



Doctoral School of Theology

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PhD Thesis

CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE VISIGOTH PEOPLE (SUMMARY)

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of this work is: *the Christianization of the Visigothic people*. I chose to research this topic due to the attitude of the main character of the work, namely King Recaredo. This king, like the Holy Apostle Paul and the Holy Emperor Constantine the Great, decided to give up the faith of his ancestors in order to embrace a new faith. The capital decisions of these protagonists of history represent a great curiosity for me. Basically, the theme came against the backdrop of some personal questions: Why does a man, at a certain point in his life, decide to give up everything he has learned and believed? What are the reasons for these decisions?

In the case of the Holy Apostle Paul and the Holy Emperor Constantine the Great, we can see that this decision was influenced by divine intervention. In the case of King Recaredo, the historical sources do not mention any supernatural episode that would underlie his decision.

The theme represents a section of the study of the History of the Universal Church from the first Christian centuries, namely the events that this barbarian Germanic people went through, from the stage of a barbarian, pagan and migratory people to the stage of a Christian people who founded a nation and a kingdom of Spain. But the research mainly delves into the two theological aspects of this people, namely the Arian Christianization of the Visigoths under the influence of Emperor Valens and the conversion from the Arian faith to the Catholic religion¹ during the time of King Recaredo.

¹ The spelling with "*th*" adopted here and throughout the entire work, has the role of drawing attention to the fact that we are talking about the original meaning of the term catholic (universal, true), not the confessional one (Roman Catholicism) for which the form "catholic" is maintained. In the early Church "catholicity" is a defining attribute of the apostolic Church. Therefore, by catholicism we understand the Nicene-Constantinopolitan faith.

At the same time, the importance of deepening the study and research of history in all its aspects, political, cultural and religious, of this migratory people lies in the special relationship of the Visigoth people in particular and the Gothic peoples in general, with the historical past of our nation and church. We know that from the mid-3rd century until the mid-4th century, these Gothic peoples coexisted in the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic territory, alongside the ancestors of our nation, leaving numerous archaeological, linguistic and, why not, even religious and cultural evidence on the territory of our country. Jordanes in his famous work *Getica* also speaks about the stay of the Visigoths on the territory of our country.

The topic chosen to be treated in this work is a particularly complex one, because in Romanian history there is no work that treats in detail the history of the Visigoth people and especially the moment of their Christianization. The first stage of the Christianization of the Visigoths in the Arian form took place, north of the Danube on the current territory of our country during the reign of Emperor Valens (364-378), on the occasion of granting asylum on the territory of the empire to the Goths led by Bishop Ulfila, in exchange for military obligations, more precisely the defense of the limes. The Visigoths requested this asylum because they were frightened by the approach of the Huns. Therefore, I believe that by treating this topic, both the bibliography of the study of the History of Romania in general and the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church in particular is enriched.

My concerns regarding the history of barbarian peoples, especially those peoples who transited our country, are older and have become more and more complex with the passage of time. This interest comes from my love for the study of history, especially the history of Christianity. Thus, my bachelor's thesis focused on *The State and the Church under Emperor Heraclius*. In my dissertation, I sought to highlight the causes that led, in 1204, the Latin participants in the Fourth Crusade to radically change their plans and conquer Constantinople. Following that, until 1261 we had the *Latin Empire of Constantinople*, which is also the title of my dissertation.

The subject of this work, even if it apparently deals with a different aspect from the other two works, the bachelor's degree and the dissertation, in fact completes my concern with the study of the history of Byzantium. If in the bachelor's degree work I chose a theme with strict reference to the Byzantine Empire and in the dissertation work I highlighted the relations of the Byzantine Empire with the papal seat and with Rome, my Ph.D. thesis, *The Christianization of the Visigothic People*, comes to complete my concern, because in addition to the strict presentation of the history of this people and of Christianization, I also deal with

the political and religious relations of the Visigoths with Rome but especially with the Byzantine Empire.

In compiling this work, I used two research methods, namely, the historical method and the theological method.

Through the historical method, I presented all the facts and events of this period, studied from a strictly historical point of view, researching the various sources, studies, articles and reference works that deal with this historical period of the Gothic peoples in general and the history of the Visigoth people in particular.

I used the theological method especially in presenting the various synods (councils) that took place in Visigothic Spain, especially in Toledo, but also in highlighting the discussions and theological disputes that took place between Catholics and Arians, both before the conversion of King Recaredo and especially after this episode. The same theological method is also used in highlighting the theological relations of the Visigoths with Rome and the Byzantine Empire.

Researching the history of the Visigothic people from the beginnings to their conquest by the Arabs in 711 was not an easy task. This difficulty is not only due to the size and complexity of this topic, but especially to the high level of disagreement that exists between experts on this subject. These differences center between two fundamental questions: Who were the Visigoths? and What entity did they form?

Regarding the stage of research, it should be noted that since the seventies and eighties, the works of E.A. Thompson have posed historiographical problems to the Visigothic kingdom. And from 1970 to the present, Garcia Moreno and Roger Collins have done so following the traditional lines of research. E.A. Thompson's work, structured around the list of Visigothic kings, focuses on the issue of ethnicity. His analysis begins with the entry of the Visigoths into Iberian lands. He emphasizes that the differences between Goths and Romans, the "*nationalities*", plus religious differences were the elements that dynamized the social evolution. In fact, he separates Visigothic history into an Arian and a Catholic period. From a legal perspective, he proposes that the triumph of the Goths marked the institutional development.

Another idea he develops concerns the relationship between clients and patrons. He understands that the free individuals entrusted to them, who were paid for their services, can be characterized as feudal vassals of the later period. Thompson finds support for his hypothesis in the writings of Sanchez Albornoz. In the 1960s and 1970s, Jose Orlandis emerged as a notable researcher within the ecclesiastical school. He proposed the Church as the

organizational nucleus of Visigothic society. Regarding the validity of this current of thought in current historiography, Javier Arce understands that there is a significant number of historians who emphasize the structuring influence of the Church on the Gothic society, although certainly far from the "*myth*" of the Church as the foundation of the Spanish nation. However, he does not specify which contemporary authors he is referring to. As far as I am concerned, I think it is possible to include Orlandis and Garcia Moreno, an eclectic historian current in historiography, in this framework of thought. His work on this period is extensive and we will return to it throughout this thesis. Here, we will only state his main ideas.

According to Garcia Moreno, the Visigothic kingdom can be understood as proto-feudal. First, he establishes that royalty, in order to protect itself from the nobility, adopted sacred forms with the approval of the Church, which established itself as the guardian of the kings. In turn, they copied the models of the Byzantine state and a militarization of the administrative structures took place. Another fundamental element was the bond of loyalty that united the members of the nobility, supported by the granting of positions and prizes. Thus, members of the supreme nobility monopolized the administrative functions that were ceded to them, which were then patrimonialized. This structure had a correspondent in the socio-economic dimension, the author notes that the phenomenon of entrusting large properties to the peasants was very widespread.

The perspective of these three authors on the Visigothic kingdom has been abandoned, but their works are still widely cited, as they are used to support very specific questions. Roger Collins has published several works on the Visigothic period. The main historiographical cliché he tries to overturn is the model of a Visigothic state mired in moral decadence.

I have structured this work in five chapters, each chapter having several subchapters.

CHAPTER I

THE VISIGOTH PEOPLE AND STATE FROM THEIR ORIGINS TO THE 5TH CENTURY ²

1. The origin of the Gothic peoples

The Goths, who appeared in the first decades of the 3rd century on the lower Danube, managed in a very short time to cause great turmoil and terror for the Roman Empire. The imperial armies suffered countless defeats in the Balkans and Asia Minor. The Goths managed, in addition to the victories they had, to capture thousands or even hundreds of thousands of prisoners whom they brought to the Danube regions, especially from the Cappadocia area, among them being countless Christians.

Around 300 AD, the Goths divided into two large groups that would later found two great kingdoms: the kingdom of the Visigoths (Western Goths), located north of the Danube towards its mouths, and the kingdom of the Ostrogoths (Eastern Goths), in the north-Pontic steppes. After countless military confrontations, both of the Visigoths and of the Ostrogoths, with the imperial armies, several peace treaties were concluded, both camps experiencing victories as well as defeats.

These barbarian peoples, having reached the border of the empire, in about two centuries, manage to conquer Rome, and with it the Western Roman Empire. The Visigoths conquer Roman Hispania, founding the Visigothic Kingdom of Spain, coming to rule almost the entire Iberian Peninsula. But before we can talk about the Visigothic people as part of the Gothic gens and about the historical course of this people, it is imperative to attempt an answer to the following question: What is the origin of the Goths? Or better said: What was the Gothorum gens³?

² Part of this chapter was published in the magazine „*Altarul Banatului*”, Nr 1-3, 2020, p. 54-78.

³ The genus (clan) is the most important unit, its members being linked by common ancestors. The genus provides peace, protection and justice to its members. The restoration of a member's honor is

According to Jordanes, the Goths originated in Scandinavia (Scandza), more precisely Gotland (probably Gotaland in present-day Sweden). Jordanes' text is not considered a reliable historical source, being intended to create a glorious past for the new ruling class. The Goths, according to Jordanes, migrated southeast along the Vistula in the 2nd century from *Gothiscandza*, settling in Scythia, which they called Oium ("*Land of Waters*")⁴. According to the legendary story *Hervarar Saga*, the capital of this kingdom was Arheimar, on the Dnieper⁵. Around 170 large groups of Goths pushed by other tribes of the same tribal family left their homeland to the Danube⁶.

The Germanness of most of the barbarian peoples mentioned by the sources written on the Danube: Goths, Vandals, Gepids, Scythians, and Heruli, who have their origin in the historical narratives of the era of Justinian, Jordanes and Procopius, is outlined in the Renaissance through the exaltation of the Goths, the so-called Gothicism. We will try to sketch a history of these moments from the perspective of the origin of the Goths.

2. The pre-scientific phase of Germanness: the Gothicism⁷

This fable of the origin of the Goths and Gepids from the island of Scandza continues with their migration, in immemorial time, before the Trojan War, to Scythia, near Palus Maeotis, the Maeotis Marsh⁸, their second stop being Mysia, Thrace and Dacia. The ancient history of the Goths transmitted by Jordanes is marked by victories and conquests, the Goths being the wisest of all barbarians, similar to the Greeks⁹.

Making Roman history out of the Goths past, Iordanes successively identified them with the inhabitants of the stopping places, the Scythians and the Getae. To explain this confusion between Getae and Goths in the literature of Late Antiquity, modern authors quickly

the sacred duty of the genus, not the individual., cf. Atlasului de Istorie Mondială, *De la începuturi până la Revoluția Franceză*, vol 1, autori Hermann Kinder și Werner Hilgemann, Editura Rao, București, 2001, p. 109.

⁴ Iordanes, *Despre originea și faptele Geților*, Ediție critică bilingvă latină-română, Traducere Prof. David Popescu, Editura Uranus, București 2014, p. 205.

⁵ Campo Mariano Gonzalez, *La saga de Hervor*, Libros de los Malos Tiempos, Ed. Miraguano, p. 89.

⁶ Ortega Rubio Juan, *Los Visigodos en Espana*, Ed. Legare Street Press, Madrid, p. 1.

⁷ Carbo Garcia, Godos y Getas en la historiografía de la Tardoantigüedad y del Medievo: una problema de identidad y de legitimación socio-política, în „*Studia Historica*”, Historia Antigua, Salamanca, 2004, pp. 179-206.

⁸ Marea de Azov, sud-estul Ucrainei de azi.

⁹ Iordanes, *Getica*..... p. 211.

agreed that the identification is favoured by phonetic reasons (Getae/Goth) and by the fact that they overlap in the same area of the Lower Danube.

3. Visigothic ethnogenesis

Although there is a later distinction between Ostrogoths and Visigoths, the origin, both mythical and historical, of both groups is perceived as one. However, it can be seen that, in reality, there are at least two ways of conceiving the myth of Gothic ethnogenesis: one Roman Christian and another of Anglo-Saxon oral tradition.

The concept of ethnogenesis was invented in the sixties by R. Wenskus in his attempt to explain the origin of the various barbarian peoples. For Wenskus, ethnogenesis (Creation/formation of peoples) would explain how the most important lineages of the Germanic barbarian peoples would have been formed during the migrations. For his disciple Wolfram, the founder of the Vienna School, in that context, the existence of a royal lineage that would bear the name was fundamental, thus preserving the traditions around which minor lineages, even from different genes, gathered. Hence the concept of Traditionskern. His school insists on the deeply aristocratic character of Germanic institutions in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, since the warrior elites were the source of royalty, which was linked in the origin myths to gods or heroes.

Returning to the development of theories of ethnogenesis, Valverde Castro concludes that the Ostrogoths and Visigoths would have been formed between the 3rd and 4th centuries, and highlights the emergence of the Huns as a crucial milestone in the development of the ethnogenesis of the Visigoths¹⁰. Carbo Garcia concludes that the Scythians, Amazons, Getae and Dacians granted prestige to historical antiquity. He states that royal genealogies and mythical stories expressed the ideological articulation of the new aristocracy and were fundamental to the new Gothic kingship¹¹. In short, all the authors agree that the creation and organization of strains/filiae is axial to the ethnogenetic problem.

¹⁰ Castro Valverde, *Ideología, simbolismo y ejercicio del poder real en la monarquía visigoda. Un proceso de cambio*, Salamanca, 2000, pp. 19-20.

¹¹ Carbo Garcia, *Godos y Getas en la historiografía de la Tardoantigüedad y del Medievo*, „*Studia Historica*”, Historia Antigua 22, Salamanca, 2004, pp.179-206.

4. The first battles of the Goths with the imperial armies

The Visigoths first appeared in history as a distinct people in 235 AD, when they invaded and devastated Dacia. In 251, the Goths' expedition against the Romans headed for the city of Philippopolis, from where, retreating and seeking to return home, pursued by the army of Emperor Decius, they headed for the city of Abrit near present-day Varna, that is, in the most direct line to Bessarabia. Between 268-270, the Scythians, Eruli, Peucii and Goths put 320,000 men on 6,000 ships and attacked the city of Tomis in Dobrogea.

After 268, they continued to attack the Roman Empire and attempted to establish themselves in the Balkan Peninsula. This invasion also targeted the Roman provinces of Pannonia and Illyria and even threatened Italy. However, the Visigoths were defeated at the Battle of Naissus¹².

Over the next three years, they were driven back across the Danube by a series of military campaigns led by Emperor Claudius II Gothicus, with the cavalry commander being the future Emperor Aurelian. They remained in Dacia, however, having been evacuated by Aurelian in 271, the one who created a new province south of the Danube called Dacia Ripensis¹³.

Constantine the Great launched a victorious campaign in 332 against the Visigoths north of the Danube, an occasion on which he took the name of *Gothicus Maximus*¹⁴. In this campaign, the Byzantine army, led by the son of Emperor Constantine II, crossed the bridge of Constantine the Great over the Danube, built at Sucidava, today Celei, and defeated the Visigoths, and as a result, the lands north of the Danube returned to Roman rule for a period. The northern limit of the empire is marked by the border, called Novac's Furrow, fortified with the Roman camp at Pietroasele where the 11th Claudian Legion, coming from Durostorum, was stationed¹⁵.

¹² Gibbon Edward, *Istoria Declinului și a prăbușirii Imperiului Roman*, O antologie de la apogeul imperiului până la sfârșitul domniei lui Iustinian, Traducere de Dan Hurmuzescu, Editura Humanitas, București, 2018, pp. 222-223.

¹³ Gibbon Edward, *Istoria Declinului și a prăbușirii Imperiului Roman*..... pp. 228-229.

¹⁴ Drăgan Iosif Constantin, *Imperiul Romano-Trac*.... p. 30.

¹⁵ Drăgan Iosif Constantin, *Imperiul Romano-Trac*.... pp. 29-31.

5. *The personality and work of Bishop Ulfila of the Goths* ¹⁶

In the 4th century, in the midst of this Gothic people appears the great Apostle of the Goths or as he was also called, "Moses of the Goths", Ulfila. He was born around the year 311 or, as Constantin Erbiceanu says (based on the story of Auxentiu, Ulfila's direct disciple), in the year 318, since he died in 388 at the age of 70. His ancestors had once lived in the small town or village of Sadagolthina, near the city of Parnassus, they were brought captives from Cappadocia and had already lived 60 years among the Goths until Ulfila was born. He is, therefore, a Goth by birth, his name is completely Germanic, this being already a proof. On the one hand, Ulfila was initiated by his parents in the Greek language, receiving from them a completely Christian education. In all probability, his youth was spent in Constantinople where he acquired a great culture, on the other hand, belonging by birth to the German people, he was, more than any other, qualified to become their educator one day. His activity extends first to the Visigoths settled on the banks of the Danube, to the Tervingi and the Taifali. He is rightly considered the Christianizer of the Goths, it is true in the Arian form of the Christian faith. Until the age of 30 he was a simple reader. It is not known for sure who ordained him a reader, probably even Theophilus as his mentor and guide.

Starting in 375, Ulfilas began translating the Bible into Gothic, "*to instruct and multiply his followers*," says historian Will Durant. He patiently translated the entire Bible from Greek into Gothic, except for the books of Kings. Today, apart from a fragment of the book of Nehemiah, the only surviving manuscripts of the Gothic Bible contain fragments of the Christian Greek Scriptures, a translation that marks – according to experts – the beginnings of the German literature¹⁷. Undoubtedly, this great achievement of translating the Holy Scriptures from Greek into Gothic, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, for this laborious work, Ulfilas having had to invent a suitable alphabet to a large extent, represents the crowning achievement of this great Christian missionary, rightly called the "Moses of the Goths".

¹⁶ Hlodec Daniel, Personalitatea și activitatea episcopului Ulfila al goților, „*Studia Doctoralia*”, Comunicările Conferinței Naționale a Doctoranzilor în Teologie Ortodoxă, Mănăstirea Caraiman, Anul II, 2019, Coord. Adrian Lemeni și Diac Gheorghe-Cristian Popa, Ed. Basilica, Ed. Universității din București, 2020, pp. 331-340.

¹⁷ Ibășescu Mihai, *Istoria literaturii germane*, București, 1968, p. 17.

6. Battle of Adrianople

The sources that record this fateful day are, as is often the case with the events of antiquity, promising but partial. By far the best is Ammianus Marcellinus, a Greek military man, as he described himself. In the early 390s he wrote, in Latin, the story of his time. We also have relevant information provided by the Greek historian Eunapius of the fifth century. Finally, we have a few minor Christian authors who fill in the gaps of the previous ones and allow us to reconstruct a complete sequence of events, but still far from perfect.

The fateful battle took place 12 Roman miles (about 19 km) from Adrianople. From this data, and using cartographic means, German scholars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries concluded that the battle took place in a relatively flat area, near the modern Turkish village of Demirhanli, 17 km from Adrianople. More recently, another alternative location has been proposed, in Muratcali, a village located in a rugged region about 17 km north of Adrianople. In this regard, we will pursue the hypothesis of the location in Muratcali, although it is obvious that we need the intervention of a battlefield archaeologist to solve the mystery. Valens agreed and ordered General Ricomeres to prepare evidence of his high lineage and noble birth and to go to the enemy lines. All this must have consumed hours, while the Roman troops, scorched by the sun, still in battle formation, were even beginning to feel hungry. According to Ammianus¹⁸, this delay was deliberate, as it was part of Fritigern's plan to make the Roman troops suffer the harshness of nature, as well as because of smoke inhalation, since the Gothic leader had ordered his troops to light fires so that the smoke would irritate the eyes and lungs of the Romans. But above all, Fritigern was trying to buy time so that his scattered troops could concentrate on the spot. The Alan and Greutunge cavalry contingents, led by the generals Alateo and Safrax, were still on the way.

At first, the Romans seemed to be gaining the advantage, as their left wing managed to advance until it reached the circle of Gothic chariots. But since the rest of the army did not have the same success, a break occurred in the Roman line that left the infantry flanks unprotected. To avoid this, they were forced to turn on their own feet and concentrate on a very compact mass, which in turn offered very little freedom of maneuver.

Abandoned by his personal guard, Valens took refuge among the surviving troops of the Lanciarii and Mattiarii units. General Trajan called for reinforcements, and General Victor tried to bring in the Batavi, but found that they had fled, as had generals Ricomeres and

¹⁸ Ammianus, XXXI, p 588.

Saturninus. As for Emperor Valens, news spread that he had been mortally wounded by an arrow and disappeared in battle.

7. The Sack of Rome

In 391, a character who would prove to be important appeared on the political scene, namely Alaric, the son of Alaviv, who organized a raid on Greece. Although the sources present him as an evil character or punishment for the sins of the Romans, Alaric was actually a skilled politician, who knew how to negotiate with the Romans and control his own subjects. An instrument of the gods or a whip of God, the barbarian leader who defied Roman authority, which is why the sources are so biased towards him, had precise goals and wanted his own territory, recognition of his authority, an alliance with the Romans and the elimination of Roman interventionism. On August 24, 410, the Goths began a systematic sack of the city, capturing the emperor's sister, Galla Placidia¹⁹. The devastation of Rome had an overwhelming impact on the collective psyche.

The pagans accused the renunciation of traditions, the Christians the sins of the people. There was no arson, destruction or extraordinary violence, because the robbery was extremely well planned. What mattered more was the moral and mental shock. A true cradle of millennial civilization falls at the mercy of the barbarians.

To the citizens of Rome, Alaric's hordes were a grotesque spectacle, pouring into the city in wave after wave, shouting wildly and brandishing spears, swords and axes. The Visigoths ravaged the streets at will, killing, raping, looting and burning houses and public buildings. Only the homes, property and lives of their Christian co-religionists were spared. The demoralised Romans offered no resistance to the invaders who systematically plundered their once undefeated city.

At midnight on August 24, 410 AD, the most powerful city in the world, which had been unconquered for nearly 12 centuries, fell to a barbarian army from the north. Thousands of Visigothic soldiers stormed the city through the Salaria Gate—opened to them, according to one later author, by hungry and disgruntled slaves, although it had been fortified only six years earlier. The sleeping Romans only realized that the barbarians were among them when they were awakened by the shrill blast of the Visigothic horns.

¹⁹ Arsenal Leon, *Godos de Hispania*, p. 37.

The Visigoths, led by their king Alaric, had descended on Rome in search of land, plunder, and money. They found the city almost defenseless, as the Roman emperor Honorius and his court had moved to the well-defended city of Ravenna on the Adriatic Sea. The once proud Romans, rulers of the entire world, were suffering from apathy, food shortages, economic chaos, and heavy taxes.

10. The Visigoths: federates of the empire

The next step was to offer the Visigoths an officially recognized kingdom within the imperial territories in exchange for an expedition into Hispania to liquidate the Suevi, Vandals, and Alans. The Visigothic king Ataulf, whom Jordanes says was handsome, although quite short, ended up marrying Gala Placidia²⁰, that girl, the sister of Emperor Honorius, in the power of the Visigoths since the sack of Rome. Ataulf's period was marked at first by devastating journeys through Italy. During the year 411 and the following year he marched into Gaul. In any case, there was always a connection between the movements of the Visigoth king and the internal Roman politics, characterized, as usual, by tension between emperors and usurpers. It was probably in Narbonne that the wedding of the Visigoth king and the imperial lady took place, as most sources show, with exceptions such as Jordanes, who places it in Italy.

The Goths were not hordes of savage tribes, but rather groups of diverse populations, amalgamated around leaderships such as that of the Thervingians and their chiefs, who eventually became kings. The kingship was thus the transcription of the internal cohesion of those who came to be known as the Visigoths between the 4th and 5th centuries. That was the monarchy which, after almost a century of settlement in southern Gaul, would be permanently established in ancient Roman Hispania at the beginning of the 6th century. The same one which, in May 589, and with the help of Recaredo, converted to Catholicism and abandoned Arianism, which had been official since its stay on the Danube.

²⁰ Arce Javier, *Barbaros y Romanos en Hispania, 400-507 A.D.* Editura Marcial Pons, 2007, p. 72.

CHAPTER II

THE REJECTION OF ARIANISM

1. *The Vouille Disaster*

In the history of Europe there have been battles that have brought human consequences over generations, and others, even if they had a major impact on contemporaries, still did not go beyond being simple anecdotes or military events. The one that took place in 507 at Vouille belongs to the first group, since the defeat of the Visigoths by the Franks meant a substantial change in the Western political map. The consequences of that battle cannot be understood without considering the previous historical evolution of both the Franks and the Visigoths.

Vouille was an extraordinary disaster and undoubtedly had a profound impact on the Visigoths. The crisis did not only affect what we would today call the collective psychology of the Visigothic milieu. Among the direct consequences of the battle was the disappearance of their monarch, since the death of Alaric II left the Visigoths without a king. Following an election, Gesaleic was elected, he was one of those noble Gothic who escaped the disaster of the war and who sought refuge in Narbonne, the most important city in southern Gaul, the capital of the ancient Roman province of Narbonensis or Septimania. Gesaleic was the bastard son of Alaric II and a concubine, and his election was accepted by Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths in Italy and father-in-law of the fallen king, who from Ravenna followed the affairs of the Visigoths with great attention. But this assent of the Ostrogothic king to the Visigothic succession would be ephemeral, as he would soon decide to appoint someone of his own blood.

2. *The beginnings of the Hispanic kingdom*

In this context, a movement occurred that ultimately proved decisive for the existence of the Visigothic kingdom. When Gesaleico was elected king of the Visigoths, he was not the only possible candidate. The boy Amalaric, son of Alaric II and the daughter of Theodoric the

Great²¹, was another alternative, although his young age reduced his career options to succeed his father in the first instance. But the boy's political fortunes soon changed. Two factors came to unite to lead to the change of monarch and, more importantly, to allow him to overcome the trance of Vouille, by consolidating the Hispanic kingdom and preserving Narbonne, which had cities like Narbonne and Carcassonne. On the one hand, King Gesaleico proved unable to successfully face the military attacks of the Franks, who sought to put pressure on their victory in 507. The sources certainly give a painful picture of the military capacity of the new monarch, but it is most likely that the available resources, especially the capacity to articulate military responses to Frankish attacks, were greatly weakened after the disaster of Vouille.

The episodes that took place between 507 and about 513 were somewhat complex, so it is convenient to summarize some balances. First, the Franks took over most of the Gallo-Roman world and, although during the 6th century another kingdom would persist, such as Burgundy, it would soon be annexed by the Merovingian kings. Second, the majority of the Visigothic population crossed the Pyrenees and moved to ancient Roman Hispania, where we already know that Gothic interests had been very present in the previous century, although some Visigothic groups remained in Narbonne. The Battle of Vouille did not produce events that had not happened before, as happened with the process of transfer of the Visigothic population to the Iberian Peninsula. Third, the Visigothic kingdom was maintained, not without great difficulties.

The Visigothic monarchy was still a somewhat weak institution and was by no means guaranteed a territorial articulation, a tributary framework or a capture of the will among the Hispanic aristocracy that could suggest a process of expansion of the kingdom. To make matters worse, in the middle of the century an internal war broke out, and after this a great change took place in the Hispano-Visigothic kingdom. So much so that a family from Narbonne Gaul ended up taking over the reins of the kingdom, which they would not abandon until half a century later. It was the family of Recaredo.

3. Creating the ideology of the new Hispanic kingdom

Theudis was the first king of the Visigoths or Visigoths to understand the importance of the Iberian Peninsula, not only as a refuge from the dynastic and territorial vicissitudes of

²¹ Chica Jose Soto, *Los Visigodos, Hijos.....* p. 270.

the kingdom of Aquitaine, but as a place where the principles of a Spanish monarchy could be founded. With him and his successors, Hispania became an end in itself, for the territorial and political aggrandizement of the monarchs of Gaul. But, as we have seen, in his time his old kingdom was practically lost, which had been reduced to a restricted space in the old province of Narbonensis, with its capital at Narbonne, also known as Septimania²². Their territories were constantly challenged by the Frankish kings, who aspired to rule over all the former Gallic provinces, thus pushing the Goths further and further into the areas beyond the Pyrenees.

Even so, at the moment Lusitania was a marginal territory, and the Goths, who dominated in Barcelona and exercised their protection over an important part of the Ebro valley, in cities such as Zaragoza and Pamplona, had long understood the importance of the Baetic cities to gain control over the western Mediterranean, without which the situation of the ports of Tarragona was precarious. Mainly because the affairs of North Africa had become adverse, the kingdom of the Vandals practically disappearing under the attack of the armies of the Empire of Constantinople. In this sense, it has been speculated that, already at the time when Theudis was making his raids through Baetica, he could have passed to the north of Africa, where, once the Vandals were defeated, the Byzantines were willing to reorganize the old Roman provinces, the Goths taking possession of the seaside city of Septem (Ceuta), which would remain for a long time as an outpost of control of the other side of the Mediterranean.

But by the middle of this 6th century the Goths were fully prepared to take the destinies of Hispania into their own hands, with the project of a new consolidated "monarchy" in which to house the various Gothic forces and to establish a dominion over the ancient provinces. The beginnings of the project that culminated with Agila and Athanagildo are an example of the search for the initial spaces from which to direct their conquests and the way in which this search clashed with the interests, first of the Byzantine Empire, and then of the provincials themselves, so the process was slow and ultimately unfinished. Until Athanagildo, the kings who had focused on peninsular affairs had lived, in an itinerant manner, in the Hispanic cities that welcomed them, Barcelona, Seville and Merida. For the same reason, they moved with their treasure, which they lost in some battles, to take refuge in the cities where they had clients and old ties of hospitality, while from the documents it is deduced that they did everything possible to accelerate their rapid departure but also to look for other places to install their kingdom. This partly explains why, in the end, they arrived in Toledo, a city that does not appear in the work of Hydatius as part of the narrative of the conflicts between the barbarians

²² James Edward, *Visigothic Spain. New Approaches*, Ed Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980, pp. 223-243.

and which is only referred to in connection with religious issues. Despite this, we know that Athanagildo fled there and died, without knowing the causes, in the year 567²³, far from the riches of Baetica and Lusitania, far from the ports of the Mediterranean, far from the political solidity of Merida, an ancient great imperial city from the mid-6th century, when the future of a Gothic or Visigothic kingdom in Hispania was still very unclear.

4. Leovigildo and the new royal capital

We can consider the death of Athanagildo in 567, in Toledo, the beginning of the Toledo monarchy, and Leovigildo ²⁴ the authentic creator of a Spanish Gothic kingdom that survived with ups and downs until the Muslim entry in 711.

One of the most important challenges for Leovigildo was to find a place to establish the royal seat, a permanent habitat of the monarchy from which to issue the decisions of its sovereigns, where to organize the court and administration, from where to control the army, in which to convene assemblies, and where to safely deposit the royal treasure.

Toledo became this seat, and with it, the city acquired a political importance that it had not had before. The main reason, the refusal of the inhabitants of Barcelona, Seville or Merida to bear this burden and the search for their own capital, different from the old capital cities of the imperial provinces, which never reached the category of royal seat, although the monarchs were there for a while. Although the city had a good urban development in the Roman era as the central point of Carpetania, however in the early imperial period it never reached great relevance nor did it have a prominent participation, in the defense of the provinces against the barbarians²⁵. Its importance in previous centuries had more to do with the convening of councils. The first Council of Toledo in 400, convened to put an end to the Priscillian heresy, and the one in 527 to regulate ecclesiastical matters. But its first bishop appeared already in a 4th-century council convened at Elvira, in the province of Baetica.

²³ În ceea ce privește războaiele care au avut loc în sud și stabilirea regelui la Sevilla, există o scurtă referire în ultimul articol din Consularia Caesaraugustana, iar referirea menționată apare ca o notă marginală în textul lui Juan de Biclaro; vezi Iohannis Biclarensis Chronicon, ed. Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann (CCSL, vol. CLXXIII A), p. 61.

²⁴ Arsenal Leon, Godos de Hispania, p. 122.

²⁵ Velazquez și G. Ripoll... pp. 521-578

5. *Northern territorial limits and the resistance*

Control of the north was, in part, an inherited problem. These most extreme regions were the least Romanized and urbanized in the Peninsula, except for the camp line at the foot of the Cantabrian mountains and the Iberian System, where there were cities such as Leon, Lancia, Bergidum Flavium, Astorga, Palencia, Virovesca or Vindeleia, and others on the coast such as Flaviobriga (Castro Urdiales) and in the Ebro valley, such as Calagurris (Calahorra) and Tarazona.

But what interested the Visigoths, as before the Romans, was the control of their valleys and the communications of Asturias, Cantabria and Vasconia with each other through the plain and with the Meseta and the Ebro valley, in addition to keeping the communication routes with Gaul clear and to avoid the attacks of the Merovingian monarchs. Therefore, like the Romans before them, they always had, at the foot of their rugged mountains, the monasteries and military camps necessary to exercise their surveillance, as was the case, from Olite or Victoriaco, but also from many other camps north of the Duero line, such as the Petrensis fort near Astorga, those at Toro, Yecla in Silos, Pico Castro southeast of Valladolid, Pena Amaya in Cantabria, Castro Ventosa in Bierzo and many others²⁶.

However, the propaganda of the Gothic kings was always about absolute domination of the north, Suintila going so far as to assert his power over all of Hispania. But the reality was different and the Basques continued to make incursions into Tarragona, on the occasion of the rebellion of Froia, during the reign of Recesvinto, in the year 653, causing the death of many Christians²⁷. He also organized an expedition against them, King Wamba entered Vasconia and burned their houses and fields, and finally Rodrigo fought against them in the Pamplona region, according to the Arab chronicle of Ajbar Maymua, when the Visigoths lost Hispania to the Muslims. In short, there were several campaigns against the Basques after Leovigild, although some seem doubtful, Recaredo and Gundemaro, while those against the Asturians and Cantabrians were reduced to those of Sisebut and Wamba, and never had the scale of the Vascones who, being closer to French territory, also constituted a poisonous hotbed for relations between both monarchies²⁸. So, while the Visigothic kings were content to

²⁶ Castro Garcia. F.J, *Sociedad y poblamiento en la Hispania del siglo IV*, Ed, Nicasio, Valladolid, 1995, p 70.

²⁷ Arce Javier, *Esperando a los arabes*.... p. 143.

²⁸ Arce Javier, *Esperando a los arabes*.... pp. 141-145.

maintain control over the surveillance centers of the Asturian and Cantabrian mountains, they organized campaigns of punishment and submission to avoid their alliance with the Franks and the deterioration of communications with Gaul.

6. Hermenegildo and the succession conflict

Regardless of the failure in the north, Leovigild's work was the most enduring of those achieved by the Gothic kings up to that time. However, internal conflict was enough to show the weakness of the conquest. Liuva's death in 474 put the entire kingdom in the hands of Leovigild, just as he was engaged in the conquest of territories in Hispania²⁹. This posed a serious problem, which could have been solved by the definitive separation of the Gallic possessions from the Hispanic ones, but this would have meant the weakening of the Gallic area, with a restricted territory and harassed by the Merovingian monarchs. It was precisely the union with Narbonensis that made the Hispanic kings connect with the origins of a hereditary monarchy of the Empire, which is why Leovigildo tried to overcome the problem, with a distribution of power between his sons Hermenegildo and Recaredo, a decision that allowed him to have more direct control over each of his domains³⁰. For this reason, Recaredo, the youngest of the sons, was destined to direct his interests in the Gallic border, while the father took care of the affairs of Hispania together with the eldest, Hermenegildo.

Hermenegildo must have been cut from a different cloth. Around 579, his father had concluded a peace treaty with King Sigibert of Austrasia, married to his stepdaughter Brunequilda, which arranged the marriage of Hermenegildo to his daughter, Ingunda, a staunch Christian. Hermenegildo was greatly influenced by his wife and embraced Catholicism against his father, who was trying to consolidate a monarchy.

Hermenegildo's betrayal was done with the consent of a part of the ecclesiastical nobility, and especially of the faction led by the metropolitan of Seville, Leander, Isidore's brother. He maintained good relations with the court of Constantinople, was a staunch defender of Catholicism, and a high-ranking politician, with influence over some of the most powerful families in Baetica. Isidore³¹, to justify it, claimed that Leovigildo's virtues were nullified by his impiety and that he persecuted the Catholics, sending many bishops into exile, suppressing

²⁹ Chica Jose Soto, Los Visigodos..... p. 311.

³⁰ Chica Jose Soto, Los Visigodos..... p. 312.

³¹ Isidoro de Sevilla, Historias de los godos, pp. 50-51.

the revenues and privileges of the churches and obtaining with threats or gold, many conversions to Arianism, among them those of very influential bishops, such as Vincent of Zaragoza, who saw in Arianism a way to pursue a political career. But the persecution of the Catholic bishops was not because of their faith, but because of their opposition to his rule, since he also cut off the heads of many of his people or sent them into exile, confiscating their properties, so that he enriched the treasury with revenues so necessary to cover his military campaigns and attract new supporters³².

7. Leovigildo and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan religion

In the episode of Hermenegildo's revolt we saw how some sources tried to divert the issue to religious differences, his anti-Catholic policy was not general, as he maintained Catholic bishoprics in the main cities, helped his churches and opposed only those who did not accept his rule. Conversion of Catholics to Arianism without the need to be rebaptized³³, and in which a theological approach to Catholic theses was produced, with the aim of highlighting the similarities between both theologies and overcoming the differences between them³⁴. Garcia Moreno denied his alleged indiscriminate cruelty regarding the exile of bishops, such as that of Leandro of Seville, that of Mazona of Merida, and that of Fronimio of Agde³⁵.

The reflection of his religious policy, to some extent quite tolerant, but also of the interests of Catholicism of his time, is found in an anonymous work apparently composed in the 7th century, although some versions consider its author to be a deacon from Merida named Paul³⁶, although the oldest manuscript is that of the National Library, from the 10th century. The work had as its practical purpose the praise of the Catholic bishopric emeritus and the demonstration of the sovereign's evil towards the Catholics, but in it, well analyzed, it reflects, inadvertently, the tolerance and patience of Leovigildo in the face of the strong Catholic opposition in that city. Not in vain, Merida had been the 4th Catholic metropolis of the province since then. Champion in the fight against the Priscillian heresy, and had important bishops at the time, despite the fact that paganism remained very strong at least throughout the 5th

³² Vicente de la Fuente, *Historia eclesiastica de Espana*, pp. 211-213.

³³ Orlandis Jose, *Problemas canonicas en torno a la conversion de los visigodos al catolicismo*, „*Anuario de derecho espanol*”, 1962, pp. 306-307.

³⁴ Moreno Garcia, *Estudios sobre la organizacion administrativa del reino visigodo de Toledo*, „*AHDE*”, 44, 1975, p.127.

³⁵ Pentru mai multe referințe se poate consulta E.A. Thompson, J. Hillgarth și Roger Collins.

³⁶ Macias Camacho A, *Viețile sfinților părinți din Merida*, Madrid, 1988.

century. The story of the Lives was not innocent, as it aimed to exalt a city, Merida, and its bishops, as a bastion of freedom against Arianism, to strengthen the faith of the readers by relating events that the same author accepted, that he had not lived, but had heard from witnesses already dead³⁷. Roger Collins saw in the work an example of the tensions that arose with the creation of the Gothic kingdom between the center that would be symbolized by the city of Toledo and the periphery that would be Merida, and with it the opposition between different powers³⁸. But in this case it was also about a plus between the monarch and his court and the former imperial capital and its political forces, among which the metropolitan was one of them.

8. The work of Masona and Saint Leander

Leovigildo had proposed the political and administrative reorganization and strengthening of Visigothic Spain. He wanted to base his entire program on Arianism. He saw clearly that political unity had to be based on religious unity. He was a convinced Arian, and the sectarianism of his wife, Gosvinta, and the fact that the main neighbors and enemies of the Visigoth people were all Catholics contributed to make him even more rigid, the Franks, the Suevi and the imperials in the southeast of the Peninsula.

The main obstacle he encountered was the opposition of Spanish Catholicism. The great mass of Visigothic Catholics were not willing to abandon their faith. And even less so the bishops. Leovigildo's energy could not stand any opposition to his plans. When he tried to convert the Catholics to Arianism, he quickly encountered the opposition of Masona, the metropolitan of Merida, and of Saint Leandro, the metropolitan of Seville. It is not strange that Leovigildo reacted violently against Catholicism.

Masona, the metropolitan of Marida, was, as we have shown above, a holy man, a great shepherd of souls and extremely charitable towards everyone. He founded and endowed monasteries and churches, but also a large hospital, where all kinds of sick people are cared for, without distinction of religion or social class. It is not strange, therefore, that, when Leovigildo proposes the religious reunification of Visigothic Spain, making all his subjects embrace Arianism, he tries to attract the great Masona.

³⁷ Paulus Diaconus, III, 1-15: „mulți spun că, cu ani în urmă, pe vremea lui Leovigildo...”.

³⁸ Collins Roger, pp. 190-219.

Saint Leander was born in Cartagena in 540, from a distinguished family. Perhaps for political reasons, the family had to emigrate to Seville around 554. Upon the death of his parents, he was responsible for the care and education of his brothers Fulgentius, Isidore and Florentine, and in 578 he was already bishop of Seville. He was concerned with the training and reform of the clergy. In 590 he convened a synod in Seville, which dealt with dogmatic matters, and founded the famous school of Seville, which was a center of culture for the entire West. Religion and worship reached great splendor. Nor did he neglect the temporal needs of his faithful. His zeal in defending Catholicism and his attacks on Arianism earned him the enmity of Leovigildo when he attempted the religious unity of Spain on the basis of Arianism³⁹.

9. The Conversion of King Recaredo and the Third Council of Toledo

According to the Chronicle of Maximus of Zaragoza⁴⁰, Leovigildo is said to have embraced Catholicism⁴¹ shortly before his death. He entrusted himself, his son Recaredo, and the entire kingdom to Masona and Saint Leander. Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Gregory of Tours also state that Leovigildo, near death, renounced Arianism and converted to Catholicism, asking Saint Leander to work for the conversion of his son Recaredo⁴². Neither Saint Isidore nor any other contemporary author speaks of such a conversion. On the contrary, in the Lives of the Honoured Fathers it is said that he died in error.

What is undeniable is that Leovigildo, at the end of his life, changed his attitude towards Christianity. I think Garcia Villada is right when he writes: „*In any case, the political talent of a man as expert as Leovigild could not hide the fact that religious divergence would be a continuous source of discord among the inhabitants of Spain, so that it was necessary at all costs to work for the unification of beliefs. To think of introducing Arianism was madness after the Suevi had abandoned it and entered the ranks of the Catholic Church, with the result that the vast majority of the country already professed the Nicene-Constantinopolitan faith. To keep the Visigothic kingdom on its feet, there was no other solution, even within the framework of*

³⁹ Florez Enrique, *Espana sagrada*, vol XII, p. 180-206.

⁴⁰ Maximus was the Visigothic bishop of Saragossa from about 592 to 619. He held the episcopal see of Saragossa during the conversion of the Visigothic kings to Catholicism, with Reccared, Liuva II, Witeric, Gundemaro and Sisebut. He participated in the Second Council of Saragossa in 592, the Second Council of Barcelona in 599 and the Council of Egara in 614, and signed the decree of Gundemaro in 610.

⁴¹ We are talking about Catholicism in the sense of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan faith and not in the sense that this term has today.

⁴² Grigorio Magno, *Dialogorum libri IV*, p. 31

political calculations than to tend towards unification under the banner of Catholicism. The ground was well prepared. The situation in which Recaredo found himself when he took over the reins of government allowed him to take this transcendental step without risking anything. Associated with the leadership of the nation during his father's lifetime, victorious over a Frankish army and having lived and witnessed the sad end of his brother Hermenegild, he was well aware of the country's misunderstandings and, through his prudent, moderate and just attitude, enjoyed full authority among all the inhabitants ⁴³”.

Leovigildo must have seen that political-administrative unity could be achieved more easily in Catholicism. To achieve this, religious unity was necessary. Union was not feasible in Arianism, given the opposition he encountered between the hierarchy and the Catholic faithful. Thus, although he gave up one of the means he believed indispensable, he did not give up the ideal he had proposed. He could only achieve it by energetic and sometimes cruel means, he was a king with great political vision.

It is also true, as I have indicated, that Saint Leandro, whether Leovigildo or not, played a very important role in the conversion of Reccaredo and the Gothic people to Catholicism. Ten months after Reccaredo's accession to the throne, he converted to Catholicism. The sources give almost nothing about the circumstances in which this took place. They are practically limited to outlining the deed. This is the fundamental act of Reccaredo's reign and, for me, the most important in the history of Spain because of its political and religious implications. The foundations of a new Spanish nationality were laid by achieving religious and political unity between the invading people and the Hispano-Roman inhabitants of Visigothic Spain. The inhabitants of Spain then acquired the conviction that they were one people, one nation. Moreover, all the obstacles were removed to the total achievement, namely the fusion of the races. However, this was not fully achieved until Recesvinus abolished the law forbidding Goths to marry Hispano-Romans. Reccaredo's conversion was not a personal act, since practically all the people converted with him. There were a few exceptions, as we will see later. There are many possible reasons for Reccaredo's conversion. The first and most fundamental is undoubtedly his inner conviction. The interest he showed in the acceptance of Catholicism by all his subjects, the efforts he made to re-establish Catholic ecclesiastical discipline, the favors he granted to Catholic bishops and the help he asked of them, show that his conversion was not due solely to political opportunism. He entered Catholicism truly convinced of the

⁴³ Villada Garcia Zacarias, *Historia eclesiastica de Espana*, Tomo II, Primera parte, Ed. Razon y Fe, Madrid. 1932, pp 59-60

superiority of his new religion. Political motives must have played a role in encouraging him to convert. Recaredo's policy, like that of his father Leovigildo, was to achieve the politico-religious unity of all Spain. The main obstacle that Leovigildo encountered, apart from the opposition of the hierarchy and the Catholic people, was the rebellion of his son Hermenegildo. Leovigildo's attempt to found unity on Arianism had failed. It is therefore natural that Recaredo should try to realize his ideal of unity on the basis of Catholicism⁴⁴.

Several other reasons could have influenced his conversion. Undoubtedly, the very different attitude of the Arian episcopate, hesitant, lacking in dogmatic conviction and always allowing concessions against its doctrine, and that of the Catholic episcopate, firm and determined, played a role in this conversion, as in the very frequent conversions of that time. As reasons which must have influenced the mind of Reccaredo, we may cite the vision of the progress of Catholicism in the Gothic people themselves, the convenience of putting an end to the religious discrepancy, a situation which had been accentuated since the incorporation of the new Catholic Suevi into the Visigothic state, the extraordinary strength of the Catholic clergy, a force which the king naturally wished to attract as an excellent means of consolidating his authority over the secular nobility, and, finally, the interest which existed in eliminating, with the conversion, the bases of possible support at home for the interests of the Byzantines, and of the Franks, opposed to the Visigoths. Each of these reasons was important in encouraging Recaredo to embrace Catholicism. Interestingly, the strained relations with the Byzantine Empire were not resolved with the king's conversion⁴⁵.

In the same year 587, Reccaredo convened a synod of Arian bishops, at which he succeeded in persuading them, more by reason than by force, to convert to Catholicism. Reccaredo returned to their former owners, both lay and clerical, the confiscated goods still in the hands of the treasury. He founded and endowed new churches and monasteries.

The king himself summoned all the bishops of Visigothic Spain. Some nobles and several Arian bishops also attended. The meetings were held in one of the basilicas in the city of Toledo. 62 Catholic bishops and five vicars, representing bishops who could not attend, attended. The council began on May 8, 589. The purpose for which the council was called is already mentioned in the title: *„Since the most glorious king himself, by virtue of the sincerity of the king's will and by virtue of the sincerity of his faith, commanded the assembly of a council*

⁴⁴ Hillgart J. N, La conversion de los visigodos, *„Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia”* 34, 1961, p 34.

⁴⁵ Girves Margarita Vallejo, Las relaciones politicas entre la Espana Visigoda y Bizancio, en *„Toledo y Bizancio”*, Coord, Miguel Cortes Arrese, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, Cuenca, 2002, pp 101-102.

(synod), of all the bishops in his dominions, to rejoice in the Lord for his conversion and that of the race of the Goths, and also to give thanks to the divine goodness for so special a gift, the same most holy prince spoke to the venerable council in these terms: "I do not think, most reverend bishops, that you do not know that I have summoned you to the presence of our serenity for the purpose of restoring ecclesiastical discipline. And since many years have passed since the threatening heresy did not permit the celebration of councils in the Catholic Church, God, who was pleased to extirpate the said heresy by our means, has urged us to restore ecclesiastical institutions according to the ancient customs. Therefore, you should be glad and rejoice that the ancient canonical customs, with God's help, they will be restored to their old ways through our glory. Nevertheless, above all, I urge you and I urge you too to dedicate yourselves to fasting, vigils and prayers, so that the canonical order, which a long and lasting forgetfulness has caused to disappear from episcopal memory and which our age confesses to be ignorant of, may be revealed to you again by divine gift" ⁴⁶.

The first objective was the solemn abjuration of Arianism. The council fathers thanked God and the prince and decreed three days of fasting. The king spoke again about the abjuration of Arianism when the sessions resumed: „We do not believe that it will be hidden from your holiness how much Spain suffered under the error of the Arian and how, your beatitude learning, not long after the death of our father, how we ourselves united to the holy Catholic faith, we believe that immense and eternal joy has occurred on all sides. And therefore, venerable fathers, we have decided to gather you to celebrate this council, so that you yourselves may give eternal thanks to the Lord on the occasion of the people who have just returned to Christ. What we should discuss equally before your priesthood regarding the faith and hope that we confess, we make known to you in writing in this document. Let it therefore be read among you. And may our glorious person, approved by the conciliar opinion, shine ennobled by the testimony of the same faith for all future times”⁴⁷.

The petition was read by the council secretary. It said: „Although Almighty God has given us to bear the burden of the kingdom for the benefit and benefit of the peoples and has entrusted the government of not a few peoples to our royal care, nevertheless, we remember our condition as mortals and that we cannot otherwise merit the happiness of future beatitude than by dedicating ourselves to the worship of the true faith and thanking our Creator at least

⁴⁶ *Concilios Visigóticos e hispano-romanos*, Edición preparada por Jose Vives con la colaboración de Tomas Martin Martinez y Gonzalo Martinez Diez, Ed. Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Enrique Florez, Barcelona-Madrid, 1963, p. 107.

⁴⁷ Vives Jose, Concilio III de Toledo, p. 108.

with the confession that He is worthy.... This means that we confess that the Father is the one who in-Him did not beget from His substance the Son, equal to Himself and co-eternal, and not that He is at the same time begotten and generator, but that one is the person of the Father who begot, another that of the Son who was begotten, and yet both subsist through the divinity of one substance: the Father, from whom the Son proceeds, but He Himself proceeds from no other. The Son is the one who proceeds from the Father, but without beginning and without dissolution He subsists in that divinity, in which He is equal and co-eternal with the Father. In the same way, we must confess and preach that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son⁴⁸ and, together with the Father and the Son, is of one substance, that there is in the Trinity a third person, who is the Holy Spirit, who, however, has a divine essence common with the Father and the Son. For this Holy Trinity is one God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by whose goodness, although every creature is created good, yet, through the human form taken by the Son, it is restored from its sinful origin to its first beatitude. But, as it is a sign of true predestination to believe that the Trinity is in Unity, and Unity in the Trinity, so it will be a proof of true justification if we confess the same faith within the universal Church and preserve the apostolic precepts based on the apostolic foundation. Nevertheless, you, bishops of the Lord, should remember how many troubles the Catholic Church of God in Spain has hitherto suffered from the adversary. When the Catholics were upholding and defending the constant truth of their faith, and the heretics were upholding their perfidy with the most stubborn animosity, I, too, as you can see from the results, inflamed by the fervor of faith, was impelled by the Lord to lead this people, who were serving error under the false name of religion, to the knowledge of the faith and into the bosom of the Catholic Church”⁴⁹.

Because of its clarity, conciseness, and precision, we have the impression that this paragraph, and perhaps the entire speech, was written by a bishop. Recaredo then speaks of his work of converting the Gothic people: *„Present is the entire illustrious race of the Goths, esteemed by almost all nations for their authentic virility, who, although hitherto separated from the faith, from the wickedness of their doctors and from the unity of the Catholic Church, nevertheless, at this moment, united with me with all their heart, participate in the communion of that Church which receives with a maternal breast the multitude of the most diverse peoples and nourishes them in her bosom of charity, and of which it is said by the mouth of the prophet: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples ". Not only the conversion of the*

⁴⁸ Pentru prima dată apare erezia Filioque în cadrul unui sinod.

⁴⁹ Vives Jose, Concilio III de Toledo, pp. 108-110.

Goths is included among the series of favors that we have received, but also the infinite multitude of the Suebi people, whom with the help of heaven we have subjected to our kingdom, although led to heresy through the fault of others, were brought, by our grace, to the source of truth. Therefore, Most Holy Fathers, I offer to the eternal God, through your hands, as a holy and expiatory sacrifice, these so noble peoples, who by our diligence have won for the Lord, for it will be for me a crown and an imperishable joy in the reward of the righteous if these peoples, who by our care have hastened to the unity of the Church, remain steadfast and constant in the unity of the Church. And just as by divine providence it has been given to us to bring these peoples into the unity of the Church of Christ, so it depends on you to instruct them in Catholic dogmas, so that, fully instructed in the knowledge of the truth, they may rightly reject the error of pernicious heresy and preserve through love the path of true faith, embracing with ever more ardent desire the communion of the Catholic Church”⁵⁰.

The Church, from the conversion of Reccaredo until the fall of the Visigothic kingdom in 711, devoted itself wholeheartedly to ensuring and perfecting Catholic unity and theology, correcting the defects of the clergy and laity, achieving the conversion of the Jews, and cooperating with civil authorities to maintain political unity and strengthen the Visigothic monarchy.

10. Caesaropapism or Papocaesarism in the Visigothic monarchy?

This subchapter is devoted to the study of the relations of the Church with the monarchy, this being the form of government practiced since ancient times among the Visigoths. The Church makes a clear distinction between the king and the monarchy. The king is not the same as the state. A distinction is also made between the king's own property and the property of the Crown. Therefore, we must treat separately the relations of the Church with the state and the relations with kings as persons occupying the throne. The Visigothic Church has a concept of monarchy abstracted by the king who can represent it. It is an ideal of a human institution that the Church models as the perfect form of government. It also has the ideal of a permanent and perfect king, who, as head of the government, represents the monarchy. We believe it is essential to begin with a study of the political ideas of Saint Isidore. His influence is so great in all aspects of knowledge that I consider it essential to know and understand his

⁵⁰ Vives Jose, Concilio III de Toledo, pp. 110-111.

political thought in order to understand the political ideas developed by the Church, especially after the Fourth Council of Toledo in 633. We will see that his influence was decisive.

Politics is one of the subjects addressed by Saint Isidore. Not only because during this period politics was seen as an essential part of human life, with wide repercussions on spiritual life, but also because Saint Isidore lived in a period when the concept of king among the Visigothic people was in the final stages of development.

The Visigothic kings were no longer, as they had been at first, the kings of warring bands seeking a territory on which to settle stably, nor the kings of the invading people of Spain. Athanagildo and Leovigildo sought national unity. When the Visigoths had conquered almost all of Spanish territory, the kings realized that being a political leader of the nation was more important than being a military leader. War took second place to the importance of the mission of promoting the common good, justice, and unity.

11. Separation of powers in the Visigothic state

Bishops were a key figure in the society of the Visigothic period in Hispania. They were omnipresent in all the activities of life, at the highest level and in the regulation of customs, ceremonies and politics. We know of hundreds of bishops either because they signed the acts of participation in councils, or because they left something in writing, or because they are mentioned in texts for various reasons. The bishop is a person of ascendancy and power, with a clear influence at court on many occasions, and is the predominant component in the life of the community. In reality, as we will see, the bishops dictate policy, they are on the side of the king or against him, they take sides for one cause or another. They take care of the communities in the cities, they become leaders and guardians who are interested in the well-being of the people. This role of the bishops is not exclusive to Visigothic society. It is widespread and similar in other places and kingdoms and, of course, in the Eastern Roman Empire, ruled from Constantinople. Their religious disputes agitated the masses and led to riots, sometimes violent and merciless towards their opponents. Emperors and kings succumb to their influence, need them, ally themselves with them. In the power of the bishops lies excommunication, condemnation, anathematization. They are a new form of local power, the authority in the city, they are the builders, the remedy for the poor and helpless, they control the masses. The bishop is *vir venerabilis*, almost untouchable⁵¹.

⁵¹ Thompson E. A, Los Godos En Espana, pp. 328-340.

During all this period, the state intervened a lot in ecclesiastical matters, and the Church in civil matters. Both helped each other to achieve their own goals. On the other hand, these goals did not contradict each other. Therefore, the interferences are explained. Religion entered politics, and politics entered religion. And both were an integral part of the national life.

In the Visigothic state, we find therefore two powers, the civil and the ecclesiastical, with almost equal goals and both intervening in civil and political matters. Thus, the question inevitably arises: which of the two powers prevailed over the other? We refer, of course, to supremacy in political matters. The question is whether the Visigothic state was theocratic.

Theocracy is understood as the government exercised directly by God within the nation. This sense of theocracy is itself excluded from the government of the Visigothic people. This is the pure meaning of the term theocracy. It may also be understood as the government of the priestly class or of the prince, as a servant of God, and therefore in his capacity as high priest. Of course, the government of Visigothic Spain was not a government in which the king appeared as a servant of God or as a high priest. He was not even an intermediary between God and the people. It is true that kings had certain religious attributions, which the Church was pleased to recognize.

12. Visigothic King's Authority: Full or Limited?

Another mistake has often been made in judging the Visigothic monarchy, namely that it was an absolutist monarchy. This is perhaps a corollary of attributing a theocratic character to the monarchy and, above all, of focusing exclusively on the powers of the kings and exaggerating them. F. Dahn, for example, was again misled by appearances. He believes that the Visigothic monarchy was absolutist. M. Torres summarizes Dahn's opinion as follows: "Dahn tries to demonstrate that the powers of the king are of an imperial type"⁵².

Trying to explain the intervention of the Councils of Toledo in the legislative, judicial and coercive powers of the sovereign power, Andres Marcos writes: „*Before arriving at this, it should be noted that the Gothic king was, in law, the exclusive subject of sovereignty and independent of any other subject in the exercise of his powers. The Lex visigothorum and the Forum indicum do not indicate any necessary limitation. The councils were therefore faced with a society ruled by absolute kings, often improvised by force and in constant danger of*

⁵² Lopez Torres M, El derecho....p. 231.

perishing because of it, kings frequently moved by warlike effects and lacking sufficient general and political culture”⁵³.

We are not sure what the author means by necessary limitation. From what he says later, stating that kings were not subject to any law. There is a civil law that limits the power of kings. It is law II 1,2 of the Fuero juzgo. The title of this law is quite significant: „*Both the royal power and the entire people are subject to the laws*”. It is therefore established that the king, like everyone else, must respect the laws. Then, the followings are added: „... *embracing with pleasure the divine commandments, we give ourselves just laws, and for our subjects, to which it is established that our high clemency and the future of our successors and all the subjects of our kingdom must submit, and this is established with this intention, that in no case is anyone exempted, either by the dignity of the person or by the dignity of power, from observing the laws which are given for subjects, in such a way that they are obliged by necessity or by the will of the prince to observe the law*”⁵⁴.

M. Torres comments on the king's obligation to obey the laws: „*The interesting thing is that these laws not only must be respected, the laws are generally well understood, but they are given for the subjects and for the king equally, the king being subject, in the private order, to them, like any member of the state*”⁵⁵. Once promulgated, the law binds both the king and the other citizens, both now and in the future, without the possibility of anyone being exempted from this obligation⁵⁶.

⁵³ Marcos Andres T, La constitucion...p. 72.

⁵⁴ Fuero juzgo II, 1.2.

⁵⁵ Lopez Torres M, Lecciones de...p. 238.

⁵⁶ Thompson E. A, Los Godos En Espana, pp. 338-341.

CHAPTER III

DEFINITION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE VISIGOTH CHURCH IN RELATION TO THE KINGS

1. Methodology of choosing the king

We have seen the Church's concept of kingship. Let us now see what the Church says about the kings. We do not intend to speak about the relations that the Church maintained with each of the Visigothic kings, although sometimes, as in the cases of Suintila and Wamba, we try to go into more detail to see the legality of the Church's attitude in such cases, comparing it with the conciliar legislation. We wish rather to analyze the qualities that the Church requires for someone to ascend to the throne and to specify the powers that are granted to him in the exercise of sovereignty. All this is closely related to what was written in the previous chapter about the electivity of the monarchy and its moderate character. The Church would require that kings realize the ideal of monarchy that appears in its canons.

We have seen that the Visigothic monarchy was elective. The Church, echoing the Gothic custom, endorsed this form of government. Let us now see what qualities the Church required of candidates for the throne. Nothing is said about the qualities that the person elected must have in the first conciliar canon, which speaks of the electivity of the monarchy and the election of the king. It is only specified that the electors are the bishops and the nobles.

The Church therefore desires that the election of the king be free. Of the candidates who fulfill the established conditions, the one chosen by the majority should ascend the throne. It also desires that none of the electors be chosen for the good of a small group and that the only motive be ambition and not the true good of the people and the country. Its desire is that the elections be free and that the vote be given to the worthiest candidate.

With all this legislation, the Church tried to ensure that the elections would be peaceful. It was natural for it to fear that, during the vacancy of the throne, passions and ambitions would be aroused. Therefore, it insisted that the one elected should be the one designated by the majority of the voters and that any imposition of a candidate by force should be excluded. The

Eighth Council of Toledo strictly excluded that the king should be imposed by the conspiracy of a few.

2. Interventions of kings in religious politics

The Visigothic kings exercised their right to convene councils and no one opposed such a custom at the time, and no such act seemed illicit at that time. It was a custom that emanated from the relations that Church and State maintained at that time. Such a custom was not exclusive to the Visigothic kings.

Politics was not alien to religion, nor religion to politics. There was no opposition between the aims of the Church and those of the State. They needed each other. M. Torres rightly writes: „*The basis of their mutual interventions in matters which today are considered to belong to different spheres is none other, for the Visigothic state and for other contemporary states, than the absence of any conflict between the aims of the state and the mission of the Church. The distinction between the two powers, and even the conflict between the two, will be only the fruit of a later historical reality, which will ultimately be exploited by philosophical systems which could hardly have been foreseen at the time*”⁵⁷. In judicial matters, for example, both agreed to punish mixed crimes, which violated both ecclesiastical and civil laws. The Church, for example, imposed the penalty of excommunication on traitors.

After his conversion, Reccaredo believed himself to be an instrument of God through whom the Arian heresy was extirpated and considered it a true obligation to restore the old customs and ecclesiastical institutions⁵⁸. Thus, he proposed, with the help of Christ, to concern himself with spiritual things and with everything that made people believers.

Saint Isidore, speaking of the duties of the kings, included certain religious duties. Saint Isidore included temporal power within the divine plans of salvation. The purpose of power is to enforce laws, even ecclesiastical laws, in special cases. And such a case is when the spiritual power has no coercive force to enforce ecclesiastical laws. The existence of two powers is therefore recognized: the spiritual and the temporal. The temporal power must help the spiritual power to achieve its goals. Secular princes sometimes retain, within the Church, the prerogatives of the power they have received in order to protect ecclesiastical discipline with the same power. Otherwise, such powers would not be necessary in the Church, except to

⁵⁷ Lopez Torres M, La Iglesia en.....p. 303.

⁵⁸ Orlandis Jose, La vida en Espana en tiempo.... pp. 357-358.

impose, through fear of discipline, what the priest cannot obtain by preaching the doctrine. The heavenly kingdom often progresses by means of the earthly kingdom, so that those in the Church who are against the faith and ecclesiastical discipline may be overthrown by the rigor of the princes, and the authority of the prince may impose on rebellious spirits that discipline which the Church, in her humility, cannot exercise, and may communicate to the Church the efficacy of its power, so that she may deserve respect⁵⁹.

3. Examples of unworthy kings

As we have seen, the Church presented an ideal of monarchy and government that was difficult to adapt to practice. Kings were not so perfect as to meet all the requirements established by ecclesiastical and civil legislation. The Church was not too harsh on kings who did not fully meet the requirements. Usually, these were defects that did not seriously endanger the characteristics of the monarchy.

We believe that St. Isidore's theory that bad kings are instruments used by God to punish the people was quite influential. They received the king they deserved. The king was obliged to do good, and this is where the name comes from. The word king comes from "to rule," just as priest comes from "to sanctify," and he who does not correct does not rule. Therefore, kings keep their name by doing good and lose it by sinning, hence that proverb of the ancients: „*You are a king if you do well, otherwise you are not*”⁶⁰.

But this did not legitimize any action against him. The legitimacy of power is weakened, to the point of disappearance, to the extent that the king does evil, because he understands that power was granted to him only to do good. But this disappearance of legitimacy can only be judged by God and does not authorize subjects to attempt any violence against kings⁶¹. However, there were two cases where the Church, the councils, made decisions against two kings: Suintila and Wamba. The councils indicate that their mistakes were serious.

The Church did not directly claim the right to depose kings it considered wicked. But it did manage to find legal grounds to act against them, even if they had already been deposed for other reasons. In theory, punishment was left to God. But in practice, events that removed a wicked king from the throne were considered providential. The resignation of Wamba and

⁵⁹ Isidoro de Sevilla, Sentencias,.....p. 61.

⁶⁰ Isidoro de Sevilla, Etimologias... p. 342.

⁶¹ J. Romero L, San Isidoro de Sevilla....p. 63.

the appointment of Ervigius were considered providential. God punished wicked kings in this way⁶². God wanted this.

4. Ensuring the King's Security and Pardoning Traitors: The Role of the Church

Frequent revolutions had other consequences. In the event of a successful revolution, not only the kings themselves, but also their families and associates were in great danger. The new king, whether out of hatred or militancy, risked going to the extreme of taking revenge on the family and friends of the deposed king. The danger of revenge could arise in many cases when the king died peacefully.

The Fifth Council of Toledo, in the year 636, begins legislation that seeks to protect the relatives of kings, in this case, of King Chintila. It suggests that injustices were often done to the relatives of the deceased king. It states ... that, preserving all that has been decided and decreed in the great universal council, it is also added that the following must be observed: to preserve love with all kindness and firmness towards all the descendants of our prince King Chintila and to grant them due assistance and defense, so that they are not unjustly taken from their property rights, neither the goods acquired by right, nor those received from their parents by legal transmission. Those who violate this decree are punished by excommunication.

The logical consequence of revolts against kings was that their collaborators also fell into the disgrace of the new holder of the throne. Sometimes because of personal hatred, sometimes because the new king was forced to distribute among his collaborators in the rebellion the positions or functions held in the palace by those loyal to the previous king. This could also happen in cases where the king died of natural causes.

5. Administrative-territorial organization of the Visigothic Church: Diocese of Toledo

The Bishop of Toledo did not have much importance in the first centuries in the life of the Spanish Church. It followed the organization of the Roman Empire, which divided Spain

⁶² Pettit Carlos, Iglesia y Justicia en el Reino de Toledo, Los visigodos. Historia y civilizacion, en „*Antigüedad y Cristianismo*”, Murcia, 1986. pp.268-272.

into five provinces: Tarraconensis, whose capital was Tarragona, Carthaginensis, whose capital was Cartagena, Baetica with its capital in Seville, Lusitania, whose capital was Merida, and Galicia, with its capital in Braga. During the Visigothic domination, Narbonense was added, with its capital in Narbonne.

The bishop of the capital was the ecclesiastical head of the entire province. The bishop of Toledo was, for many years, just another suffragan of the province of Carthage. His importance began to grow when Spain was invaded and the Visigoths established their capital at Toledo. In the II Council of Toledo, in the year 527, the bishop of this city already appears as metropolitan of the entire province of Tarraconensis⁶³. Subsequent councils repeated this statement despite the protests of some bishops. They wanted the bishop of Toledo to be metropolitan only of the central region, and the bishop of Cartagena of the other dioceses.

The civil power supported the bishop of Toledo in this dispute, King Gundemaro opposed the bishops who tried to defend the rights of the bishop of Cartagena and, with the approval of the other Spanish metropolitans, issued a decree recognizing Toledo as the sole metropolis of the entire former ecclesiastical province of Cartagena⁶⁴.

From then on, the power of the Metropolitan of Toledo grew steadily. At the Seventh Council of Toledo in 646, it was declared: „ *We have also agreed that, out of respect for the king and for the honor of the royal throne and for the comfort of the metropolitan city itself, the bishops of the vicinity of the city of Toledo, in accordance with the notice they will receive from the metropolitan himself, shall reside in the said city for one month each year, except during the harvest and grape picking period* ”⁶⁵.

Thus, a kind of ecclesiastical curia was formed around the metropolitan of Toledo, made up of the bishops of the surrounding areas. This can be explained not only by the power acquired by the metropolitan of Toledo, but also by the close connection between civil and ecclesiastical power and by the fact that the kings had their court in Toledo. The bishops, as we will see, had become a kind of advisors to the kingdom with extensive powers. Thus, at the same time as they helped the metropolitan, they were at the king's side and acted at any time in the most diverse problems.

⁶³ Recio Riviera J. F, Encumbramiento de la sede toledana durante la dominacion visigotica, „*Hispania Sacra*”, 8, pp. 3-34.

⁶⁴ Vives Jose, Concilio XII de Toledo...p. 404.

⁶⁵ Vives Jose, Concilio VII de Toledo...p. 256.

6. The role and duties of the Metropolitan

The metropolitan bishops had great importance in the Spanish Church. Their existence is already assured by the first certain information we have about the Church in Spain. At first it seems that the oldest bishop of the ecclesiastical province received the rank of metropolitan. But it seems that this custom did not last long in Spain. Gradually, the sees of Tarragona, Seville, Merida, Braga and Cartagena acquired the status of metropolitan sees⁶⁶.

The metropolitan consecrates all the bishops in his ecclesiastical province. But it could happen that the new bishop, for some reason, is not consecrated in the metropolitan city. In this case, the letters of approval of the metropolitan are necessary for the bishop to receive the blessing and attain the honor of the diocese. In any case, after a prudent time, he must present himself to his metropolitan to receive the first pastoral advice and thus learn what he must do. This is how the Council of Tarragona of the year 516 expresses it: *„If someone has not been ordained in the metropolitan city after receiving the blessing and acquiring the honor of the episcopate through letters of approval from the metropolitan, we consider it most appropriate that, after the established time, that is, after two months, he should present himself personally to his metropolitan so that, receiving pastoral advice from him, he may know better what he must observe”*⁶⁷.

The metropolitan has the duty to inform his bishops in advance of the day of the celebration of Easter, as can be seen, already in the 6th century the metropolitan is the true spiritual head of the ecclesiastical province and even the suffragan bishops are subject to him. He consecrates them and gives them pastoral advice and they are subject to his authority.

8. The role and duties of the bishop

The bishop was the head of the clergy in his diocese and the fundamental subject of pastoral care, whose problems and concerns were to find an echo and a solution in him. The other clergy were merely his ministers. Bishops are the ordinary ministers of all the sacraments and they alone had the power to confer major holy orders and to consecrate the anointing of confirmation.

⁶⁶ Mansilla D, Orígenes de la organización metropolitana en la Iglesia española, „*Hispania Sacra*”, 12, Madrid, pp. 261-162.

⁶⁷ Vives Jose, Concilio de Tarragona, p. 35.

Their main duty was the spiritual and material care of the Church. In other words, he must ensure that his priests fulfill their duties well and, above all, ensure that they celebrate the holy services as prescribed. He must verify that they know the truths of faith. He will instruct the ignorant clergy and teach the faithful the fundamental truths of faith.

1. The civil and legal powers of the bishop

After the conversion of Recaredo and the entire Visigothic people to Catholicism, the bishop was a powerful man not only in the ecclesiastical sphere, but also in civil society ⁶⁸. From the close union between the Church and the State, the bishops held important civil functions. We will expand a little on this subject, since it is, without a doubt, the period in the history of the Spanish Church in which the bishops were most involved in civil power. The bishop intervened not only as a member of the episcopate and the national council, but also personally in the political and administrative activity of the nation. The laws granted him important public activities in daily life. Thus, for example, they were certainly members of the Aula Regia as grandees of the kingdom and were part of the tribunals established to judge the crimes of the upper classes.

4. The Role of the Priest from a Civil Perspective

Montano de Toledo wrote to the priests of Palencia: God wanted you to be our assistants in our work. This concept of priests is not new. From the beginning of the Church, they have been considered assistants to the bishop in matters of worship and even the governance of the Christian flock. They are his advisors and are in such close communion with him that even the Eucharistic sacrifice, exercised by the bishops, is a form of worship and a form of governance of the Christian flock.

The Council of Elvira tells us that even then there were priests at the head of some churches. It was only later, with the numerical and geographical expansion of Christianity, that priests acquired a more independent personality⁶⁹. Later, in 516, when the Council of Tarragona took place, we know that there were already priests in the villages.

⁶⁸ Arce Javier, Esperando..... pp. 261-265.

⁶⁹ Alonso Fernandez J, *La cura pastoral en la Espana romano-visigoda*, Madrid, p. 38.

The office of the priest is to teach, celebrate, and distribute the holy mysteries. His chief duty is to attend to the spiritual needs of his parishioners. For this reason, the Fourth Council of Toledo established that all clerics who are naive in the service of religion should be exempted from all public convocations and work, so that they may serve God more freely and not be kept from ecclesiastical work by any hindrance⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ Vives Jose, Concilio de Tarragona, p. 38.

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNCILS OF TOLEDO IN THE VISIGOTH PERIOD

We have already spoken of the persuasion of the Spanish bishops to form a college. They were convinced that they were all responsible for the spiritual life and observance of ecclesiastical discipline throughout the nation. All had to cooperate in solving problems that arose. And the best way to solve problems was to discuss them in council. The extent and importance of these problems depended on whether a general or provincial assembly was convened.

It is interesting to see the large number of councils held in Spain from the conversion of Reccaredo to the fall of Spain to the Arabs. There are twenty-six from 589 to 711. At least those of which we have knowledge. Although the intervals at which the councils were to be held were fixed in detail on several occasions, both general and provincial councils did not, in practice, meet with mathematical regularity.

The general councils enjoyed the greatest authority within the Spanish Church. Once a canon was approved or a certain course of action was established, all were obliged to obey and observe it as long as the law was not revoked. At the third council of Toledo in 589, a distinction was made between general councils, in which questions of faith and problems affecting the entire Spanish Church were to be discussed, and provincial councils, which were to deal with other matters. The general councils were the clearest expression of the unity of the Spanish Church. What gave them the character of general councils was the number of those present and the problems addressed⁷¹. National councils were attended by bishops from the entire Visigothic kingdom, while provincial councils were attended only by bishops from the ecclesiastical province in which they were held.

⁷¹ Villada Garcia Z, *Historia eclesiastica de Espana*...p. 108.

1. *Methodology for convening a council*

The Visigothic kings always exercised their right to convene councils. It was a right or custom that no one disputed during the Visigothic period. The bishops not only did not oppose this prerogative, but, by their expressions, showed themselves absolutely in agreement with it⁷². On the other hand, neither in Spain nor in the rest of the Christian countries did it appear as an illegal interference in ecclesiastical affairs. The custom of the emperor convening the council began with Constantine. Kings in all countries continued to practice this custom as an inherent right of the Crown. The Merovingian councils qualified as national were convened by the king or at least he gave his consent. In Spain, the kings not only convened the national councils, but sometimes also convened the provincial councils or gave their consent to their celebration.

2. *Topics debated in councils*

The subjects addressed in the councils are extremely varied: liturgy, sacraments, morality, religious songs, idolatry, Judaism, problems of social justice, political obligations, punishments for those who break the laws, and so on. They made, above all, a remarkable effort to combat all types of abuses and corruptions of both a religious and civil nature. It is normal that all types of religious and even mixed subjects are addressed in the councils. What is surprising is the large number, especially starting with the XII Council of Toledo in 681, in which judicial and political subjects are addressed. These began to become more numerous at the VIII Council of Toledo in 653 and became almost exclusive subjects from the XII Council of Toledo onwards.

This ease in dealing with political issues, together with the presence of lay people in the assemblies, their convocation by the king and their confirmation, made the councils, without losing their significance as religious assemblies, acquire an important civil significance.

The councils, which were presided over and even convened by the king, something not specific to the Visigoths, did not cease to be so, but acquired a political character, which gave rise to confusion and which is mainly highlighted by the appearance in them, alongside the

⁷² Villada Garcia Z, Historia eclesiastica de Espana...p. 109.

king, of the king's aula. This is mainly due to the fact that they sometimes dealt with non-religious matters, given that the real powers of the state were reunited, and finally, because the king accepted, through laws of confirmation, non-religious agreements that could affect the political order⁷³.

3. *Councils: Form of connection and union between Church and State*

The Councils of Toledo were the meetings where the most important religious and political problems were discussed. And where the union between Church and State initiated by Reccaredo was carried to the highest degree. Reccaredo's conversion initiated a close and intimate relationship between Church and State, which, examined correctly and in the light of the ideas of the era, does not allow us to call the Visigothic Church of the 7th century either national, in the sense of being a Church led and governed by the monarch, or the Visigothic State theocratic, in the translatable sense of the term, and meaning thereby that the Church, the bishops and the councils, truly held the reins of government and of the political and legal life of the state in accordance with the constitutive principles of the state⁷⁴.

At that time, the question was not one of dominance, but of cooperation in order to achieve both the Church and the State's own goals. Neither of them hesitated to ask for mutual help. In the councils, the most important problems were analyzed and the most appropriate solutions were sought together. The Church and the State collaborate and help each other in achieving their respective goals. The Church, through its bishops, who are usually more educated than kings and laymen in general, provides political ideas and the basis for legal norms, and all this as a natural consequence of its superior culture, but this does not mean that the Church imposes its doctrines and dominates the State. The latter grants the Church its assistance, legislates for it and, in harmony with it, exercises rights, through the king, the embodiment of the State, rights which, at that time and given the dominant ideas, ideas that have their origin in the Roman Empire and in its relations with the Church since Constantine. Nor was the Church's intervention in civil affairs considered abusive. The reason for such mutual interference is that there is no opposition between the aims of the Church and those of the State. The two were mutually complementary. In the Councils of Toledo the interference

⁷³ Lopez Torres M, Lecciones de historia.... p. 250.

⁷⁴ Lopez Torres M, La Iglesia en la... p. 302.

of the State in ecclesiastical affairs and of the Church in civil affairs is most visible. Of course, the distinction was not as clear then as it may seem to us today.

4. *Civil authority of the canons*

From what has been said in the previous section, it is clear that the king intended to give the canons of the councils confirmed by him more than ecclesiastical value. Many of the subjects of these canons would not have been addressed in the councils had it not been at the express request of the king. They were outside the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. What happened was that the king was not in the foreground, and the canons, rather than a civil imposition, seemed to be cases of conscience, to be accepted out of religious conviction. There was less opposition from the various political factions. The king used the council to make civil laws. But let us not forget that the council was attended by many nobles belonging to the Aula Regia and that some bishops, in all probability, were members of this body.

The canons of the council, although approved by the bishops and nobles present, had only ecclesiastical value. They were binding on conscience, but transgressions could be punished only by canonical sanctions imposed by the council itself. M. Torres states that, the councils of Toledo were not a civil legislative assembly, the canons of the councils had no civil efficacy⁷⁵. A council in itself is not a civil legislative assembly. But if we consider that the Aula Regia participates in this assembly, that the king himself asks those present at the council to legislate in civil matters, the council was a civil legislative assembly that lacked only the last requirement to become true civil laws: the king's approval.

The councils issued legal norms, which then became true laws. It is not surprising that the king took advantage of the superior culture of the bishops in this way. The council deliberations formed the basis for subsequent legislation. Even if the canons were not modified in any way, the king's approval was absolutely necessary for them to become laws of the kingdom.

5. *The relationship of the Visigothic Church to other religions*

⁷⁵ Lopez Torres M, La Iglesia en la... p. 306.

5. 1. *Heathenism*

A large part of the population of Spain was Catholic when it was invaded by the Suevi, Vandals, Alans and Visigoths. The ecclesiastical organization was quite good. The evangelization of the Peninsula followed the great trade and communication routes. Baetica, Galicia and the Ebro valley were the regions where Christianity flourished the most. The percentage of Catholics was higher in the cities than in the countryside. The peoples of northern Spain had resisted Roman political domination, had resisted the acceptance of the culture and had not converted to Catholicism. They would continue to oppose all political and religious influences throughout the Visigothic period.

Paganism still had its followers⁷⁶, and in some regions Christianity had penetrated very superficially. In Spanish territory, therefore, many idolatrous practices and abundant superstitions, rooted in paganism, remained. It is often difficult to know whether the practitioners of idolatrous and superstitious rites are pagans or Christians who have not yet abandoned their ancient religious practices. The invading peoples are all pagan, with the exception of the Vandals and the Visigoths, who are Arians. They bring with them their religious practices and superstitions, which will revive those existing in Spanish territory. The primitive pagan cults that existed in the Iberian Peninsula were very similar to those of the Germanic peoples, and the contact between the two peoples gave them new strength. The Visigoths themselves, under a superficial layer of Arianism, preserved many pagan rites. Their mass conversion had not been very deep. With the conversion of Recaredo to Catholicism, the Visigoths and the Hispano-Romans would be grouped into a single kingdom and under a single religion, inaugurating an era rich in hopes due to the peaceful and religious tendencies that inaugurated it. It was a people who emerged from paganism and began to receive the rudiments of the Catholic faith, which was brought to them by a young and missionary Church, and who was forced to take measures at all levels to banish paganism and the religious practices of those people⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ Thompson E. A, *Los godos en Espana.....* p. 400.

⁷⁷ Martinez V, *El paganismo en la Espana visigoda*, „*Burgense*”, Nr. 13, 1972, p. 492.

5. 2. Mosaic religion

The existence and activities of Jews in Visigothic territory were a serious concern for both the Church and the state. Proof of this is the abundant conciliar legislation and the fact that Titles II and III of Book XII of the *Fuero juzgo* are entirely devoted to the Jewish question. This was a problem throughout Europe, and Spain was no exception. We will discuss later the letter of Pope Honorius I urging the Spanish bishops to be tougher on the Jews.

The interests of the Church and those of the State coincide completely in this matter. Nor can it be forgotten that often the intimate relationship between canons and laws arises from a parallel common interest of the Church and the State in the same matter. A clear case of this circumstance is the Visigothic anti-Jewish legislation, in which religious and political interests are so closely linked, sometimes even manifesting themselves in certain discrepancies between the purely political conception of the State, which has no objection to legally imposing compulsory baptism, and that of the Church, which can only accept a free conversion, moved by an intimate conviction⁷⁸. Both coincided in their interest in bringing the Jews into the newly inaugurated political-religious unity. They generally agreed on the means to be used, although they sometimes disagreed on how to use them.

6. Faith teachings foreign to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan one

Heresies were not a problem for the Visigothic Church during this period. No Spaniard defended heterodox doctrines. Nor did heresies that had appeared elsewhere find an echo in Visigothic territory. Arianism, which had been the official religion of the Visigoths until 589, disappeared almost suddenly with the conversion of Reccaredo, who was followed by all his people, with very rare exceptions. Not even the Arian clergy offered much resistance to the change of faith. At least there is no mention of this in the documents of the time. The rebellions against Reccaredo were more political than religious in nature. The rebels' goal, rather than the restoration of the Arian faith, was to take the throne. They were all political maneuvers that tried to take advantage of the discontent that Reccaredo's conversion might have caused. Witerico (603–10) tried to restore Arianism during his reign⁷⁹. Its failure was absolute. The formulas of faith that would appear in almost all the councils were merely a confession of faith

⁷⁸ Lopez Torres M, *La Iglesia en la...* pp. 306-307.

⁷⁹ Orlandis Jose, *Historia del Reino.....* p. 376.

to proclaim its orthodoxy. They did not mean that any error had arisen against Catholic doctrine and that it had to be combated.

7. The Visigothic Church and Rome

The Spanish bishops' consciousness as a national college did not lead them to believe that they were the supreme authority within the Spanish Church. The national councils and bishops recognized the authority of the ecumenical councils and the authority of the pope. The national councils were very careful to ensure that their doctrines and decisions were in accordance with the thinking of the universal Church.

The Third Council of Toledo, for example, forbids everything forbidden by the ancient canons and commands that the decisions of the holy councils and the synodal letters of the Holy Fathers remain in force. They will command, as in the Eastern Churches, that the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed be recited. They will make frequent reference to the primitive canons of the Church. They will take special care to follow in the footsteps of the universal Church, especially in not departing from her in matters of faith. The Councils of Toledo proclaimed that their doctrine was none other than that of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

Throughout the Visigothic period, there is no lack of testimonies of recognition of the Church of Rome, although these are not very numerous. Nor were they all based on terms of complete cordiality. The Visigothic Church always accepted the principle of the unity of the Catholic Church, unity in faith, in dogma, in liturgy, in customs. There were never any doctrinal differences between the Visigothic Church and Rome. Neither was the primacy or the power of the Holy See to intervene in the affairs of the Spanish Church denied⁸⁰.

But during this period, it is clear that relations between Spain and Rome had considerably diminished in numbers and cordiality. There are several reasons for this. First of all, we could mention the rapprochement and subsequent identification of the Spanish Church with the Visigothic monarchy and the opposition of both to the Eastern Empire which occupied part of the Visigothic territory. Rome was at this time under imperial policy. The second cause was the flourishing of the Visigothic Church and its internal strength, which allowed it to solve its own problems, especially those of a pastoral and disciplinary nature⁸¹. Thus, it was no longer necessary to return to Rome so often. The result of this process was the emergence of a vigorous

⁸⁰ Thompson E. A, *Los godos en Espana....* p. 363.

⁸¹ Thompson E. A, *Los godos en Espana....* p. 363-365.

national Church, with a clear consciousness of its own personality and its own coherent unity. One faith, one Church, one kingdom, is the motto proclaimed by the Fourth Council of Toledo, presided over by Saint Isidore, which was in many ways a true constituent council. It established liturgical unity for all the churches of Spain, and the supreme reason for this unity of worship is none other, as the bishops declare, than the fact that they are all bound together by the double bond of professing the same faith and belonging to the same kingdom⁸².

⁸² Orlandis Jose, Las relaciones intereclesiales en la Hispania visigotica, En. „*Comunione intereclesiale. Collegialita. Primato. Ecumenismo*”. Roma, 1972, pp. 420-421.

CHAPTER V

The Spirituality of the Visigothic Church

I do not attempt a complete theological study of each sacrament separately. We will limit ourselves to speaking briefly, first of all, about baptism, penance, and the Eucharist, because of their special importance in the Christian life and because of the demands that are placed on Christians for their reception.

Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Christian life. Through it, man is incorporated into the Church and into the life of grace. Whoever receives it is washed by grace and passes to a new life. It is a transition from the state of sin to the state of grace. God willed that the grace of the sacrament of baptism be given through the element in which the Spirit was initially present. Water is the natural element that best signifies the internal action of grace in this sacrament. For just as water cleanses the body externally, so baptism cleanses the soul internally. Such a sacrament is always performed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit⁸³. Saint Martin fiercely fought the custom of baptism by single immersion, a ritual used in 6th-century Spain⁸⁴.

Penance for serious sins had to be done in public. Penance for less serious sins was done in private. Naturally, and according to the letter of Saint Leo to the bishops of Campania, the type of serious fault the sinner had committed was not to be made public. It was enough for others to know that he had committed a serious sin and that he was doing penance for it. Neither ecclesiastical authors nor conciliar legislation fully agree in enumerating the type of sins that deserved such penance. Perhaps the specific circumstances of life played a role. In general, we can say that these were serious sins committed against the faith, against the life of others or one's own life and against chastity, idolatry, murder, fornication, etc. These were subject to public penance even if they had been committed in private and were not known to others.

The entire Visigothic Christian people celebrated a penitential paraliturgy on Good Friday. Due to foreign influences, this ceased to be celebrated in some places. The Fourth Council of Toledo, in 633, ordered that on this day the mystery of the cross should be preached

⁸³ Isidoro de Sevilla, *Etimologias*.... pp. 43-52.

⁸⁴ Vicente de la Fuente, *Historia eclesiastica de Espana*... p. 291.

and the people should ask aloud for the forgiveness of their sins so that they could receive, cleansed of all guilt, the body and blood of the Lord on the day of Resurrection⁸⁵.

The main reason why it is so much insisted on is that those who committed serious sins were deprived of receiving communion, did not participate with the other believers in the sacramental part of the Eucharist with other Christians.

The Eucharist is a sacrifice and a mystery in which Christ offers himself as a sacrifice and gives himself as food to the Christian. And the Christian must participate in both the sacrifice and the mystery. We will transcribe some precious texts from Saint Isidore and Saint Ildefonso. The Visigothic Church believed deeply in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

This sacrifice was instituted by Christ when, before he was betrayed, He gave His body and blood to the apostles and commanded them to continue to do so. Its purpose is the sanctification of the Christian. The bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ when they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The chalice is offered mixed with water, because this signifies the union between Christ and the Christian. The water represents the union of the Christian people with Christ. And just as this water can no longer be separated from the wine, neither can the Church be separated from Christ.

The meaning of the Eucharist is therefore very clear. It is the mystery that gives us life and unites us with Christ, making us one body with him. At the same time, it unites us with other Christians, so that all of us, united among ourselves and with Christ, form his mystical Body.

Marriage is a sacrament instituted by God for the advancement of the human race. Both by the requirements of the sacrament and by those of the contract, it must be a monogamous union, because its spiritual meaning is the union of Christ with the Church. The union is indissoluble. Saint Isidore complains that many marry more out of interest and passion than out of true love⁸⁶. The marriage was celebrated on Sunday. On the eve of the wedding, the house and the marital bed were blessed. In the prayers of the ceremony, prayers were said that they would worthily fulfill their marital obligations.

⁸⁵ Vives Jose, Concilio IV de Toledo.... p. 193.

⁸⁶ Isidoro de Sevilla, Etimologias.... pp. 38-39.

1. Visigothic Liturgy

The Visigothic liturgy is undoubtedly the most studied subject of the entire period, both in terms of its origin and character, and in terms of the particularities of each of its rites. The bibliography is abundant. This liturgy has received various names: Mozarabic, because it was used by Christians living in territories dominated by the Arabs, Toledan, because it flourished, especially, in the city of Toledo, and Isidorian, because its composition was attributed to Saint Isidore. I believe that the name that best defines it is Visigothic, because it was formed, acquired its own character and reached its splendor during this period.

It is obvious that the first liturgical formulas and rites entered Spain with the first evangelizers. In its essence, it comes from Rome as regards the sacramental rites and, above all, as regards the celebration of the Eucharist. During the first centuries there was no absolute liturgical unity. Respecting the essential elements of each sacramental rite, the particular churches are free to introduce new formulas and ceremonies that best suit the idiosyncrasies of the people who practice them. A liturgy is not formed suddenly, nor does it appear from the beginning with all its particularities. The Visigothic liturgy was elaborated slowly and gradually and enriched with new elements.

The Visigothic liturgy is essentially similar to the Roman liturgy. In the variable parts, it has a special character, adapted to the way of being of the composers and the Visigothic people. In the Visigothic liturgy there are typically oriental elements, undoubtedly due to the relations with the Christian East, to the fact that the south-eastern part of the Peninsula was under Byzantine rule until the reign of Suintila (621-631) and to the fact that the Visigoths were Arians, and brought with them oriental cultic forms, which the Catholic bishops, after the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism, respected when they did not oppose either Catholic dogma or the essence of the traditional liturgy. It also has points in common with the Ambrosian rite of Milan.

2. *The priest*

The definition that Saint Isidore gives to the word priest makes us understand that pastoral duties are his essence and main purpose. „*Priest is a name composed of Greek and Latin and means that of the sacred, just as the king is said to rule, so the priest is said to sanctify, because he consecrates and sanctifies*”⁸⁷. During this period, the name priest is still given, distinctly, both to the bishop and to the presbyters. The bishop, as the principal person in charge, or the presbyter, as his immediate assistant, is charged with the planning and carrying out of pastoral activity in the diocese and in each parish. All other clergy are merely assistants to both almost exclusively in liturgical ceremonies. The Christian people must live the spiritual life, because their duties to God demand it. And the priest has the grave obligation of celebrating and administering the sacraments to the people entrusted to him.

3. *Church administration*

The Visigothic Church needed financial resources for its maintenance and apostolate. The maintenance of the clergy, the expenses for the formation of the clergy, the worship, the construction and repair of churches and charitable works could not be carried out without a financial basis. From the beginning of the Church, Christians cooperated with their own goods to solve the economic problem of the Church. The Visigothic Christians did the same with their offerings or by donating real estate.

The Church, as an institution, could own any kind of property and administer it to cover its expenses. At this time, the Church already had its own patrimony. Part of these goods came from the offering of offerings. In the Visigothic Church, these offerings were celebrated regularly. The Council of Merida in 666 speaks of the fact that, depending on the custom and generosity of each person, money was offered at the service on Sundays and holidays, which had to be given to the bishop so that he could distribute it equitably⁸⁸. Perhaps the most normal formula for these offerings was to offer a sum of money, as in the case of contributions to the treasury, which were paid in cash, although this does not exclude the possibility that offerings were also made in kind, especially in rural churches. During the service, prayers were said for those who presented them. Also, offerings that could be more substantial, such as tithes, were

⁸⁷ Isidoro de Sevilla, Etimologias.... pp. 291-292.

⁸⁸ Vives Jose, Concilio de Merida.... p. 335.

received in the church. These tithes were not obligatory during the Christian era, but a pious practice that the faithful did not perform very often. No council refers to tithes or their obligatory character. And those who did so were free to give them where they saw fit. Neither the Visigothic writers nor the councils speak of tithing⁸⁹, although liturgical books do.

4. The disadvantages of church administration

Despite the high level that the Visigothic Church had reached compared to other countries and the activity of the clergy and the great bishops of the time, it naturally had its defects. And it is necessary to list them in order to give an accurate picture of the state of the Spanish Church in the first centuries. Going through the conciliar legislation, we find that the defects that appear most frequently are some cases of avarice on the part of some bishops, sins against chastity on the part of the clergy and laity, and idolatry, still practiced by the most backward and ignorant people, together with some superstitious practices.

We have already alluded to the prohibitions against receiving and, especially, demanding gifts for the administration of the sacraments. We are now speaking of those things which the bishops demanded improperly and which did not involve simony. Already the Third Council of Toledo, in 589, warns the bishops not to demand anything more from the diocese than the ancient canons allow and forbids them from imposing personal benefits or special tributes on their clergy. If this happens, the clergy must bring this to the attention of the metropolitan so that he can put an end to such abuses⁹⁰.

5. Asceticism in Visigothic Spain

Asceticism is a continuous movement of perfection that ends with the organization of monastic life. For this reason, we focus only on those ascetic elements that will later become the foundation of religious life. Asceticism naturally leads to monasticism. The burning desire for perfection and flight from the world gave rise to monastic life as the most suitable form of union with God. Spain is no exception and, since the Council of Elvira, the existence of a rigorous asceticism is evident. We will now try to see when Spanish asceticism reached such perfection that it gathered within itself all the elements necessary to form monastic life.

⁸⁹ Vicente de la Fuente, *Historia eclesiastica de Espana...* pp. 300-301.

⁹⁰ Vives Jose, *Concilio III de Toledo....* p. 132.

Naturally, this Spanish monastic life could not have been very perfect at the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th century. Therefore, it is often difficult to know whether it is asceticism or monastic life. On the other hand, documents relating to Spanish monasticism in the first five centuries are very rare and are limited to noting the existence of monks in Spain, making some allusions to the type of life practiced by these monks. We have no detailed descriptions of their life. For this reason, we know nothing about their legislation, if any.

6. *The beginnings of monasticism*

The word monk comes from the Greek language and nominally indicates the idea of solitude, separation and isolation. This is the name given to Christians who, eager for perfection, retreated to solitary places to freely dedicate themselves to penance and the practice of piety, without being disturbed by anyone, in order to achieve it more easily. The word meant, above all, physical solitude, a detachment from contact with other people. Therefore, it was the most common name given to all those who led a solitary life. It mattered little what kind of life or penance the solitaire practiced. Isolation was sufficient to be called a monk. Strictly speaking and according to its true meaning, the name could be applied to the anchorite only as long as he lived isolated from others.

The great number of monks who soon filled the eastern deserts and their diverse way of life began to gradually change the meaning of the word monk. Many of them began to practice a less rigid solitude. Some through relaxation, and others because of their great reputation for holiness, which was why disciples joined them to receive their teachings, began, in a certain sense, to have some tact with others. Very few of these monks were able to receive this name, while retaining its original technical meaning of solitary⁹¹.

7. *Monasticism and the Arians*

The barbarian invasions and the struggles of the invading peoples on Spanish territory throughout the 5th century stopped the normal development of monasticism. The monks were often forced to flee the monasteries to save their lives. We know nothing of the vicissitudes of monasticism in those days of incessant fighting between the different peoples who divided the

⁹¹ Colombas Grives M, El concepto de monje y vida monastica hasta finales del siglo V, En. „*Studia Monastica I*”, Montserrat, p. 266.

Peninsula. Peace was made at the beginning of the 6th century and then the light began to shine through the canons of the councils⁹².

From the beginning of the 6th century we begin to hear more about monasticism. The disagreements between bishops and monks disappear, and bishops become protectors and sometimes founders of monasteries. Councils dedicate some canons to order monastic life. Bishops authorize the establishment of monasteries, enforce and supervise their observance, and intervene when there are abuses. The abbot has a certain independence in the governance of the monastery⁹³. The only thing in which the bishops cannot interfere is in the administration of the monastery's property. The abbot may allow one of his monks to be ordained as a cleric for the benefit of the church. Perhaps during this period, the monks showed too much interest in performing ecclesiastical duties. The Council of Tarragona in 516 established that they could do so only by the mandate of the abbot.

We already have concrete news about the existence and location of monasteries. There is a monastery near Tarragona and another in Valencia, the Servitan monastery. Saint Milan, son of shepherds and himself a shepherd, left his position and went to join the hermit Felix. Trained in doctrine and ascetic practices, he lives a solitary life in the Districios mountains. The Bishop of Tarazona ordained him a priest. Due to his great charity, the other clerics accuse him of embezzling church property. He withdraws again to the solitude of the Suso Valley. There, a community of religious men and women begins to form around him. He died in the year 574. The first followers of Saint Milan formed the monastery of Saint Milan of Cogolla.

The largest number of monasteries can be found in the ecclesiastical province of Galicia. The main promoter of monastic life in this region is Saint Martin of Dumio. He was born in Pannonia. He visited the Holy Places and lived in the East for several years. He decided to come to Galicia. Here he worked as a priest and monk. The saint chooses a place near the city of Braga for his retreat. Attracted by his fame, several disciples join him and the famous Dumio Abbey is born. The abbey soon receives the title of bishopric. Martin was the main craftsman of the Christianization of the Suevi, we have data that other monasteries in the region also collaborated in their Christianization. Near Arrasate was the monastery of Saint Martin of Asan, where Saint Victoriano was abbot.

The Spanish rules regarding the work of the monks, as well as prayer and reading, faithfully follow the Eastern and Western monastic traditions. Manual labor was an important

⁹² Urbel de Perez, *Los monjes españoles en la Edad Media I*, Madrid, pp. 166-167.

⁹³ Villar Louzao Joseba, *Breve Historia de la Iglesia Católica*, p. 49.

element in the organization of the cenobitic life. Not only as a means of ascetic purification, but also as a means of achieving, as far as possible, economic independence from the outside world, ensuring the self-sufficiency of the monastery. Saint Isidore and Saint Fructuoso will take these two things into account when they speak of manual labor.

The monastery was not an island within the Church. It was an integral part of ecclesiastical life and the most significant exponent of Christian life. The monks were part of the ecclesiastical life of the diocese and, therefore, had to live and act in accordance with the rules established by the bishop. Even if the bishop granted them an office of their own, they could not celebrate the public offices, vespers, matins and service in a manner different from that of the main church⁹⁴.

⁹⁴ Vives Jose, Concilio IX de Toledo.... p. 356.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking back over the entire period, we can see not only how strongly organized the Church in Spain became, but also the decisive influence it exerted on the formation of the kingdom and on the political and social development of the nation. Tired of the unbearable burden that a fallen and decadent empire like the Roman Empire had placed upon them, the provincials saw in the invading Germanic peoples a glimmer of deliverance. Although at first, they received them with the natural suspicion with which an armed stranger is welcomed into their home, they soon recovered and realized that they were not as fierce as they had imagined. Life in common brought the two peoples closer together. The invader realized that the invaded people had a higher level of culture than his own and, with respect, learned their language, imitated their customs, copied their law and merged with them, maintaining his political and military dominance. The role played by the Church was initially limited to its mission of evangelization. In the first two centuries, that is, from 409 to the end of the 1st century, the invading people, who were Arian, tried to Arianize the entire nation, sometimes with respect, sometimes by devastating the churches, sometimes by violent personal actions, culminating in the persecution of Leovigildo against Bishop Masona, John of Biclarense and his son Hermenegildo.

The Church did not give in and, in the end, it won. In the middle of the 6th century, Saint Martin, Bishop of Braga, succeeded in converting the Sueves, and the gentle and continuous action of Saint Leander made an impression, first on Hermenegildo and then on his brother Reccaredo, who, in 589, abjured the Arian heresy with all his people and entered with him into the bosom of Catholicism.

The reign of Reccaredo acquired a truly historical importance from an ideological and political point of view. At his death, he left behind a kingdom founded on much more solid and durable bases than those available in previous reigns to support the vulnerable structure of central power. The role of Leovigildo, without whom the room for maneuver that his son enjoyed is incomprehensible, must be emphasized again. The alliance between Reccaredo and the Catholic Church brought support that went beyond judicial pacts, Toledo meetings or court discussions. Both would benefit from this alliance. The Church, already very powerful before Reccaredo, would come to participate in the central power of the kingdom. While the king would come into possession of the resources, fundamentally ideological and organizational,

that had made the ecclesiastical institution the most powerful in the society of the time. The Catholic bishops became the ideologists of royalty and were responsible for formulating the theoretical project that would henceforth serve to legitimize the Visigothic monarchy's dominance over the kingdom in Spain. This did not solve the problem of aristocratic competitiveness, but it did give solidity to the monarchical institution itself, regardless of the identity of its current occupant. The impressive territorial capillarity of the church network would do the rest, carrying to many corners the message of unity so desired by the previous Visigothic kings and which the Catholic Church put at the service of King Recaredo and his successors: one king, one religion, one kingdom.

This event set a new course for the political conception of the Visigothic monarchy and for its structure. From that moment on, the State became the defender of the Catholic unity and of the Church, and the Church, in turn, became its protector and supporter. The fundamental rules governing the coexistence of the two powers were established by Saint Isidore of Seville. Without stopping to compose a philosophical treatise of high politics, he indicates the abstract idea of the unity of the Universe and, following in the footsteps of Saint Augustine, he teaches that every organization of a human community must be like an organic member of that *Civitas Dei*, which includes both heaven and earth. From this he deduces the necessity of a harmony between the civil and ecclesiastical organization. A harmony all the more indispensable since, according to the theory of Saint Gregory, which he accepted, the Church and the State constitute a mystical body and must be reduced to unity by means of a mutual competition. Starting from the principle that royal power descends from God, the Visigothic Church considers the monarch as the anointed of the Lord and establishes a kind of theocracy similar to that of the people of Israel. In the implementation of these great principles, powers are sometimes mixed, one invading the domain of the other. Thus, the king is the one who convenes the councils and appoints the bishops, while the Church takes an active part in the appointment and deposition of monarchs and in the governance of the country. To resolve the affairs of the kingdom, the institution of Provincial and General Councils (synods and ecclesiastical courts at the same time) was created, with legislative and judicial powers. The bishops and the clergy in general, due to their position, the rigidity of their customs and culture, were the true directors of public affairs and thanks to their support, the monarchy, constantly threatened by conspirators and intriguers, was able to prolong its existence for three centuries. This intervention of the clergy in the political and social life of the nation, together with the topography of the land and the reserved character of its inhabitants, caused the Visigothic

Church to live somewhat withdrawn in itself, but without breaking its ties with Rome, to which it always submitted as the hierarchical superior of Catholicism.

After having managed to produce in its midst men of extraordinary talent and vigor, such as a Leander, an Isidore, a Braulio and so many others, it knew how to organize itself strongly in the metropolitan cities, provinces and parishes. It dealt with the formation of the clergy with farsighted talent through seminaries, it compiled an Official Book for the clergy, a compendium of canonical, theological and moral law. It imposed on the clergy life in community in order to protect their morals and developed asceticism through monasticism, which spread rapidly throughout the peninsula, especially thanks to the saints Fructuoso, Valerius, Milan and Toribio. The Church, together with the monarch and the administration, tried by all the means at their disposal, some of them certainly exaggerated, to attract the Jews, without, unfortunately, really succeeding in this and solving one of the most profound and difficult problems of that society. Compared to the old constitution of the Society, divided into freemen and slaves, it left the doors of sacred orders wide open to all, without a doubt. It can be rightly said that the Spanish Church was the educator of the Suebian-Visigothic people. With the exception of Rome, the head of Catholicism, none of the other particular Churches equaled it. The Visigothic Church was already at the peak of its formation and organization in the year 633, when the great Council of Toledo took place, presided over by Saint Isidore, which established liturgical unity and the rules to be observed in the celebration of national synodal assemblies, unique in the world. In addition to this influence on the political, social and religious life of the nation, the Visigothic Church exercised another influence no less effective in the field of culture, which it perfected.

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