing the ordination of Ildefonsus probably in 632, presumably having reached at least the canonical age of

XCVI cols. 43-44 *Non impar meritis sanctissimi illius domini Isidori, de cujus fonte adhuc clientulus purissimos latices bibit; nam directus a sancto ac venerabili papa Eugenio, Toletanae sedis metropolitano episcopo ad supradictum doctorem Spalensem metropolitanum episcopum... plenius instructus ad poedagogum suum domnum Eugenium remeans.*

¹⁴Braegelmann 5-6; Carmen Codoñer Merino, El De viris illustribus de Ildefonso de Toledo (Universidad de Salamanca, 1972): 31.

¹⁵*Elogium PL XCVI 43 Coenobium quoque virginum in Deibiensi villula construxit, ac propriis opibus decoravit.*

¹⁶*Elogium PL XCVI col. 43 divino tactus spiritu, vita delectatus est monachorum, contemptisque parentum rerumque mundanarum affectibus, Agaliense monasterium petit.* Some later mss. of the *Elogium* include the story that Ildefonsus's father, angered by his decision, attempted to remove him from the monastery with an armed band (PL XCVI col. 43), but this is generally discounted as a later interpolation (see Braegelmann 9-10).

¹⁷Ildefonsus *De viris VI Me ad monasterium rediens memoratum, ultimo uitae suae tempore leuitam fecit.*

twenty-five, he is unlikely to have been born after the year 607.¹⁸ By no later than 653, Ildefonsus had become abbot of the monastery at Agali, having signed the acts of the Eighth Council of Toledo under that title. Since VIII Toledo was the first council in which abbots signed the acts, it is unknown how long prior to that date Ildefonsus had been abbot.¹⁹ It has been suggested that Julian's use of the verb *reducitur* with regard to the appointment of Ildefonsus to the see of Toledo indicates that the king forced Ildefonsus to become bishop of that city against his will.²⁰ While one may suppose that the move to Toledo was made at the royal request, to see a suggestion of the use of force in this passage is perhaps to read a meaning into the word which it does not necessarily have. No councils were held in Toledo during the years of Ildefonsus' bishopric and little is known of his activities as bishop. After his death in 667 he was buried, again according to Julian, in the church of Leocadia in Toledo.

Julian lists in the *Elogium* a number of theological and devotional works written by Ildefonsus, in addition to a book of letters, masses, hymns, sermons, epitaphs and epigrams.²¹ Of

¹⁸Braegelmann 5, 8-9.

¹⁹Vives 288.

²⁰Braegelmann 5; *Elogium* PL XCVI 44 *Principali post haec violentia Toletum reducitur.*

²¹*Elogium* PL XCVI 44 *Scriptis sane quamplurimos libros luculentiori sermone potissimos, quos idem in tot partibus censuit dividendos, id est, librum Prosopopaeiae imbecillitatis propriae, libellum de Virginitate sanctae Mariae contra tres infideles, opusculum de Proprietate personarum Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti, opusculum Annotationum, et de Progressu spiritualis deserti alium. Quod totum primae partis voluit volumini connectendum. Partis quoque secundae liber epistolarum est, in quo diversis scribens, aenigmaticis formulis*

these, only three - the *De virginitate sanctae Mariae contra tres infideles*, the *De cognitione baptismi*, and *De itinere deserti* - are extant, in addition to two letters to Quiricus of Barcelona. Of the work which concerns us here, the *De viris illustribus*,²² Julian makes no mention. Fortunately, however, the author identifies himself in the preface of the work as the successor of Bishop Eugenius of Toledo, the same successor identified by Julian as Ildefonsus.²³ This statement by Ildefonsus also permits us to place the composition of the work within the ten year period from 657 to 667 in which he was bishop.

The *De viris* consists of a *praefatio*, thirteen chapters on famous men and a disputed chapter on Gregory the Great. While the

egit, personasque interdum induxit. In quo etiam a quibusdam luculentiora scriptorum responsa promeruit. Partem sane tertiam missarum esse voluit, hymnorum, atque sermonum; ulterioris denique partis liber est quartus, versibus prosaque concretus, in quo epitaphia, et quaedam sunt epigrammata annotata.

²²The earliest surviving manuscripts of the *De viris* of Ildefonsus are the ninth-century Cathedral Ms. 22 at León and the tenth-century to eleventh-century Codex Casinensis 294 at Monte Cassino. Other extant manuscripts include the fifteenth century Codex Urbinas Latinus 382 in the Vatican Library and several sixteenth-century manuscripts, the Codex Ottobonianus 1720 in the Vatican, BN 1376 in Madrid, Escorial Codex IV.23 and Vallicellana C. 19 at Rome. In addition, there are two tenth-century manuscripts which give the table of contents of the *De viris* but do not include the text. These are Escorial, Codex Aemilianensis d. I. 1 and Escorial, Vigilianus d. I. 2. The *De viris* was first edited in 1576 by François Feuarent of the Friars Minor. In 1617 this edition was published under the title *Opera quae hactenus reperiri potuerunt omnia*. The *De viris* of Ildefonsus was also included as an appendix in Jacob du Breul's *Isidori opera* of 1602. A 1778 edition of the works of Isidore by Juan Grial, the *Divi Isidori Hispalensis episcopi opera*, included the *De viris* of Ildefonsus along with that of Isidore. An edition prepared by Cardinal Francisco Antonio Lorenzana in 1782, published in his *Sanctorum Patrum Toletanorum quotquot extant opera*, was reprinted in the *Patrologia latina* XCVI in 1850. Arévalo also included an edition of Ildefonsus' *De viris* as an appendix in volume VII of the *Isidori Hispalensis opera*, 1797-1803. The *De viris* was most recently edited by Carmen Codoñer Merino in 1972. It is this edition which is cited in the present work. Further discussion of the manuscripts and editions is to be found in Braegelmann 36-41 and Codoñer Merino 89-94.

²³Ildefonsus *De viris Praefatio successor sanctae memoriae alterius Eugenii factus in sede illa gloriosa Toletanae urbis; Elogium PL XCVI 43 praesul post secundum Eugenium in sacerdotium consecratur.*

chapter on Gregory does not appear in all the manuscripts, Braegelmann accepts it as Ildefonsine, mainly based on the mention made of it in the preface and the inclusion by the author of works by the pope which were not included in Isidore's account of Gregory in his own *De viris*. She suggests that it was excluded in some manuscripts because Isidore had already given an account of the pope.²⁴ Jacques Fontaine also accepts the Gregorian chapter as the work of Ildefonsus and, in fact, suggests that the chapter on the pope, which preceeds the other thirteen, holds the key to the entire work.²⁵ Codoñer Merino, on the other hand, doubts its authenticity, citing the manuscript tradition and comparing it with the amplification of Isidore's chapter on Gregory in later manuscripts of his *De viris*. She accepts the preface and thirteen chapters of Ildefonsus' *De viris* as authentic and relegates the Gregorian chapter to an appendix at the end of her edition of the work.²⁶

The *De viris* of Ildefonsus is rather different from the works of his predecessors under the same title. Although in his preface Ildefonsus acknowledges the work done before him in this genre by Jerome, Gennadius and Isidore, and appears to intend his own work to be viewed as an addendum to theirs,²⁷ we are already given, in

²⁴Braegelmann 41-44.

²⁵Jacques Fontaine "El *De viris illustribus* de San Ildefonso de Toledo: tradición y originalidad" *Anales Toledanos* III (Toledo, 1970): 84.

²⁶Codoñer Merino 23-30.

²⁷It is likely that Ildefonsus considered the *De viris* of his predecessors as a single unit. See also Braegelmann 32.

that same preface, an indication of the change in direction which he is about to undertake. As successor to the see of Toledo, he states that it is his intention to try to prevent the memory of his glorious predecessors in that position from disappearing in a cloud of silence.²⁸ Toledo, the reader is told, is glorious not only for the splendor which it is given by the presence of its kings, but because it is considered worthy of veneration by those who fear the Lord.²⁹ To reinforce this point, Ildefonsus then presents four instances in which former bishops of Toledo were afforded divine protection - Montanus, to refute a false accusation, carried live coals in his vestments while celebrating mass without his clothes being burned; a deacon was visited with divine punishment for insulting Helladius; the priest Gerontius was also punished for insubordination towards Justus; and finally, a deacon of Eugenius was punished for extortion of the honour of priesthood and certain estates.³⁰ Ildefonsus clearly states his reason for including

²⁸Ildefonsus *De viris Praefatio* ego...successor sanctae memoriae alterius Eugenii factus in sede illa gloriosa Toletanae urbis...conatus sum...ne incurrerem ex silentio damnum, si tam gloriosae sedis tamque gloriosorum uirorum clarescentem memoriae lucem tenebrosi nube silentii contexissem.

²⁹Ildefonsus *De viris Praefatio* quam non ex hominum immenso conuentu gloriosam dico, cum hanc etiam gloriosorum inlustret praesentia principum, sed ex hoc quod coram timentibus Deum iniquis atque iustis habetur locus terribilis omnique ueneratione sublimis.

³⁰Ildefonsus *De viris Praefatio* Montanus...ut a se coniugalibus conuersationibus infamiam propulsaret, tamdiu adsumptos ueste candentes narratur tenuisse carbones, donec Domino consecrans oblationem totius per semetipsum compleret missae celebritatem; quo sacrificio expleto, prunarum ignis cum decore uestis adeo in concordiam uenit, ut nec uestis uim extingueret ignis, nec uis ignis statum laederet uestis.

Rursum cum Helladio...Iustus diaconus fastu superbiae insultaret, post mortem quidem sui pontificis uixit episcopus et ipse; sed tabefactus et in reprobum uersus sensum, ob intemperantiam morum a ministris altaris sui dormiens strangulatus laqueo expirauit.

Item cum... Iusto episcopo Gerontius presbyter principis oblectamine fatus,

these cases in his preface, that these previous occurrences could provide an example for his contemporaries.³¹ We have then, laid out for us in the *Praefatio*, a clear statement of the author's intent in compiling this work, a statement which students of Isidore's *De viris* might well envy, to preserve the memory of the illustrious bishops of Toledo, to emphasize the pre-eminent position of that see within Spain afforded to it by divine protection, and to provide, by these sketches, an example to the people of his own time. It remains to consider how he set about his task in the body of the work.

Whereas previous versions of the *De viris* by other authors contained chapters on a selection of illustrious men from various countries, Ildefonsus, with the exception of the chapter on Gregory the Great, limits his selection to the great men of the Spanish Church.³² In further contrast to his predecessors in the genre, Ildefonsus does not limit his selection to authors alone, but includes six individuals who were not writers.³³ Of these six,

contemptum aduersitatemque deferret, tam repentino motu uim perdidit intellectus, ut multis medicorum curationibus acto quiquid in medellam fieret, totum in pestis augmentum concrederet. Sique perinualuit commotio mentis ut usque ad obitum suum horror esset homini eius uel participatio uisionis uel conloquium oris.

Adhuc etiam successor in locum eius Eugenio priori Lucidius diaconus suus, cum innexus amicitiae saeculari uiolenter honorem presbyterii et quaedam praedia extorsisset, tam in reprobrum sensum, tamque in languoris supereminentem peruenit statum ut cum uiuere recusaret, tam mori esset quod uiueret, quam uiuere quod mori uellet.

³¹Ildefonsus *De viris Praefatio* Fertur namque ex antiquitate ueteri quod potuisse fieri cernitur exemplo temporis noui.

³²Although Donatus was African, not Spanish, Ildefonsus deals only with the Spanish part of his career.

³³Asturius (ch. IV), Donatus (ch. III), Aurasius (ch. IV), Helladius (ch. VI), Nonnitus (ch. IX), Eugenius I (ch. XII).

four were bishops of Toledo and therefore obvious candidates for inclusion in view of the stated purpose of the preface. The other two fulfill his other stated purpose in composing the *De viris*, to provide examples for his contemporaries. In these cases he takes care to express specifically their roles as examples.³⁴ The expressions used in these circumstances - living example, more fully by example than by the published word - and also in the case of Asturius - more by the example of living than by the pen of writing - are reminiscent of the words of Augustine, who, on the presence before the congregation of the young man healed by St. Stephen, stated that "today the presence of this young man replaces a book...now joyfully read what you see...engrave in your memory what is written in him."³⁵ It is an acknowledgement that wisdom is not limited to the written word alone, but is also to be found in living examples. It is also an indication of the very different purpose of Ildefonsus' installment of the *De viris* from that of Jerome, Gennadius and Isidore. Its purpose is no longer to provide a work of reference for those who are required to refute the arguments of others, be they pagan or heretic, but, in part, to serve as a blueprint for the conduct of the audience itself. This suggests that the intended audience for this work was perhaps wider

³⁴Ildefonsus *De viris* III <Donatus> *tam uiuens uirtutum exemplis nobilis*; IX <Nonnitus> *rexit ecclesiam Dei meritorum exemplis amplius quam uerborum edictis*.

³⁵Ildefonsus *De viris* I *plus exemplo uiuendi quam calamo scribentis*; Augustine *Sermo cccxx PL XXXVIII col. 1442 Libellus hujus, aspectus est...in praesenti gaudentes legite quod videtis...et quod in libello conscriptum est, in vestram memoriam conscribatur*. I have quoted the translation by J.N. Hillgarth in his *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986): 28.

than for the earlier ones, albeit still largely limited to clerics.

Jacques Fontaine has suggested that the examples provided by the abbots and bishops included in Ildefonsus' *De viris* are presented as various incarnations of the ideal of the pastor put forth by Gregory the Great in his pastoral rule, and that it is for this reason that the chapter on Gregory preceeds the other thirteen *viri*. According to Fontaine, Gregory established an opposition between the actions and the words of the pastor and judged works to be superior to words. That that estimation was shared by Ildefonsus, he contends, is manifest in the fact that he deviated from the norm of the genre by including individuals who had not made literary contributions.³⁶ While there is no doubting Ildefonsus' great admiration for Gregory, and that this view of the value of works can be seen in his chapter on Helladius,³⁷ it must be remembered that only six of the *viri illustres* were not authors and the other eight, including Gregory himself, had composed works which Ildefonsus deemed worthy of listing. Although Gregory's pastoral ideal may well have influenced Ildefonsus's selection and presentation of the individuals he included in his work, there would seem to be more balance in Ildefonsus' view of the relative merits of actions and words than Professor Fontaine allows.

However, *exempla vivendi* were not the only objective of the *De viris*. It was also intended to emphasize the pre-eminent position

³⁶Fontaine "El *De viris*" 84-87.

³⁷Ildefonsus *De viris* VI *Scribere renuit, quia quod scribendum fuit, quotidianae operationis pagina demonstravit.*

of the see of Toledo and its bishops within the Spanish Church. Seven of the thirteen Spanish chapters are devoted to bishops of Toledo.³⁸ These chapters appear to be designed to establish the predominant position of the see of Toledo both by the divine favour shown to it and by the antiquity of its leading position within Spain. This claim is bolstered by the special sanctity and worthiness of its bishops. Although the line of bishops is followed continuously only from 603 to 657, Ildefonsus cites two earlier bishops whose circumstances further his claim. Asturius (c. 400), *sacerdotio beatus et miraculo dignus*, was led by divine revelation to the discovery of the martyrs of Compludo.³⁹ Montanus (522-531), bishop of Toledo "first see of the province of Carthagera"⁴⁰, whose claim to divine protection was already established in the preface, is also cited as the author of two letters in which he instructed that bishops from other sees should not consecrate churches outside their own dioceses.⁴¹ The seventh-century bishops follow in the same vein. Three of the five had already been shown

³⁸Asturius (I), Montanus (II), Aurasius (IV), Helladius (VI), Justus (VII), Eugene I (XII), and Eugene II (XIII).

³⁹Ildefonsus *De viris* I *diuina dicitur reuelatione commonitus, Complutensi sepultos municipio, quod ab urbe eius ferme sexagesimo miliario situm est, Dei martyres perscrutari.*

⁴⁰Ildefonsus *De viris* II *primae sedis prouinciae Carthaginis Toletanae urbis cathedram tenuit.*

⁴¹Ildefonsus *De viris* II *Scriptis epistolas duas ecclesiasticae utilitatis disciplina consertas, e quibus unam Palentiae habitatoribus. In qua presbyteres chrisma conficere episcoposque alienae diocesis alterius territorii ecclesias consecrare magna perhibetur prohibere auctoritate, sacrarum litterarum testimoniis adfirmans, id ipsum fieri penitus non licere...Aliam uero epistolam ad Turibium religiosum...conmittit ei sacerdotalis auctoritatem uigoris, per quam presbyteres chrisma conficere et episcopos alienae sortis alterius diocesis ecclesias consecrare magna compescat inuentione. Also see n. 30 supra.*

in the preface to be the beneficiaries of divine protection (*supra*. n. 30). In addition to their eminence as defenders of the truth, for great charity, numerous conversions and liturgical reform,⁴² Ildefonsus also emphasizes the close connection with the king and prominent place at court which some of these Toledan prelates held.⁴³ It has been noted above that Seville held its prominent place in the Spanish Church in the late sixth and early seventh century by virtue of the stature and character of its bishops (*supra* pg. 172). Ildefonsus, in his *De viris*, attempts to establish a similar reputation for the bishops of Toledo, both with regard to their personal worthiness and leadership and in the influence which they may have at court to the benefit of the church. He does this not only for the recent bishops, but seeks to establish such prominence for the past. The association in the preface of the role of Toledo as both royal city and holy city emphasizes the advantage which the Toledan metropolitan has over the Sevillians by reason of his proximity, and by extension, easy access to the king (*supra*. n. 28).

Although the seven chapters discussed above can be seen to be directly relevant to Ildefonsus' stated purpose, there remains the question of the remaining entries which comprise half of the work.

⁴²Ildefonsus *De viris* IV (Aurasius) *in defensione ueritatis*; VI (Helladius) *miserationes eleemosinarumque copias tam largiter*; XII (Eugenius I) *Nam numeros, statum, incrementa detrimentaque, cursus recursusque lunarium tanta peritia nouit, ut considerationes disputationis eius auditorem et in stuporem uerterent et in desiderabilem doctrinam inducerent*; XIII (Eugenius II) *Scipsit et duos libellos, unum diuersi carminis metro, alium diuersi operis prosa concretos, qui ad multorum industriam eius ex hoc tenaciter sanctam ualuerunt commendare memoriam.*

⁴³Ildefonsus *De viris* VI (Helladius), XIII (Eugenius II).

These include five bishops of other Spanish sees,⁴⁴ the African monk Donatus, and pope Gregory I. If Ildefonsus' purpose was to glorify Toledo, why were these others included? There is, it would seem, no single answer to this. One might suggest, on a simple level, that the author, although intending to promote Toledo, was wary of creating resentment in other parts of the country were he to exclude all non-Toledans from his list of illustrious men. He therefore chose to include a few of these others. It is worthy of note that, with the exception of Caesaraugusta which merited two chapters, no more than one bishop from any other city was included. In each of these cases it is the man, not the see, which is being honoured. Ildefonsus' criteria for his selection would seem to stem largely from their involvement in two of his own personal interests, monasticism and the liturgy. Nonnitus of Gerona and John of Caesaraugusta had been monks before becoming bishops and Donatus, a monk from Africa, was credited, although mistakenly, by Ildefonsus with first bringing monastic observance and a rule to Spain.⁴⁵ Gregory the Great, the only pope included in the *De viris*, and the only individual on that list who had never been in Spain, also began his career as a monk. Although Ildefonsus does not mention Gregory's monastic origins, he does refer the reader back to the entry on him in Isidore's *De viris*, as well as noting

⁴⁴John of Saragossa (V), Isidore of Seville (VIII), Nonnitus of Gerona (IX), Conantius of Palencia (X), and Braulio of Saragossa (XI).

⁴⁵Ildefonsus *De viris* IX <Nonnitus> *vir professione monachus*; III <Donatus> *professione et opere monachus*.

a book of pastoral rule published by the pope.⁴⁶ Three of the other non-Toledan bishops contained in the work are noted for having contributed to the liturgy. John of Caesaraugusta composed songs and prayers for the ecclesiastical offices and a brief work on calculating the date of Easter, Conantius of Palentina composed melodies and prayers, and the chants written by Braulio of Caesaraugusta are also noted.⁴⁷ To reiterate, it would seem, then, that in the choice of men to include along with his illustrious Toledans Ildefonsus was guided by their contributions to fields which were of particular interest to him, but took some care to distribute these tributes among the various sees of Spain.

There remains the chapter on Isidore of Seville, who was neither Toledan nor monk and whose contributions to the liturgy are not mentioned in the brief account which Ildefonsus gives of him. It has been questioned why Ildefonsus "treated Isidore at all when he dealt with him in such an incomplete fashion". The same scholar was puzzled that Ildefonsus dismissed Braulio of Caesaraugusta with a brief summary.⁴⁸ One might approach the question in a different way and ask not why they were dealt with so summarily but why these two were included at all. Certainly Braulio's liturgical

⁴⁶Ildefonsus *De viris* Appendix *Hic namque in exordio episcopatus sui edidit librum regulae pastoralis and de quibus Isidorus beatae memoriae mentionem facit; Praefatio beatissimum Gregorium sanctae memoriae Isidorus adnotauerat.*

⁴⁷Ildefonsus *De viris* V *In ecclesiasticis officiis quaedam eleganter et sono et oratione composuit (John); X melodias soni multas nobiliter edidit. Orationum quoque libellum de omnium decenter conscripsit proprietate psalmorum (Conantius); XI Clarus et iste habitus canoribus et quibusdam opusculis (Braulio).*

⁴⁸Braegelmann 54-55.

contributions were noted, but Ildefonsus had already included a Caesaragustan bishop, Braulio's elder brother John, who had written for the divine office. Many of the works of Isidore listed by Braulio in the *Praenotatio* are omitted. It might be suggested that the answer in both cases is the same, that Ildefonsus did not include Isidore and Braulio for the same reasons for which he chose the other non-Toledans, but rather in the service of his primary purpose, to bolster the prestige of the Toledan see. There existed a line of succession from Isidore, through his pupil Braulio to the most recent bishop of Toledo. Eugenius II had in his turn been the disciple of Braulio before he become bishop of Toledo.⁴⁹ The inclusion of Isidore and Braulio would serve to remind the reader of this connection and so transfer some part of the legacy of the celebrated bishop of Seville to Toledo.⁵⁰ It would also suggest an orderly transition of the prestige which the metropolitans of Seville had enjoyed in earlier years to Toledo.

The *De viris illustribus* of Ildefonsus appears, then, to be much in accord with the dual purpose outlined by the author in his

⁴⁹Roger Collins *Early Medieval Spain* 73.

⁵⁰I remain unconvinced by Fontaine's contention that Ildefonsus' tone in the chapter on Isidore suggests that his admiration of the Sevillian was mixed with reserve ("El *De viris*" 87-88). I do not see the same suspicion of the *Etymologiae* as a concession to profane learning that Fontaine sees in the words *Scipsit quoque in ultimo, ad petitionem Braulionis, Caesaraugustani episcopi, librum Etymologiarum quem, cum multis annis conaretur perficere, in eius opere diem extremum uisis est concludisse*, nor any particular reserve in the fact that Ildefonsus did not list all of Isidore's works. Apart from the suggestions I have put forth regarding the brevity of the chapter on Isidore, I would add two points. First, Isidore's considerable corpus had already been listed by Braulio, a fact of which Ildefonsus may well have been aware. The second point is, given that Ildefonsus did not list all of Isidore's works, why should he have chosen to include a work of which he did not approve, particularly in view of Fontaine's emphasis on the function of these *vires* as examples to others.

preface, a preservation of the illustrious deeds and character of the bishops of Toledo to the end of enhancing the prestige of that city within the hierarchy of the Spanish Church, tempered by the author's diplomatic inclusion of other, carefully selected, famous men, and to provide edifying examples to his readers. It is, further, an indication of the growing preoccupation of Spanish historians and clerics with the internal business of the peninsula over more "international" concerns.

The only other properly historical work to be produced in Spain in the late seventh century was composed by another bishop of Toledo, Julian, who held that position from 680 until his death in 690. The main source of information we have for Julian's life is the *Vita* written by his immediate successor in Toledo, the bishop Felix. Further information about Julian and the time in which he lived is provided by the later chronicles *Continuatio Isidoriana Hispana*, the *Epitome Ovetense* and the *Chronica* attributed to Alfonso III, although the accuracy of the material found there is the subject of some question.⁵¹

The *Vita* of Felix relates that Julian was born and baptized in Toledo.⁵² The date of his birth has been variously placed between

⁵¹*Continuatio Isidoriana Hispana* MGH AA XI 334-369, is a mixture of Byzantine, Arabic and Spanish material covering the period from 610 to 754; *Epitome Ovetense* MGH AA XI; *Chronica* of Alfonso III *Cronicas Asturianas* Ed. Juan Gil Fernandez Oviedo, 1985. For a fuller discussion of these sources, see Murphy "Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom" 3-4.

⁵²*Vita S. Juliani Toletani Episcopi* PL XCVI 445 *cuius videlicet civitatis proprius civis exstitit, atque in ejusdem urbis principali ecclesia sacrosancti baptismatis fluentis est lotus.*

640 and 644.⁵³ Although Felix reveals nothing about Julian's family background, the *Continuatio Hispana* ascribes to him a Jewish background, although born of Christian parents.⁵⁴ While this claim, written more than half a century after the bishop's death, has been disputed, it is generally accepted by modern historians.⁵⁵ Most do not see any difficulty in reconciling Julian's Judaic heritage with his later harshness against the Jews, and it has even been suggested that his hostility towards them has been exaggerated and was not more virulent than that of his contemporaries in seventh-century Spain.⁵⁶ The *Vita* also reveals that Julian was a pupil of Eugenius II - following in the educational tradition stemming from Isidore of Seville - and was

⁵³Roger Collins suggests that Julian was born in 640 in "Julian of Toledo and the Education of Kings in Late Seventh-Century Spain" Revised version of "Julian of Toledo and the Royal Succession in Late Seventh-Century Spain" in *Early Medieval Kingship*, eds. P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood. Leeds: School of History, University of Leeds, 1977 (Variorum, 1992) 36; Francis X Murphy in "Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom in Spain" *Speculum* 27 (1952): 5 says that Julian was born in or before 642; while J.N. Hillgarth suggests his date of birth was about 644 (*Corpus Christianorum* 115, viii).

⁵⁴*Continuatio Hispana* 50 in cuius tempore iam Iulianus episcopus, ex traduce Iudeorum,...a parentibus Christianis progenitus.

⁵⁵Murphy "Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom" 5; Collins "Julian of Toledo" 36; Julio Campos "El De comprobatione sextae aetatis libri tres de San Julián de Toledo" *La Patrologia Toledano-Visigoda* (Madrid, 1970): 245-6; Hillgarth *Corpus Christianorum* v. 115, viii; et al.

⁵⁶P.D. King suggests that Julian may have been vigorous in his hostility to the Jews because of his Jewish origin rather than in spite of it (*Law and Society in the Visigothic Kingdom* Cambridge, 1972: 134). Francis Murphy, on the other hand, writes "too much must not be read into <Julian's> writings against the Jews. In the *Historia*, for example, he is writing of a particular rebellion in which certain Jews played a definite part; and although the phrase he uses in referring to the Jewish participants is far from elegant, he is no more violent against them than he is against the others involved in the insurrection" in, "Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom" 13. Murphy adds that in the *De comprobatione*, Julian's approach to the subject is in the patristic tradition. I suspect that the truth falls somewhere between these two views, that Julian shared the anti-Jewish sentiment prevalent in his time, but was probably no more nor less hostile toward the Jews than his contemporaries.

made bishop on 29 January 680, the second successor of Ildefonsus, following Quiricus. He died on 6 March 690 and was buried in the church of St. Leocadia.⁵⁷

Apart from the four Councils of Toledo - the Twelfth to the Fifteenth - that we know Julian to have presided over, evidence exists for two other important events in his life after he became bishop. Both are controversial. The first of these is the minor tempest surrounding communications between Julian and Rome concerning the condemnation of Monothelitism. While a complete discussion of this event is not appropriate here, it would perhaps be germane to note the impression which Julian's spirited defense in 686 of his own orthodoxy in response to papal criticism made on some later historians who saw the incident as evidence of Julian's ambition leading the Spanish Church to the brink of schism. While such a negative view of the situation has been argued against by Francis X. Murphy in his article of 1951, not everyone remains convinced.⁵⁸

⁵⁷*Elogium PL XCVI 450-451 Praesulatus autem honorem et sacerdotii dignitatem annis decem obtinuit, mense uno, diebus septem. Quique etiam inevitabilis mortis praeventus occasu, anno tertio Egicanis principis, pridie Nonas Martii, aera septingentesima vigesima octava, diem vitae clausit extremum, ac sic in basilica gloriosissimae sanctae Leocadiae virginis sorte sepulcrale est tumulatus.*

⁵⁸Francis X. Murphy, "Julian of Toledo and the Condemnation of Monothelitism in Spain" *Mélanges Joseph de Ghellinck* t. I (Éditions J. Duculot, 1951): 361-73. Murphy cites the earlier views of such historians as Görres, Gams and Paul á Wengen that this was an act of defiance of the Roman pontiff on the part of Julian which would have led to schism of the Spanish Church had it not been forestalled by the Arab invasion, but Murphy himself argues that the Visigothic prelates had a proper respect for the pope and Julian was merely defending his theological orthodoxy (371-72). Hillgarth (*Corpus Christianorum* 115 x-xi) suggests that while the Spanish Church was justifiably proud of its accomplishments, it still had the proper respect for the Apostolic authority of Rome. Collins, too, sees in these events no justification for the view that the Spanish Church was headed for schism (*Early Medieval Spain* 79).

The second of these events has also led some scholars to a negative impression of Julian's character. This incident was the deposition of King Wamba in 680. Although it does not bear directly on the subject matter of the *Historia Wambae*, it does affect our understanding of the relationship Julian had with that king and with the Visigothic monarchy in general. The known facts are straightforward. As recorded in the minutes of the Twelfth Council of Toledo held in January 681, Wamba became ill in October 680 and, thought to be dying, was made a penitent while in an unconscious state. Recovering from illness, Wamba found that he was prevented by canon law from resuming the throne. According to evidence presented at the council, he then appointed Erwig as his successor.⁵⁹ Opposition to his succession and controversy over the admission to penance of an unconscious person compelled Erwig to summon a council at Toledo, the Twelfth, to settle the matter. Having considered the documents presented in support of Erwig's claims, the bishops declared the penitance state binding even when the recipient is unconscious and released the people from their oath to Wamba.⁶⁰

The problem arises from the interpretation put on these events

Thompson, while describing the schism scenario as extreme, does describe Julian's response as firm and uncompromising and his language offensive (*The Goths* 241). King (*Law and Society*, 123-124) on the other hand, does not consider the suggestion of impending schism implausible and finds Murphy's argument unconvincing.

⁵⁹XII Toledo 1, Vives 386-87. The canon which prevented Wamba, as a penitent, from resuming the throne is VI Toledo 17.

⁶⁰XII Toledo ii.

by later chroniclers. Although the *Continuatio Isidoriana* makes no mention of the manner in which Erwig gained the throne, the later *Chronica* of Alfonso III claims that Erwig had administered some sort of potion to the king to make him unconscious and then convinced the bishop, Julian, and the nobles that Wamba was dying and that penance should be administered. The chronicler makes it very clear that he did not consider Julian to be part of the plot.⁶¹ Nineteenth-century historians tended to accept this later version of events and even went so far as to implicate the bishop himself in the plot, supposedly in reaction to Wamba's legislation requiring military service from the clergy.⁶² This extreme view has now been largely rejected by historians, although not everyone is entirely convinced that Erwig was blameless and even Julian is still under suspicion in some quarters.⁶³ If Julian was indeed

⁶¹*Continuatio Hispana* 49. *Chronica Alfonso III (Rotensis)* 2 *Erbam cui nomen est spartus illi <Erwig> dedit potandam; statimque ei memoria est ablata. Quumque episcopus ciuitatis seu et optimates palatii qui regis fideles erant, cui penitus causa potionis latebat, uidissent regem...*

⁶²*LV ix 2, 8.* For a discussion of earlier views, see Hillgarth *Corpus Christianorum* 115 xii; Murphy "Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom" 17.

⁶³Murphy ("Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom" 17-19) argues that while the story of the administration of a drug to the king is not impossible, it is more likely to be legend. He argues that the certain invention of certain details in the later chronicles with regard to the deposition of Wamba would lead one to discard the entire account and suggests that the story suggested by XII Toledo may in fact be true. Hillgarth (*Corpus Christianorum* 115 xii-xiii) considers the question open, although he does not see Wamba's legislation regarding military service as having been contentious and suggests that it would not be surprising if the unusual circumstances of Wamba's deposition led to the rise of the legend regarding the event. Collins (*Early Medieval Spain* 79) suggests that Julian may not have been displeased to get rid of Wamba at XII Toledo, but in his "Julian of Toledo" 38, he rejects the conspiracy theory and wonders why, if it were true, Erwig did not just poison the king outright. Thompson (*The Goths* 230) contends only that if the nobility and bishops had wanted Wamba to continue on the throne, they could have waived the seventeenth canon of VI Toledo, but he notes that he takes a less lenient view of Erwig's role in the matter than does Murphy (230 n.1). King (*Law and Society*

involved in some complicity in upholding Erwig's claims at XII Toledo, if not in an actual conspiracy before the fact, it would indicate that, not only did tension exist between Wamba and the clergy, but that the bishop had considerably altered his own opinion of that king since writing the *Historia Wambae*. Unfortunately we cannot be certain about the true state of these events and Julian's involvement in them.

Of the seventeen works by Julian of Toledo attested to by Felix,⁶⁴ the *Historia Wambae*⁶⁵ was very likely of secondary importance in the view of its author to his theological texts, yet

19 n.4) remains suspicious of both Erwig and Julian of Toledo.

⁶⁴*Elogium* PL XCVI cols. 448-450. The extant works are *Prognosticum futuri saeculi*, *Apologeticum de tribus capitulis*, *De comprobatione sextae aetatis*, *Antikeimena* and *Historia Wambae*, in addition to the *Elogium Ildefonsi* not mentioned in Felix's *Elogium*. For a discussion of other texts attributed to Julian, see Hillgarth *Corpus Christianorum* 115, xiv-xv.

⁶⁵The *Historia Wambae*, little known outside of Spain, is preserved in later copies made from earlier identifiable but now lost manuscripts. The earliest of these lost manuscripts is the ninth-century *Codex Soriensis* destroyed in the Escorial fire of 1671. Copies of this *codex* made by Bishop Juan Bautista Perez in the later sixteenth-century were inserted in three collections of the same century: Segorbe, Archivo de la Catedral G. est. I; Toledo, Bibl. capitular 27.26; and Madrid, Bibl. nacional 1376 (F 38). The *Historia Wambae* is also contained in the thirteenth-century Madrid, Academia de la Historia A 189. An eighteenth-century edition of the *Ep. Pauli* and the *Iudicium* by Fr. X. M. de la Huerta y Vega is based on an unidentified manuscript. The twelfth-century *Codex Ouetensis* was lost in the eighteenth century, but a sixteenth-century copy survives in Madrid, Bibl. Nac. 1346 (F 58). Another lost twelfth-century manuscript, the *Codex Moissiacensis*, is known to have still been extant in the seventeenth century. Copies of the second part of this manuscript is preserved in the sixteenth-century Città del Vaticano, Regin. lat. 667 (1009) and Paris, Bibl. nat. lat. 2769. An edition of the history was produced by A. Duchesne in 1636 based on the *Codex Moissiacensis* and two other manuscripts. Duchesne's edition was reproduced by M. Bouquet in 1739 and H. Florez in 1751. In 1785 F. de Lorenzana published an edition containing the *Ep. Pauli*, *Historia Wambae*, *Insultatio* and *Iudicium* based on Toledo, Bibl. capitular 27.26 and the editions of Duchesne and Florez. Lorenzana's edition is reproduced in the *Patrologia Latina* XCVI, 1862. The *Historia* along with the *Ep. Pauli*, *Insultatio* and *Iudicium* were edited by W. Levison for the *Monumenta Germaniae historica, script. rerum Merov V* in 1910, reprinted in *Corpus Christianorum* 115. Citations from the text are taken from the Levison edition. A more comprehensive study of the manuscripts and editions may be found in Levison's introduction to his edition in the *MGH*, and summarized in the introduction to the *Corpus Christianorum* reprint.

in the study of historiography it stands out both in its isolated position as a work of Spanish history in its period and in the unique nature of its style in the *corpus* of historical writing in Visigothic Spain.

The history itself covers only a single year, from September 672 to September 673, and relates only two events, the election and coronation of Wamba and the revolt led by the *dux* Paul in Gaul throughout the summer of 673. It is singular among the histories of the Visigothic period for its detailed concentration on such narrow events and for its imitation of the classical style of composing histories. Julian appears to have been directly inspired in the form and style of his composition by the *Bellum Catilinae* and the *Bellum Jugurthae* of Sallust, and the influence of Vergil and Pliny is also detectable.⁶⁶ The work follows the classical form in its concentration on a single topic and narrowly limited events in contrast with the world chronicles of earlier ecclesiastical authors and even the more specifically focused *Historia Gothorum* of Isidore of Seville, as well as in the introduction of literary dialogue and speeches put into the mouths of the protagonists. Julian also follows the classical style in his introduction in

⁶⁶Hillgarth "Historiography" 299; Collins "Julian of Toledo" 39-40. Collins points out that the writings of Sallust were extremely popular with grammarians and, as Julian was the author or inspirer of a grammar, it is not surprising that the works of Sallust were available to him. Collins also remarks on the possibility of the *Insultatio* having been inspired by pseudo-Sallustian invectives, but see Hillgarth *op. cit.* 301 for an alternative prototype. The inspiration of classical histories may also largely account for the classical and imperial vocabulary and images of power which Teillet detects in the text (*Des Goths* 587), although some such imperial vocabulary may well have become commonplace among Visigothic royalty since the time of Leovigild and the assumption of some of the imperial trappings.

which he expounds on the didactic nature of the work in instructing the present by examples from the past.⁶⁷

It would, I think, be a mistake to underestimate the scriptural influence on the text as Roger Collins seems to do. Although he rightly points out the similarities to imperial practice and classical style in the coronation and the events leading up to it, his contention that the role of Old Testament influence on Visigothic kingship should be minimised and that the *Historia* is "unequivocally written in the secular tradition of classical historiography" disregards the attributions of scriptural quotations from Kings and the Psalms to the king within the text.⁶⁸ Suzanne Teillet suggests that Wamba appears, in the *Historia*, more as a successor to the Old Testament kings than an heir to the emperors. She compares the story of Wamba with that of Saul in the first book of Kings, who, shortly after receiving unction and the acclamation of the people, went to war against the Ammonites.⁶⁹ Certainly the ecclesiastical impingement on the text is minimal compared with the earlier historical works we have considered, but it is not completely absent here.

The intention of the history may be approached from two

⁶⁷Collins compares Julian's expression of a didactic purpose in his preface with similar prefaces of Sallust. It is also comparable to remarks made by Livy in the introduction to his history of Rome (1.1).

⁶⁸Collins "Julian of Toledo" 43; for scriptural quotes used in the *Historia* see Hillgarth "Historiography" 300.

⁶⁹Teillet *Des Goths* 599-602. However, her contention that this imitation of the Old Testament kings was also intentionally done by Wamba, while it may be true, cannot be concluded on the basis of the *Historia Wambae* alone. There is nothing in the text to allow the reader to conclude that these parallels with the Old Testament were anything but the formulations of the author.

different perspectives, its educational purpose as set out by the author in the introduction and the aspect of political commentary contained in the presentation of its two main events. Julian, in the introduction, seems particularly interested in the effect his work will have on the minds of the young, suggesting that the text may have been designed, although not necessarily primarily, or exclusively, for use in the schoolroom.⁷⁰ If Julian was indeed the author, or instigator, of the *Ars Grammatica* attributed to him, the *Historia Wambae* may well have been intended as a companion piece for use in the practical application of the elements of the grammar. This, apart from the subject matter, would help to account for Julian's selection of a classical formulation for the work, which would provide students with a Latin text in the classical style but containing a subject which would be more useful and edifying for pupils who are both Hispano-Visigothic and Christian than would the works of pagan Roman authors. The subject matter of the *Historia* would indicate the type of pupil to which the lessons of the text were directed. In the introduction, Julian states that it is his wish that the examples of the past should provoke subsequent generations to virtue.⁷¹ The examples which he invokes are concerned with loyalty to the legitimate ruler, military courage and zeal in the defense of one's honour and country, and

⁷⁰*Historia Wamba* 1 *Solet virtutis esse praesidio triumphorum relata narratio animosque iuvenum ad virtutis adtollere signum, quidquid gloriae de praeteritis fuerit praedicatum.* Collins, in "Julian of Toledo" 39-40, makes a strong argument for the didactic purpose of the *Historia*.

⁷¹*Historia Wamba* 1 *per quod ad virtutem subsequiva saecula provocemus.*

respect for the faith and all its appurtenances. This would suggest that the history was directed not towards clerical students, but to the education of the youth of the secular aristocracy.⁷²

It is these examples alluded to above, and the manner in which Julian presents them, which lead to the second aspect of the history to be considered, its political position. Although the *Historia* covers two events, the coronation and the rebellion, these may be considered as one within the dominant theme of the work, the legitimacy of rule. The main event of the history is the rebellion which Julian has used to create parallel scenarios of legitimate and illegitimate rule in the persons of Wamba and Paul. The coronation of Wamba becomes a necessary component of this parallel in order to create a contrast between the lawful means of obtaining royal authority and the unlawful means later used by Paul. Each action or reaction by the rebel leader, each aspect of his character is presented in the history as a dark shadowing of the actions and character of the king, a negative counterpart of legitimate authority.

The coronation of Wamba, described in a relatively detailed and self-contained narrative, emphasizes certain characteristics

⁷²This was also suggested by Collins in "Julian of Toledo" 40, as similar to the recommendations made in the pseudo-Isidorian text, *Institutionum Disciplinae* (P. Pascal, ed. *Traditio* 13 426-7) which he dates in the late seventh century. Collins questions the view that the *carmina* referred to in this text are Gothic epics and suggests that rather they may well have been Latin (Vergil) *carmina*. This may well have inspired Julian to add what he would have considered a more appropriate epic to the collection. However, the date of composition of the *Institutionum Disciplinae* is uncertain and it may not have been written until after Julian's history (see J.N.Hillgarth "The Position of Isidorian Studies: A Critical Review of the Literature 1936-1975" *Studi Medievali* 3^a Serie XXIV, II 1983: 842).

appropriate to the legitimate assumption of rule which throw into relief the manner in which Paul donned the trappings of his unlawful rule.⁷³ Thus, the author emphasizes the unanimity of all the people in selecting Wamba as their king in contrast with the apparent coercion used by the usurper to bind the people to him by an oath after having been chosen as their leader.⁷⁴ Moreover, Wamba's reluctance to assume the throne, whether merely a literary device, an expected ritualized act or an accurate account of his reaction, portrays an appropriate humility when offered such high station, which serves to emphasize the ambition embodied in Paul's immediate acceptance of his own election.⁷⁵

Wamba's insistence on delaying the ceremony of his anointing for nineteen days, until he had entered the city of Toledo⁷⁶ serves a twofold purpose in the narrative. First, it bestows upon his anointing the legitimacy which is associated with Toledo not only as the *urbs regia*, but from the antiquity of that city's claim

⁷³The coronation of Paul is not dignified by being given its own narrative, but must be gleaned from various parts of the *HW* and its appended companion pieces.

⁷⁴Wamba: *HW* 2 *subito una omnes in concordiam versi, uno quodammodo non tam animo quam oris affectu pariter provocati, illum se delectanter habere principem clamant*; Paul: *HW* 8 *Quin potius ait: 'Caput regiminis ex vobis ipsis eligit; Iudicium 6 ad quas ipse perfidus Paulus populum sibi iurare fecerat.*

⁷⁵Wamba: *HW* 2 *Quos vir omni ex parte refugiens, lacrimosis singultibus interclusus, nullis precibus vincitur nulloque voto flectitur populorum, modo non se suffecturum tot ruinis imminentibus clamans, modo senio confectum sese pronuntians*; Paul: *HW* 8 *At ubi idem Paulus sui consilii adcelerationem inspexit consensionem illico propriae voluntatis adibuit.* Teillet contrasts the passive attitude of Wamba to the acquisition of power with the active will to power of Paul (*Des Goths* 591).

⁷⁶*HW* 3.

to being the seat of royal power.⁷⁷ The second purpose is to remove any suspicion of impropriety in the manner of his election or of ambition on his part by allowing, as it were, the opportunity for sober second thought on the part of those who had chosen him.⁷⁸ Wamba's fastidiousness in this regard serves as a counterpoint to the actions of the usurper Paul.

The action of divine providence, the exercising of the will of God, in the election and coronation of Wamba is repeatedly stressed. Wamba is willed by God to be worthy to rule the Goths, he is present on the day and at the site of the death of the previous king by a sort of divine pre-election, he has obtained the throne as a sign from God.⁷⁹ This divine protection over Wamba continues throughout the history. A guard of angels is seen, supposedly by an independent observer from another tribe, to hover over his camp as a sign, and after his victory Julian attributes a speech to the king in which, quoting Psalms, he acknowledges that responsibility for that victory rests entirely with God, the king of all kings.⁸⁰ In counterpoint, the ending of the career of the usurper Paul in humiliation and defeat is a judgement from God for his treachery

⁷⁷HW 3 *solium peteret paternae antiquitatis.*

⁷⁸HW 3 *ne, citata regni ambitione permotus, usurpasse potius vel furasse quam percepisse a Domino signum tantae gloriae putatetur.*

⁷⁹HW 2 *quem digne principari Dominus voluit; HW 3 praelectione illa quam praemisimus populi adclamatio extitit. Nam eundem virum quamquam divinitus.*

⁸⁰HW 23 *Ubi divina protectio evidentis signi ostensione monstrata est. Visum est enim, ut fertur, cuidam externae gentis homini angelorum excubiis protectus religiosi principis exercitus esse angelosque ipsos super castra ipsius exercitus volitatione suae protectionis signa portendere; HW 25 'Te, Deus, conlaudo, regem omnium regum qui humiliasti sicut vulneratum superbum et in virtute brachii tui conteruisti adversarios meos.*

and sacrilege.⁸¹

The election of Wamba may have been by the unanimous acclamation of the people, but his divine pre-selection is revealed by the miraculous sign which appears at his anointing.⁸² Roger Collins has suggested that in using the symbol of the bee Julian drew his inspiration from a passage of the fourth *Georgic* of Vergil which refers to two warring "king" bees and recommends that the loser should be killed and the winner "become absolute in the kingdom". Collins equates the political philosophy embodied in this phrase with the events of the first half of the seventh century in Spain in which kings seized and held on to the throne by military strength and unsuccessful rivals were disposed of.⁸³ It would, perhaps, be more to the point to connect this image with the upcoming *contretemps* between Wamba and Paul, and indeed Julian describes the sign as a portent of Wamba's future good fortune.⁸⁴ Could Julian have seen the bee as a representation of Wamba, the triumphant king emerging from the smoke of rebellion and battle as the absolute ruler of the kingdom, suggesting that the outcome of

⁸¹HW 20 *tabefactus deposuit, miro occultoque Dei iudicio id agente; HW*
30 *Nec enim ista sine dispensatione iusti iudicii Dei eisdem accessisse credendum est.*

⁸²HW 2 *quem sacerdotalis unctio declaravit; HW* 4 *Nam mox e vertice ipso, ubi oleum ipsum perfusum fuerat, evaporatio quaedam fumo similis in modum columnae sese erexit in capite, et e loco ipso capitis apis visa est prosilisse.*

⁸³Collins "Julian of Toledo" 47, and in n. 86 *Georgics* IV lines 88-90. Collins notes that Roman entomology classified as king bees what are now known as queen bees, and that this classification was accepted by Isidore (*Etym* XII viii) and so by Julian.

⁸⁴HW 4 *quod utique signum cuiusdam felicitatis sequuturæ speciem portenderet.*

the struggle with Paul was foreordained?

The coronation of Wamba, surrounded with all the signs of divine approval, is in contrast to the coronation of Paul, in which the very act of crowning is tainted with sacrilege. Not only had Paul broken his oath to his king and country, but his very crown, which had been a gift from Reccared to the shrine of St. Felix, was stolen from the church.⁸⁵ The parallels of contrast continue throughout the campaign in Gaul. Whereas Paul steals from the churches and he and his companions commit sacrilege,⁸⁶ Wamba not only restores to the churches what rightfully belongs to them, but he even demonstrates respect and mercy to the rebel bishop Argebadus.⁸⁷ Whereas Wamba exhorts his men to action by appealing to their honour and love of country, Paul, when sent to suppress the rebellion in Gaul, tries to turn the mind of the young men away from fighting and later, in his confrontation with Wamba's troops, attempts to incite his followers to battle through fear.⁸⁸ Throughout the history the courage and high character of Wamba is

⁸⁵HW 26 *Paulus...tyrannidi adiungeret sacrilegium...et coronam illam auream, quam divae memoriae Reccaredus princeps ad corpus beatissimi Felicis obtulerat.*

⁸⁶HW 26 *vasa argenti quam plurima de thesauris dominicis rapta; HW 12 Ubi dum Wittimirus armata adhuc manu ecclesiam peteret, accessu nostrorum turbatus, post aram beatae virginis Mariae se vindicaturum non reverentia loci miser, sed ultore gladio testabatur.*

⁸⁷HW 26 *Iubet tamen thesauri omnem quam ceperant copiam diligentiori servare custodia, non avaritiae quaestu inlectus, sed amore divino provacatur, scilicet ut res sacratae Deo facilius possent discernere et cultibus divinis restitui; HW 21 princeps...erat misericordiae visceribus affluens, et ipse inlacrimans, sublebari episcopum a terra praecepit; HW 22 'Certum tene', ait, 'quoddixero. Victus precibus tuis, dono tibi animas quas petisti.*

⁸⁸HW 9; 7, 16.

thrown into sharp relief by the cowardice of the usurper. In a final parallel, the triumphant return of the legitimate king into Toledo is set beside the ignominious parading of Paul and his followers.⁸⁹ The style of the history, although relating an actual event, becomes highly stylized, almost formulaic, in its juxtaposition of the two protagonists. The actual event, particularly the battle scenes are secondary to the contest between, not so much two men, as two concepts of kingship, one embodying all that is desirable, the other all that is not. Seen in this way, the history comes close to being more of a parable than anything else.⁹⁰

Before considering further the purpose which may lie behind the history, two lesser themes which appear in it should be explored. These concern the concept of nation and the status of the city of Toledo. It is tempting to see in the *Historia Wambae* the emergent concept of Spain as a nation with a population united under one king, whose position as king is in relation not only to his subjects, but to the country itself. In Julian's use of the

⁸⁹HW 29 *Et tamen, sub quo celebri triumpho regiam urbem intraverit, de inimicis exultans; HW 30 Etenim quarto fere ab urbe regia miliario Paulus princeps tyrannidis vel ceteri incentories seditionum eius, decalvatis capitibus, abradis barbis pedibusque nudatis, subsqualentibus veste vel habitu induti, camelorum vehiculis imponuntur. Rex ipse perditionis praeibat in capite, omni confusionis ignominia dignus et picea ex coreis laurea coronatus. Sequebatur deinde hunc regem suum longa deductione ordo suorum dispositus ministrorum, eisdem omnes quibus relatum est vehiculis insedentes eisdemque inclusionibus acti, hinc inde adstantibus populis urbem intrantes.*

⁹⁰Teillet compares the style and vocabulary of the history to a *Vita* which is meant to serve as an example (*Des Goths* 603). While it is comparable with the highly formulaic style of hagiography in which the saint becomes a 'type' which is almost interchangeable with the *Vitae* of other saints, just as Wamba, as a religious king can be seen as a 'type' or *exemplum*, one should not, I think, read into it the intention on the part of the author to present Wamba, personally, as a saint, or the *Historia* as hagiography.

phrase *totius gentis et patriae communio* with regard to the election of Wamba, or of *pro patria quiete* in the king's exhortation to his troops, his reference to Wamba's army as the *exercitus Hispaniae* or the *Spani*⁹¹, and most especially the personification of Spain and Gaul in opposition in the *Insultatio* one could read a sense of nation, of *patria* replacing *gens* as the dominant political self-awareness in late seventh-century Spain.

However, there are other indications, particularly in the election and coronation section of the history, which indicate that the king was still to some extent considered a king of the Gothic people rather than of a geographically defined nation. In the acclamation of the new king by those assembled at the deathbed of Reccesuinth, it is the declared wish of those present that Wamba, and no other, shall rule *the Goths*.⁹² Wamba himself expresses the desire to receive the assent of men of position to his election upon his return to Toledo, and it is later noted that he was forced to accept the kingdom by the pressure of the whole race.⁹³

These passages suggest that even at this date there existed some ambiguity in the perception of the relationship between king, people and country. The definition of that relationship appears to have fluctuated according to the circumstances within which it was

⁹¹*HW* 2, 7, 13, 19.

⁹²*HW* 2 *clamant illum se nec alium in Gothis principari.*

⁹³*HW* 3 *positorum consensus*. This suggests that Wamba sought the consent of the whole Gothic nobility who were eligible to elect a king and not just that of those who were present at Gerticos. As Collins points out ("Julian of Toledo" 42), there is no mention in the history of clerical involvement in the election or that any bishops were present at Gerticos.

being defined. In the matter of the royal election, the more personal relationship between king and subjects dominates and Gothic ethnicity plays an important part in that relationship. However, when the situation involves an encounter with a geographically external entity, the king's territorial rights and responsibilities come to the fore. *Patria* becomes a more central concept and emphasis on the Goths gives way to the *Spani*. The king is no longer seen as ruler of the Goths, but as ruler of a territory and all who are resident within it.⁹⁴ The fact that the perception of the king's role and relationship with his subjects could fluctuate to such a degree within the bounds of a single historical narrative suggests that, not only was it no longer clearly defined, but that it was in the process of being redefined, a process cut short by the Arab conquest of 711.⁹⁵

The role of the city of Toledo, as it is presented in the *Historia Wambae*, is far more straightforward. For the most part, Julian's concept of the position of that city within the context of the Visigothic kingdom of Spain is confined to the third chapter of the history and is defined by the role it is to play in the royal coronation. Wamba's refusal to be consecrated king anywhere but

⁹⁴Although Teillet, rightly I think, sees in the *Historia* a concept of "king" and "nation" within the context of war with another "nation", I think that her equating of the nation of the Goths with *Hispania* in the context of that war (*Des Goths* 585) is not quite accurate. When the king represents *Hispania* outside of the kingdom, it would seem that, at least in the history of Julian, *Hispania* represents all the inhabitants of Spain and not just a Gothic "nation".

⁹⁵It is of interest to note that this ambiguity exists in the work of a non-Goth. Julian seems both to accept the traditional Gothic relationship of king and people and at the same time to embrace the new elements of king and nation. It would be interesting to know to what extent the Goths themselves accepted or even acknowledged the changing role of the king.

Toledo places that city in the position of possessing the sole power to confer legitimacy on a candidate for the throne. Further, the antiquity of Toledo's claim to be the legitimate seat of royal authority and right to the title of *urbs regia* is emphasized in Wamba's request.⁹⁶ It is worthy of note that the role in the conferring of royal authority which Wamba reserves for Toledo is the anointing of the king. Whereas the popular election, the receiving of the regalia and even the assumption of royal duties could be accomplished elsewhere, the anointing of the king, a function performed by the bishop, could only take place in Toledo.⁹⁷ This suggests, in effect, an elaboration of the concept of Toledo presented by Ildefonsus in the preface to his *De viris*, in which the status of that city results from a combination of the royal presence and its eminence as an episcopal see, a status for which Ildefonsus claims great antiquity.⁹⁸

It is evident that the *Historia Wambae* can be seen to serve a number of purposes. It possesses the features of a treatise on the

⁹⁶HW 3 *ne citra locum sedis antiquae sacraretur in principe; quam sedem adiret regiae urbis.*

⁹⁷HW 3 *Nam eundem virum...abinceps et per hanelantia plevium vota et per eorum obsequentia regali cultu iam circumdederant magna officia, ungi se tamen per sacerdotis manus ante non passus est, quam sedem adiret regiae urbis.* Teillet's contention that the anointing of a Visigothic king was practiced for the first time on Wamba seems unlikely (*Des Goths* 609). Julian's reference to the anointing seems rather offhand if he were referring to a new innovation and one closely tied to the role of the Church in conferring legitimacy to royal power. His emphasis in this passage is not so much on the unction itself, but on the location in which it is to take place, i.e. the city of Toledo. Teillet acknowledges the importance of unction to the Church's role in the constituting of a new king and establishing the religious foundation of power (613-614), which would also seem to undermine the suggestion that this was a new practice in light of the manner in which Julian presents it.

⁹⁸See n. 28, *supra*.

legitimacy of royal authority and its identifying characteristics. At the same time, with its stylized presentation of Wamba, it could be seen as a near panegyric to that king, perhaps designed to enhance his personal prestige as well as that of the Visigothic monarchy in general. The history also stresses the leading position of the city of Toledo, both political and ecclesiastical, within the kingdom, although this constitutes only a minor part of the history. Finally, there is the pedagogical aspect of the work, indicated both by the author's own words in his introduction and by the classical style which he emulates. While all of these apparent purposes may co-exist without contradiction within the history, it would seem that the dominant intent of the author would largely depend on the date of composition of the work, a date of which we are not certain.

Although it is often accepted that the history was written soon after the events described, and that it may have been instrumental in Julian's rise to become bishop of Toledo during the reign of Wamba, the suggestion has more recently been put forward that there are no grounds for ascribing an early date of composition to the work and that it could have been composed at any time between 673 and Julian's death in 690.⁹⁹ If indeed the history was written in the 670s, it could be seen as a deliberate

⁹⁹Hillgarth ("Historiography" 299) suggests 673 or shortly thereafter as the date of composition of the *Historia Wambae*; Murphy ("Julian of Toledo and the Fall of the Visigothic Kingdom" 10) attributes Julian's appointment to the see of Toledo to the intimacy he had with Wamba as a result of the *Historia*, thereby placing the date of composition prior to 680; Collins ("Julian of Toledo" 40-41) suggests a wider possible range of dates for the composition of the history.

attempt to bolster Wamba's position and, perhaps, even an attempt to curry favour with the king, although this would not preclude additional motivations for its composition. If, however, the history was in fact written after Wamba's deposition in 680, it seems unlikely that the bishop would have seen the need to compose a history designed to reinforce the personal prestige of that particular monarch. Although Julian may be exonerated from complicity in Wamba's deposition, and there is little reason to assume hostility existed between the king and the bishop at the end of the reign, one still fails to see any advantage which Julian might have found in enhancing Wamba's reputation at such a late date. On the other hand, the theories of kingship and the promotion of the city of Toledo would remain relevant and useful and would not be inconsistent with a pedagogical purpose behind the work. The lack of concrete evidence with regard to the date of composition prevents any conclusive determination of the dominant purpose of the history, although it seems apparent that Julian deliberately wove several thematic strands into his work.

The works of the two authors considered in this chapter serve to reinforce the perception that the predominant concerns within the Visigothic kingdom in the late seventh century tended to become more inward-looking than they had been in the earlier period when external relations had had more of an impact on the actions and policies of the kingdom. Although Julian's history largely deals with the elimination of an external threat, it may be argued that in essence his work has more to do with the Spanish kingdom than

with foreign affairs. This inward-looking tendency found in the works of these two authors suggests a developing sense of confidence and security within the Spanish Visigothic kingdom as a result of the military, political and religious consolidation achieved in the previous period. The caveat must be reiterated, however, that too much generalization should not be drawn on the basis of only two texts.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

It would seem, from the foregoing examination, that historical writing in the Visigothic period in Spain can be divided into three separate stages, each defined by its own characteristics and purposes. The first phase, which may be characterized as a period of adjustment, precedes the Visigothic conquest of the peninsula and is represented by the chronicle of Hydatius. This is followed by what might be termed the political phase, embodied in the chronicle of John of Biclar and the *Historia Gothorum* and, to a lesser extent the chronicle, of Isidore of Seville. Finally, we have what may be considered a period of consolidation, represented by the *De viris illustribus* of Ildefonsus and the *Historia Wambae* of Julian of Toledo. Each of these phases will be considered in turn.

The sole historiographical text of the first period is characterized by a sense of loss for a way of life that is seen to be disappearing, perhaps irrevocably. The author, Hydatius, lived in a culture which still viewed itself as part of the Roman world in spirit if no longer in actual fact. He viewed his chronicle as an integral part of the continuing tradition of Eusebius and Jerome which was formed by Christian writers within the Empire. The central concern of his chronicle was the disruption of Roman, or rather Hispano-Roman, administration and culture in his native land by a new force which was, to him, plainly inferior to that which it

threatened to supplant. Further, faced with the ineffectuality of the imperial response, Hydatius may have suspected that the alteration would become permanent. All other concerns, including religion and even heresy, play a secondary role in the chronicle to the new cultural and political reality. Although the chronicle, like its predecessors, would have been intended for a wider audience and for posterity, it might be suggested that, in one sense, the audience for the chronicle was the author himself. It would seem that, through the writing of the chronicle, Hydatius was engaging in the process of coming to terms with the changes which were taking place within Spain, and especially Gallaecia, and working out the terms of his own acceptance of the new reality. Through the dissemination of the chronicle, those terms might serve as a pattern for others facing the same situation.

The second historiographical stage, which I have termed political, is one in which historical texts seem to have been directed toward achieving a conscious effect in the audience. The reflectiveness of the Hydatian chronicle is replaced by a more precise sense of purpose, in which the authors appear to have already settled on their own attitude with regard to the manner in which events ought to be viewed and wish to influence others to share that attitude. This is no longer a period in which the historian must come to terms with changes which are disagreeable to him, but rather one in which the most sought for change, the conversion of the Visigothic kings to the Catholic faith, has been accomplished. The histories of this period are greatly concerned

with protecting that gain.

The chronicle of John of Biclar, although similar to that of Hydatius in its genesis, was most probably recast after III Toledo in its present form to serve a specific purpose. That purpose was, as I have suggested in chapter three, to enhance the prestige of the Visigothic king and to discourage dissent or rebellion among those members of the Gothic nobility who still harboured Arian sympathies. The parallel structuring found in the chronicle of the activities of the Visigothic kings and the emperors suggests that there existed a unity of purpose for the revised text from the outset. This paralleling of kings and emperors, especially that of Reccared and Constantine, was meant to bolster the status of the Catholic Visigothic monarchy, while the examples of rebellion gone awry would serve to dissuade any who might be contemplating similar action.

The *Historia Gothorum* of Isidore has also, at its core, the design of protecting and stabilizing the Catholic Visigothic monarchy in Spain. First Isidore demonstrated that the Goths held that position by right of the merit of nobility of character, by divine favour as a result of their conversion, and by an almost mystical union between the Goths and *Spania*. Moreover, he attempted to separate the Catholic monarchy from the taint of its Arian past more thoroughly than had John of Biclar by removing all mention of the association of Reccared with his father's reign and with the suppression of the rebellion of Hermenegild, introducing the Catholic king into his history only after the death of the last

Arian king. This, of course, was necessary in view of the third aspect of the *Historia*, the presentation of Reccared as the standard by which Christian princes are to be measured.

To a lesser extent, the *Chronica* of Isidore also served to strengthen the position of Visigothic rule in Spain although this was not, perhaps, the primary consideration in its composition. The political advantage to the Gothic kings in the chronicle is gained more by negative means, whereby Isidore denies to the empire the continuing providential role in Christian history with which Eusebius had endowed it. By this means, he removes any suggestion that other Christian rulers are to be subordinate to the emperor within the divine plan and, by extension, in the secular realm.

This second stage of Visigothic historiography is marked by a pragmatism which may seem almost ruthless. There seems to be a willingness to abandon failed enterprises, even when they had previously been supported. The two texts in which this is most apparent are the chronicle of John of Biclar and the *Historia Gothorum*. If I have been correct in suggesting that Leander of Seville was the main force behind the former work, then the pragmatic stance would seem to stem from the two bishops of Seville, Leander and his younger brother, Isidore. We have seen that the Catholic convert, Hermenegild, was abandoned in both texts after the failure of his rebellion and, more importantly, after a new legitimate Catholic king was found. We know from the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great that Leander was responsible for the earlier conversion of Hermenegild as well as for that of Reccared, yet,

after the rebellion was suppressed and in his homily at III Toledo, his earlier convert seems to have been abandoned.

Similarly, in the *Historia Gothorum* of Isidore, the Catholic Hermenegild, whom Gregory the Great had characterized as a Christian martyr, was all but ignored. Isidore showed additional signs of this pragmatic bent with regard to King Suinthila, whom he praised highly in his history but summarily abandoned at IV Toledo after that king's deposition. It is not surprising that Isidore should share the pragmatic attitude of Leander since the latter was responsible for his brother's education and no doubt formed many of his opinions. It should, however, be made clear that this pragmatism was, for both men, practised in the service of an ideal, that of the survival of the Catholic Church in Spain and, consequently, in the survival of any regime which supported that end. In a period of newly-won harmony and collaboration between Church and monarchy, which could still be so easily lost, those who would protect the Church's position at any cost could not afford to be sentimental about lost causes.

The third phase of historical writing I have termed one of consolidation, not so much because the process of consolidation was going on as because, at least in the political and religious realms, it had been largely accomplished. This was the period in which, Visigothic sovereignty having been firmly established throughout most of the peninsula and the religious unity of the Christian population now almost a century old, those who chose to write works of a historical nature could now turn their attention

to other matters which were of internal concern to the kingdom. Thus, the matter of ecclesiastical prominence within the Spanish Church could become an important informing factor in the works of both Ildefonsus and Julian of Toledo in the absence of the more pressing need to defend the Church from any Arian threat. Moreover, attention could be turned towards defining the Visigothic monarchy and kingdom within its own context rather than in relation to an intrusive external entity. Although the *Historia Wambae* is set within the framework of a rebellion taking place in Gaul, its real concern is with the definition of legitimacy of royal authority within the Visigothic kingdom and the role of the Church at Toledo in the conferring of royal power. It also contains, perhaps unconsciously, an indication of the process which was going on of redefining the nature of the relationship between the Gothic king, the Goths and the Spanish 'nation'.

Although throughout the period of the Visigothic kingdom, the role of providence seems to have played a relatively minor part in the historical vision of these authors with regard to temporal kingdoms and rulers, in contrast with the Eusebian model of Constantine and the Roman Empire, that role grew in importance as the period progressed. The chronicle of Hydatius shows little indication of providential intervention within history, and those few examples it does provide, for the most part, result from offenses to the Church or its clergy. In the chronicle of John of Biclar, divine providence is absent from most of the history and only makes an appearance after the conversion of Reccared, and is

represented only as a reward to a Catholic king who led his people to the true faith, not as an indication that that king is to be considered the same sort of providential instrument as was Eusebius' Constantine.

In the *Historia Gothorum* providential history becomes more prominent. The contemporary position of the Goths in Spain is viewed as something that was predestined, as, it would seem, was their eventual conversion. However, their destiny appears to have been more the result of a natural merit than of any sense that they were indispensable to the divine plan. This is reinforced by his chronicle, in which Isidore makes it clear that the subsequent rise of kingdoms, specifically the Assyrian and Roman, while important in the course of worldly history, had no special significance in a providential sense. The only kingdom which was an integral and indispensable part of the divine plan was the kingdom of Christ.

It is in the *Historia Wambae* that the action of providence is made most manifest in the divine pre-election of the king with the attendant miraculous signs at his coronation. This is reinforced throughout the history, particularly in the passage wherein angels are seen to protect the camp of Wamba's soldiers. Although these signs of providence and divine favour are an important element for Julian's purpose of contrasting the legitimate power of the Christian king with that of the sacrilegious tyrant, one cannot help but note that the historians of Visigothic Spain seemed to feel incrementally more comfortable with assigning a providential role to the ruler as it increasingly seemed that the Catholic

Visigothic monarchy was to be a permanent fixture in Spain. One can only wonder whether, had the Arab conquest not taken place, Spanish historians would have eventually created for themselves a new Constantine in the Eusebian mould.

One of the main protagonists in the historical texts throughout the period was the Empire itself. The dominant position of the Empire in the Mediterranean world in the late antique and early medieval period ensured that it would necessarily provide a major point of reference in relation to which any emergent group must be defined. For Hydatius, it was the major cultural referent for himself and the other citizens of the Spanish peninsula. It also represented a level of order and administration which was quickly becoming lost to him. In order to come to terms with the emerging authority, he had to define it in terms of its relationship to the Empire. Thus, the Goths could become acceptable, or at least tolerable, to him insofar as they were the most romanized of the available alternatives and could be viewed as at least occasional allies or agents of the emperor.

As the Gothic kingdom came to be accepted by the churchmen who were writing histories and the Empire became an antagonist, an unwanted presence in Spain, it still remained the standard by which temporal power was measured. John of Biclar tried to put the activities of the Gothic kings in their realm on a par with those of the emperor within his empire to demonstrate the equality of their legitimacy. Isidore, in the *Historia Gothorum*, tries to establish a special relationship between the Goths and the Empire

from the beginning, one in which the Empire viewed the Goths with respect. He also made a point, in the earlier recension of the history, of Leovigild's assuming the imperial trappings in his own court, again suggesting an equality between the two rulers.

Even in the period when imperial troops were considered the enemies of the kingdom of Spain the culture of the Roman Empire was highly esteemed in that country. Isidore so valued the learning of the classical world that he sought to preserve it in his *Etymologiae*. After the expulsion of the last Byzantine troops by Suinthila, the culture of the Empire remained. When Julian of Toledo sought a different sort of model for his history, it was to examples such as Sallust that he turned. For the historians of the Visigothic period the Empire could not be evaded or ignored. No matter what they thought of it, it remained inescapable.

In the final analysis, it must not be forgotten that, in any period, history is written by the victors. In the case of Visigothic Spain, it was not so much written by the victorious Goths as by the victorious Church. It is the privilege of those who prevail to provide the voice of their times, to write what will become the official version of the past and to influence both present and future. Thus, the Catholic bishops of Visigothic Spain defined for the Goths, and most particularly for their rulers, who they were, who they had been and who they should become. They have also, to a considerable extent, defined them for posterity. This was particularly brought home to me by encountering attitudes which seem to prevail among some modern scholars with regard to the

Arianism of the Goths. It has been observed that the Goths did not think deeply about the tenets of their Arian beliefs, that their Arianism was theologically unsophisticated and that it was so easily given up after the conversion of their king because the strength of their beliefs was not as strongly held as that of their Catholic counterparts. The point which this view disregards is that all Arian texts were destroyed after the conversion of Reccared and only the writings of the victorious were preserved. We do not know the depth of theological thought which might have been contained in those lost documents, or if there might not even have been among them a chronicle of Gothic history from the Arian perspective. It is perhaps for this reason that historiographical, as well as historical, studies can be of value.

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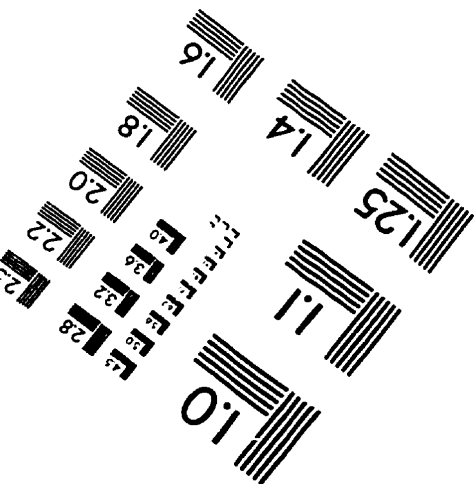
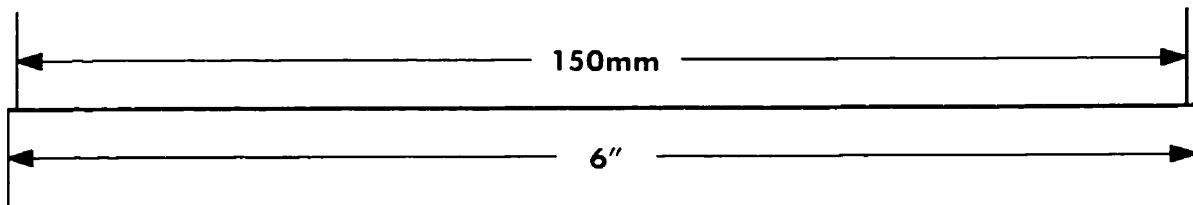
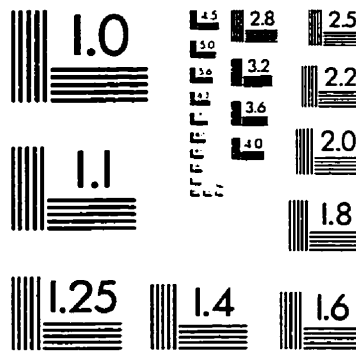
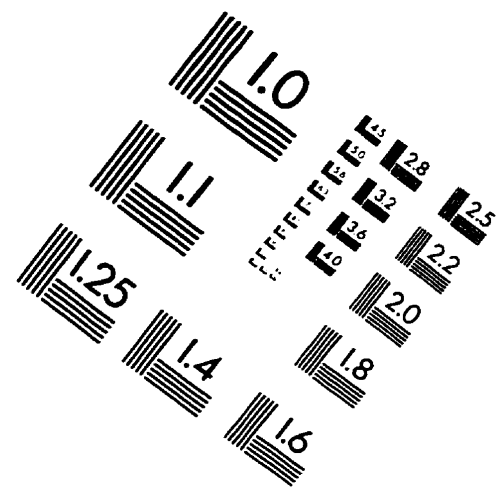
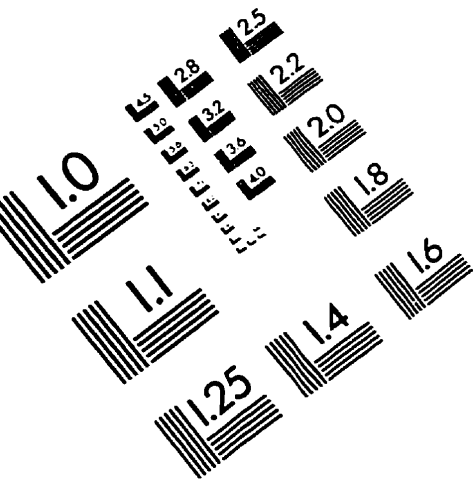
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