1. IN PRAISE OF SPAIN

Isidore of Seville (ca.560–636), History of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi (624)
Translated from Latin by Kenneth B. Wolf

Isidore of Seville, one of the most influential figures in the early medieval church, was born in about 560, probably in Byzantine-held Cartagena. As a boy he moved with his family to Seville, which was then under Visigothic control. In 600 he became bishop of Seville, a post he occupied until his death in 636. Isidore was the author of many books, including three historical works. One of them, the Historiae Gothorum Vandalorum et Sueborum [History of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi], completed in 624, chronicled the history of the Visigoths from 256 until the time in which Isidore was writing, with brief additional sections describing the Vandals and the Suevi. Although this book had an important influence on later Spanish historiography, it was less known outside the peninsula. The prologue to Isidore’s history (translated here) was composed with classical literary models in mind and was designed to praise Spain and glorify the Goths. Isidore’s panegyric was echoed in later literature, including the thirteenth-century Castilian Primera crónica general. (ORC)

Of all the lands from the west to the Indies, you, Spain, O sacred and always fortunate mother of princes and peoples, are the most beautiful. Rightly are you now the queen of all provinces, from which not only the west but also the east borrows its shining lights. You are the pride and the ornament of the world, the more illustrious part of the earth, in which the Getic people are gloriously prolific, rejoicing much and flourishing greatly.

Indulgent nature has deservedly enriched you with an abundance of everything fruitful. You are rich with olives, overflowing with grapes, fertile with harvests. You are dressed in corn, shaded with olive trees, covered with the vine. Your fields are full of flowers, your mountains full of trees, and your shores full of fish. You are located in the most favourable region in the world; neither are you parched by the summer heat of the sun, nor do you languish under icy cold, but girded by a temperate band of sky, you are nourished by fertile west winds. You bring forth the fruits of the fields, the wealth of the mines, and beautiful and useful plants and animals. Nor are you to be held inferior in rivers, which the brilliant fame of your fair flocks ennobles.

Alpheus yields to you in horses and Clitumnus in cattle, although

Alpheus, regarded as sacred for his Olympic victories, exercised fleet chariots on the track of Pisa, and Clitumnus once sacrificed great oxen as victims on the Capitol. You do not need the fields of Etruria, for you have more abundant pasturage, nor do you marvel at the groves of Molorchus, for you have palm trees in plenty, nor do your horses run less swiftly than the Elian chariots. You are fertile with overflowing rivers, you are tawny with gold-flowing torrents, you have a spring that fathered a horse. You have fleeces, dyed with native purples, that glow with Tyrian crimson. You have rock, shining in the shadowy depths of the mountains, that is aflame with radiance like the sun.

Yet you are as rich in purple-clad rulers as you are in native gems, and rich in imperial gifts, you are as wealthy in adorning your princes as you are blessed in producing them. Rightly did golden Rome, the head of the nations, desire you long ago. And although this same Romulean power, initially victorious, betrothed you to itself, now it is the most flourishing people of the Goths, who in their turn, after many victories all over the world, have eagerly seized you and loved you: they enjoy you up to the present time amidst royal emblems and great wealth, secure in the good fortune of empire.

1. The Alpheus is a river in the Peloponnese. According to tradition, it flowed through an underwater channel to Sicily. There, as Isidore observed in his _Etymologies_ (14.6.33), it watered a pasture renowned for the quality of its horses. These horses were famous for their success at the Olympic games held near Pisa and Elis in the Peloponnese. The Clitumnus is a small river in the Umbria region of Italy. Isidore referred to it in his _Etymologies_ (13.13.6) as a lake known for the size of the cattle that grazed nearby. These cattle were the preferred victims of sacrifices to the gods. Isidore's intention throughout his famous prologue (known as the _Laus Spaniae_) was to compare Spain favorably to the Italy and Greece of the Roman poets, using their own points of classical reference.

2. In west-central Italy.

3. Molorchus was a poor farmer who, according to tradition, entertained Heracles.

4. "Elian chariots" is a poetic way of referring to the chariots of the Olympic games, held near Elis.

5. A reference to the famous Tyrian dyes that were extracted from a particular kind of mollusc.

6. A reference to the Roman emperors who were born in Spain.

7. Referring to Romulus, the traditional founder of Rome.
2. A CATHOLIC BISHOP AND AN ARIAN KING
(569–586)

Lives of the Holy Fathers of Mérida (ca.630)
Translated from Latin by Joseph N. Garvin

The author of this work is unknown, although he is sometimes identified as a certain Paul, a deacon of Mérida. The Lives was probably composed in the 630s. It chronicles the lives and works of the Catholic bishops of Mérida in the period before the conversion of the Visigoths from Arianism to Catholicism in 589. Although Catholics formed a majority in the Iberian population during the sixth century, the ruling Visigoths tried to impose Arian beliefs. Primary among these was the tenet that Christ was subordinate to God the Father and created by God in time. In contrast, Catholic doctrine taught that Father and Son were coequal, coeternal, and of the same substance.

This selection describes events in the life of Masona, the bishop of Mérida under Leovigild (r.569–586), the last Arian king before the Visigothic conversion to Catholicism. The author clearly portrays the king as a demonic obstructor of the true faith, but the monarch may also be seen as attempting to preserve his own religious beliefs in the face of popular pressure. (ORC)

Whence it happened that his [Masona’s] virtue, through report, reached the ears of Leovigild, the savage and cruel king of the Visigoths, and the monstrous demon of his jealousy, always envious of good works, stung into action by sharper goadings, wounded the soul of the king with its viperous venom and poured into his being its poisoned potion. At once, the king, armed with diabolical cunning by the drinking of this lethal cup, urged on by hate, again and again commanded the holy man by messengers who went back and forth between them to abandon the Catholic Faith and to turn to the Arian heresy together with all the people who were entrusted to him. And when the man who had dedicated himself to God replied courageously and told the king as the messengers kept coming back that he would never abandon the true faith he had learned once, he also rebuked the Arian king as he was in duty bound and with proper reproofs refused to embrace the heresy.

When the messengers returned to him, the king began to tempt his soul by various persuasions in the hope that in some way he might incline him to his wicked pleasure. But the bishop scorned his many crafty persuasions, rejected his gift as so much dross, and heroically defended his Catholic Faith.

He was unwilling to remain silent about the heresy lest by keeping silent he seemed to give assent, and with all his powers he fought against its madness, sounding forth with the trumpet of truth.

When the king saw himself failing and his efforts fruitless, he became furious and began to terrorize him, thinking that he could by threats shatter the constancy of one whom he had been unable to overcome by blandishments. But the holy man was not broken by the terrorizing nor persuaded by the blandishments; but fighting the fierce tyrant in brave encounter, he remained unconquered in defense of justice.

Realizing that neither by threats nor by bribes could he make the man of God turn from the true faith to his heresy, the cruel tyrant, wholly a vessel of wrath, fomenter of vice, and root of damnation, whose breast the fierce enemy and crafty serpent occupied and held in his control, gave to his people bitter instead of sweet things, harsh instead of mild measures, death-dealing potions instead of health. With the object of arousing seditious uprisings and of disturbing the bishop and all his people he appointed as bishop of the Arian party in the city a certain wicked man, an out-and-out supporter of the Arian heresy, whose name was Sunna. He was a supporter of wicked doctrine, a baleful and harsh-featured man; his brow was wild, his eyes savage, his aspect hateful, his movements horrifying; he was sinister in mind, depraved in character, of lying tongue and obscene speech, turgid exteriorly, empty interiorly, puffed up without, vapid within, inflated externally, devoid of all virtue internally, deformed both within and without, lacking in goodness, abounding in evil, guilty of crime, exceedingly reckless of eternal death.

This fosterer of heresy came to Mérida and at the command of the king boldly took some churches and all their privileges from their rightful bishop, appropriating them for himself.

Now after the heretical bishop had sought with all his might to perturb the servant of God and all the faithful by well-devised measures but could not, he relying on the king’s favor attempted to attack the basilica of the holy virgin Eulalia in order to wrest it from the authority of its bishop and to have it for the Arians. When the holy bishop Masona and all his people resisted keenly and fought back sturdily the false bishop Sunna made many written accusations to the king against the holy man and suggested to him that the basilica which he longed to lay hold of be taken from the authority of the Catholics by royal order and handed over to his control. In answer to this request the king is said to have promulgated the following decree: that both bishops be cited and appear before judges who were to sit in the Bishop’s House, and in their presence engage in oral conflict in defense of either side and, arguing against each other alternately, fortify and back up by arguments
drawn from the books of Holy Scripture whatever claims each one made; and that he whose side won the triumph of victory should likewise possess the church of St. Eulalia.

When this decree, as rumor spread, sounded in the ears of the devout Masona he went at once in haste to the basilica of the holy virgin Eulalia and lay prostrate upon the floor before the altar under which lay the venerable body of the holy martyr, persevering for three days and as many nights in fasting and weeping. On the third day he returned to his home, which is built within the walls of the city, and with such readiness and steadfastness of mind did he return that to none of the faithful did it seem doubtful that He was coming to aid him Who said: "Be not thoughtfult beforehand what you shall speak; but whatever shall be said to you in that hour that speak you. For it is not you that speak, but the Holy Spirit."

When he came into the city and, entering his house, took his seat, he took away the grief of all the faithful by the joyfulness of his countenance and exhorted them not to be uncertain of his victory, and awaiting the shameless Arian bishop and the judges he waited a long time. Finally the Arian bishop and the judges came in, accompanied by thongs of people and puffed up with arrogant pride. When the bishops were seated the judges who in the majority were supporters of the Arian party and of the impious king also seated themselves. When they were seated, the holy bishop Masona, with his usual dignity and good judgment, pointedly remained silent with his eyes fixed upon heaven. Since he was silent Sunna, the bishop of the heretics, spoke first and poured forth shameless, strident, harsh, scabrous, and undisciplined words. After the man of God patiently, gently, and sweetly answered him and brilliantly set forth the whole truth and he in reply hissed in insolent words as though with the mouth of a dragon, the two carried on a mighty verbal struggle with each other. But fleshly power could in no way resist the wisdom of God and the Holy Spirit who spoke through the mouth of His servant, Bishop Masona.

But why go on? Beaten and overthrown on every point Sunna fell silent and flushed, covered with great shame, and likewise his perverse partisans who tried earnestly to help him, not only blushed in their confusion but hearing the amazingly learned exposition that proceeded in mellifluous speech from his mouth, in consternation of mind and deep admiration praised him whom a little before they had tried to overcome. For the Lord vouchsafed that day to give so great favor to his lips that never before had anyone seen him so brilliant in eloquent discourse, and although he always taught eloquently he was more eloquent that day than on all other days.

Then did the righteous see and rejoice and all iniquity stilled its mouth
because God stopped the mouth of them that spoke wicked things. All the faithful marvelled exceedingly because although they had known before that the man was eloquent they could not remember that he had ever uttered such scholarly and brilliant words with such clear and fluent speech.

Although the above-mentioned heretical bishop Sunna had been refuted by every argument and the truth, he remained obdurate in his former religion and could not advance with free steps to the haven of salvation, for the ancient enemy had with God’s permission hardened his stony heart as he had Pharaoh’s.¹

After the debate, seeing himself utterly defeated, he began ever more wildly with clever scheming to devise complaints and false charges against the servant of God and, supported by every sort of weapon, to hurl them against the soldier of Christ, attacking therein rather himself, and privily to lodge many charges against the blessed bishop Masona in the ears of the Arian king Leovigild. But the craft of the adversary did not avail, his calamitous wickedness in no way harmed the man of God, for the grace of the Redeemer armed him with weapons of the spirit.

Finally the evil spirit impelled the oft-named king of the Arians to remove the holy man from his see and to have him brought before him. His ministers, sharing in his crime, quickly obeyed the command of their king and coming to Mérida forced the blessed man to go in all haste to Toledo² where the king lived.

When the holy bishop Masona, suddenly torn from the bosom of his holy Church, was being taken away from Mérida and, though innocent, was being led into exile like a condemned person, the voice of all the citizens of Mérida resounded loudly with great cries and unbearable tears. With immense groaning and immense wailing they proclaimed that they were being robbed of the help of their great bishop, shouting in these words: “Why are you abandoning your fold, loving shepherd? Why are you leaving your flock to perish? Do not, we beg, cast us into the jaws of wolves, lest your sheep fed until now on honeyed flowers be torn by devouring wolves, with no shepherd to care for them.” He, moved by so much weeping, full of compassion in the Lord as always, is said to have burst into tears. Then addressing them in many words, he with marvelous subtlety consoled them. Then he bade farewell to all and accompanied by the blessing of God left them with tranquil mind, constant soul, and joyful countenance as was his wont.

When he arrived at Toledo and stood in the presence of the fierce tyrant,

---

1. Referring to the Pharaoh in the biblical book of Exodus whose heart was hardened against the pleas of Moses.
2. Toledo was the capital city of the Visigothic rulers.
the king reviling him with many insults and assailing him with many threats sought with all the power of his depraved will to draw him to Arianism. Although the man of God willingly bore all the abuse that was heaped upon him and calmly put up with everything he meekly but boldly answered what the rabid dog barked at him and, disregarding personal insults but pained at the outrage to the Catholic Faith, replied to the tyrant bravely.

More and more enraged by his imperturbability, the maddened king even more savagely raged against the servant of God with more rabid barkings. Then he demanded with terrible threats that he give him the tunic of the holy virgin Eulalia that he might have it in the basilica of the Arian heresy there in Toledo. To this demand the man of God answered: “Be it known to you that I shall never soil my heart with the sordidness of Arian unbelief, never shall I sully my mind with the foulness of its perverted doctrine. Never shall I permit the tunic of my Lady Eulalia to be polluted by the sacrilegious hands of heretics or even to be touched by the tips of their fingers. Never can you find it and get it into your possession.” On hearing this the profane king flew into a frenzy of madness and quickly and speedily sent emissaries to Mérida to look carefully everywhere for the sacred tunic, searching diligently in the treasure of the church of St. Eulalia and in the treasure of the older church that is called Sancta Jerusalem, until they should find it and bring it to him.

They came and looked for it everywhere diligently but did not find it and so returned empty-handed to their king. When they reported their failure to him the devil raged more furiously against the man of God, gnashing his teeth. When the bishop was brought before him the king said: “Either tell me where that is which I demand or know that if you do not tell you will be subjected to severe tortures and then sent into exile in a distant land where you will be subjected to many trials and intolerably tortured by want of all necessities and die a cruel death.” To this threat the man of God is said to have answered thus: “You threaten me with exile? Be it known to you that I do not fear your threats nor am I afraid of exile and therefore I beg of you that if you know of any place where God is not present, you have me exiled there.” The king said to him: “Where is not God present, you death-seeker?” The man of God replied: “If you know that God is everywhere, why do you threaten me with exile? Wherever you send me I know that the love of God will not abandon me. And I am sure of this, that the more cruelly you rage against me the more will His mercy accompany me and His clemency console me.”

Because of the bishop’s constancy the maddened tyrant was stricken within by a greater torment of his wicked mind and, moved by exceeding gall and bitterness, said to him: “Either give me the tunic that you have surreptitiously taken away or if you do not give it to me I shall have your members
torn apart by various tortures.” The soldier of God fearlessly made this reply: “I have already told you once and again that I shall not fear your threats. Let your perverted mind devise against me whatever more it can. I still do not fear you nor shall I, terrified by fear, give you what you ask for. But know this, that I have burned the tunic in fire and reduced it to ashes and mixed them in water and drunk them,” and touching his stomach with his hand he said, “Look! here it is within upon my stomach. Never shall I give it to you.” This he said because without anyone knowing it he had folded it and wrapped it in linen cloths and wound it about his stomach under his clothes and wore it thus, God alone aware of it. But God so blinded the eyes of the king and all his attendants that not one understood how the man of God did it.

While these and similar remarks were being made the sky was very clear. Suddenly the majesty of God thundered from heaven with a great rumble so that King Leovigild fell trembling in great terror from his throne upon the ground. Then the man of God with great exultation said boldly: “If we must fear a king, behold the king we should fear, not such as you.”

Then the evil spirit who is always armed with revilings opened the sacrilegious mouth of the tyrant to noxious words and he growled this impious sentence: “We command that Masona, always hostile to our way of life, the enemy of our faith and opposed to our religion, be speedily taken from our presence and sent into exile.”

As soon as the hostile and impious king gave this unjust sentence his ministers, who shared in his crime, withdrew the bishop from his presence and, at the bidding of the king, prepared an untamed horse for him to ride in the hope that it would throw him headlong so that in falling he would break his neck and perish cruelly. So wild was the horse that no rider dared to mount it because it had already thrown many headlong. While it was being made ready for the man of God to mount it, the cruel king emerged from a window of the palace and looking on waited for the holy man to fall from the horse and give him a great spectacle. At once the holy bishop made the sign of the cross and mounted the untamed horse which the Lord made like a gentle lamb. It began with all gentleness and care to pursue the course of its journey although a little while before it had as though with scorn refused with great snorting and blowing and incessant motion of its entire body to carry another. When they saw this miracle all were astounded and marvelled exceedingly and the attitude of the king himself was changed into great wonder. But of what advantage could the blazing splendor of the sun be to a blind man whose heart the savage enemy had darkened entirely!

God’s holy bishop Masona went to the appointed place accompanied by
only three of his servants, with whom the men who had been sent by the king to punish him put him away in exile in a monastery.

Bishop Masona lived in exile for three years until Saint Eulalia appeared to King Leovigild in a dream. In this dream, the saint beat the king, and demanded that Masona be reinstated in Mérida. Fearing further punishment, the king complied with her wishes.
3. THE VISIGOTHIC CONVERSION TO CATHOLICISM

The Third Council of Toledo, Sixty-Two Bishops Attending, in Which the Arian Heresy Was Condemned in Spain (589)
Translated from Latin by David Nirenberg

The records of the ecclesiastical councils celebrated by the bishops of the Iberian Peninsula from the fourth century to the Arab conquest are among the most important sources for the history of Visigothic Spain.

The councils offer much information, but it is rarely easy to interpret. Because church councils were interested in condemning nonnormative practices, we do not know how common these practices were nor in what contexts they occurred. Further, the fact that councils often repeat much older legislation makes it difficult to use them as indicators of contemporary social reality.

Toledo III is the most famous of the councils, representing the moment when the ruling Visigoths converted from their traditional Arian form of Christianity to the Catholic Christianity of the Hispano-Roman peoples they had conquered. In Toledo III the Visigothic king Reccared (r.586–601) endorsed an assimilationist policy; in it one can already see a symbiosis between Visigothic and Catholic peoples. This cooperation would have had a profound effect on the later stability and prosperity of the Visigothic kingdom. (DN)

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the fourth year of the reign of the most glorious, most pious and most faithful to God Lord Reccared, King, on the eighth day of the Ides of May, era 627 [589], this sacred council was celebrated in the royal city of Toledo, by the bishops of all Spain and of the Gauls who are inscribed below.

This most glorious prince having commanded, because of the sincerity of his faith, that all the prelates of his kingdom should convene in one [council] in order that they might exult in the Lord, both for his conversion and for the renewal of the Gothic people, and that they should at the same time give thanks to the divine dignity for such an extraordinary gift, this same most blessed prince addressed the venerable council saying: "I do not believe that you are unaware of the fact, most reverend bishops, that I have summoned


Because of space limitations here, the text of some chapters is omitted. Their subjects are generally clear from the headings.
you into our serene presence for the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline. And because throughout past times the threatening heresy [of Arianism] did not allow a synod of all the Catholic Church to be convened, God, whom it pleased to eliminate the said heresy through us, admonished us to repair the institutions of the customs of the church. . . .

Upon [hearing] this, the entire council, giving thanks to God and acclaiming the most religious prince, decreed in that instant a fast of three days. And all the bishops of God having come together again on the eighth day of the Ides of May, after the preliminary oration, each of the bishops was again seated in his proper place, when behold, among them appeared the most serene prince, having joined himself to the oration of the bishops of God, and filled thereafter with divine inspiration, he began to address [the bishops] saying: "We do not believe that your holinesses are unaware of how long a time Spain labored under the error of the Arians, and how, not long after our father's death, when it was known that we had associated ourselves with your holy Catholic faith, there [arose] everywhere a great and eternal rejoicing. And therefore, venerable fathers, we decided to unite you [in order] to celebrate this council, so that you yourselves may give eternal thanks to the Lord for the peoples newly come to Christ. The rest of the agenda which we present before your priestliness concerning our faith and hope which we profess, we have written down in this book. Read it, therefore, among yourselves. And [then] approved by the judgment of council and decorated with this testimony of faith, our glory shall shine throughout all times to come."

The . . . book the king offered was received, therefore, by all the bishops of God, and [it] being read in a clear voice by the clerk, the following was heard: Although the omnipotent God has, for the benefit of the populace, given us charge of the kingdom, and has delivered the governance of not a few peoples into our royal stewardship, nevertheless we remember that we too are of mortal condition, and that we cannot merit the happiness of future blessedness unless we esteem the cult of the true faith, and, at least, please our creator with the creed of which he is worthy. For which reason, the higher we are exalted above our subjects by royal dignity, the more we should provide for those things that pertain to God, both to increase our faith, and to take thought for the people God has entrusted to us. . . .

Therefore, most holy fathers, these most noble peoples, who have been brought near to the Lord by our diligence, I offer to the eternal God through your hands, as a holy and propitiating sacrifice. Truly it shall be for me an unfading crown and a delight in the reward of the just if these peoples, who because of our dexterity have rushed to the unity of the church, remain rooted and firm within it. And truly, just as it was [entrusted] to our care by the
divine will to bring these peoples to the unity of the Church of Christ, it is your duty to instruct them in the dogmas of the Catholics so that, instructed in the full knowledge of the truth, they [shall] know [how] stolidly to reject the errors of the pernicious heresy, and to keep to the path of the true faith through love, embracing the communion of the Catholic Church with an ever more ardent desire.

To these my true confessions I added the sacred decrees of the above-mentioned councils, and I signed them, with God [as my] witness, in all innocence of heart.

I, Reccared, king, faithful to this holy and true creed, which is believed by the Catholic Church throughout the world, holding it in my heart, affirming it with my mouth, signed it with my right hand, [under] God's protection.

I, Bado, glorious queen, signed with my hand and with all my heart this creed, which I believed and professed.

Then the entire council broke into acclamations, praising God and applauding the prince: I. Glory be to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose care it is to bestow peace and unity upon His Holy Catholic Church. II. Glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the price of His blood assembled the Catholic Church from [among] all peoples. III. Glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, who joined such an illustrious people to the unity of the true faith, and established [but] one flock and one shepherd. IV. Who has [been given] eternal merit [by] God, if not the true and Catholic King Reccared? V. To whom [has] God [given] an eternal crown, if not the true [and] orthodox King Reccared? VI. [To] whom present and eternal glory, if not [to] the true lover of God, King Reccared? VII. He is the recruiter of new peoples for the church. VIII. May he be beloved of God and of men, who so admirably glorified God on earth, with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ, who with God the Father lives and reigns, one with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever, amen.

Here begin the decrees which, in the name of God, were established by the third holy synod in the city of Toledo.

I. That the Statutes of the Councils and the Decrees of the Roman Pontiffs Be Maintained

After the condemnation of the Arian heresy and the exposition of the holy Catholic faith, the holy council decreed the following: that since in some Spanish churches, whether because of heresy or paganism, canonical discipline was passed over, license for transgression abounded, and the option of discipline was denied, so that any excess of heresy found favor and an abundance of evil made lukewarm the strictness of discipline, [because of these things,] the mercy of Christ having restored peace to the church, [we order
that] all that which the authority of the ancient canons prohibited, let it also be restricted by the revived discipline, and let that be performed which [the canons said] ought to be performed. Let the determinations of all the councils retain their vigor, and also the synodal letters of the holy Roman pontiffs. Henceforth let no unworthy [person], contravening the ancient councils, aspire to be worthy of the honors of episcopal office. And let nothing be done of that which the holy fathers, filled with the spirit of God, decreed should not be done, and let any who presume to do [such a thing] be restrained by the severity of the ancient canons.

II. That in All the Churches the Creed Should Be Recited on Sunday

III. That No One May Alienate Church Goods Unless out of Necessity

This holy council gives no bishop license to alienate the goods of the church, for this is forbidden in the ancient canons. But if they should give something that does not prejudice the well-being of the church for the benefit of the monks or churches of their parish, [the donation] shall remain valid. They are also permitted to provide for the necessities of pilgrims, clerics, and the poor to the extent that they are able, excepting the rights of the church.

IV. That It Is Permitted the Bishop to Convert a Church in His Parish into a Monastery

V. That Bishops and Deacons Should Live Chastely with Their Wives

It has come to the attention of the holy council that the bishops, presbyters, and deacons who are coming out of heresy [i.e., Arians] copulate with their wives out of carnal desire. So that this shall not be done in the future, we decree what prior canons had already determined: that they are not allowed to live in libidinous union, but rather with the conjugal bond remaining between them they should mutually help each other, without living in the same room. Or if [his] virtue is strong enough, let him make his wife live in some other house, as good witness to [his] chastity, not only before God, but also before men. But if any should choose to live obscenely with his wife after this accord, let him be a lector. [And concerning any of] those who have always been subjected to ecclesiastical canons [i.e., Catholics], if against ancient command they have had consort in their cells with women who could provoke a suspicion of infamy, let them be punished canonically, the women being sold [into slavery] by the bishop, their price being distributed to the poor.
VI. That a Slave of the Church Who Is Manumitted by the Bishop Must Remain a Dependent of the Church, and That Those Manumitted by Others Should Be Defended by the Bishop

VII. That Divine Scriptures Be Read at the Bishop’s Table

Out of reverence for the bishops of God the entire council decreed the following: that because idle tales are often told at table, the divine scriptures should be read at all episcopal gatherings, for in this fashion the soul will be edified and unnecessary tales will be prohibited.

VIII. That the Prince May Not Give Away Clerics Dependent on the Fisc

By command and consent of our lord the most pious king Reccared the council of bishops decrees as follows: that no one dare ask the prince for [unfree] clerics belonging to the fisc as a present, but rather, with their personal tribute paid, let them serve the church to which they are bound so long as they live according to their rule.

IX. That the Churches of the Arians Shall Belong to the Catholic Bishops in Whose Dioceses They Are Located

X. That No One Commit Violence Against the Chastity of a Widow, and That No One Marry a Woman Against Her Will

In the interests of chastity (the increase of which the council should most avidly incite) and with the agreement of our most glorious lord king Reccared, this holy council affirms that widows who wish to maintain their chastity may not be forced with any violence into a second marriage. And if before taking a vow of chastity they wish to be married, let them marry him who of their own free will they wish to have as husband. The same should be maintained concerning virgins, [for] they should not be forced to take a husband against their parents’ will or their own. If anyone impedes the desire of a widow or virgin to remain chaste, let him be held a stranger from holy communion and the thresholds of the church.

XI. That Penitents Do Penance

[We are] aware of the fact that in some churches of Spain men do penitence for their sins, not in accordance with the canons, but in a disgusting way: as often as they wish to sin, they ask the presbyter to be reconciled. Therefore, in order to eliminate such an execrable presumption, the council
decrees that penitence be given in accordance with the form of the ancient canons, that is: that he who repents should first be separated from communion, and he should avail himself often of the laying on of hands, along with the other penitents. Once his time of satisfaction is finished, he should be restored to communion as the bishop sees fit. But those who return to their old vice, whether during the time of penitence or afterwards, shall be condemned in accordance with the severity of the ancient canons.

XII. Concerning Those Who Ask for Penance: If They Are Male, First Tonsure Them; If Female, [Let Them] First Change Their Dress

... [Because] often, out of eagerness to administer penance to lay people, [lay people] relapse into lamentable crimes after receiving it.

XIII. That Clerics Who Appeal to Secular Judges Be Excommunicated

Prolonged lack of discipline and ingrown license have given rise to such illicit presumption, that clerics, abandoning their own bishop, summon other clerics to civil courts. Therefore we decree that henceforth they not presume to do so, and if any one does, let him lose the case and be excommunicated.

XIV. Concerning the Jews

At the suggestion of the council, our most glorious lord has commanded [that the following] be inserted in the canons: It is not permitted for Jews to have Christian women as wives or concubines, nor to purchase slaves for their personal use. And if children are born of such a union, they should be taken to the baptismal font. They may not be assigned any public business by virtue of which they [might] have power to punish Christians. And if any Christians have been stained by them, [or] by Jewish ritual, or been circumcised, let them return to liberty and the Christian religion without paying the price [of their freedom].

XV. That Servants of the [Royal] Fisc Who Build a Church Should Endow It, and [Ask] Confirmation from the King

XVI. That Bishops Along with Judges Destroy the Idols, and That Lords Forbid Their Servants Idolatry

Because the sacrilege of idolatry is taking root in nearly all of Spain and Gaul, the holy synod, with the consent of the glorious prince, commands the following: that each bishop in his respective area, along with the judge of that region, should diligently search out the aforesaid sacrilege, and should not re-
frain from exterminating that which they find, and should correct those who participate in such error with any punishment available, save that which endangers life. . . .

XVII. That the Bishops and the Judges Correct with Bitter Discipline Those Who Murder Their Own Children

Among the many complaints which have come to the ears of the holy council, there has been denounced to it a crime so great, that the ears of the present bishops cannot bear it, and this is that in some parts of Spain, parents kill their own children, [because they are] eager to fornicate, and know nothing of piety. Those to whom it is troublesome to have many children should first refrain from fornication. [For once] they have contracted marriage under the pretext of procreation, they make themselves guilty of parricide and fornication, who, by murdering their own children, reveal that they were married not for procreation but for libidinous union. Our most glorious lord King Reccared, having taken account of such evil, his glory has deigned to instruct the judges of those regions to inquire diligently concerning such a horrible crime, in conjunction with the bishops, and to forbid it with all severity. Therefore this sacred council sorrowfully urges the bishops of [those] regions that together with the judges they diligently inquire [about this crime], and forbid it with the most severe penalties, excepting death.

XVIII. That the Synod Meet Once a Year, and That the Judges and Agents of the [Royal] Fisc Attend

XIX. That the Church and All Its Goods Are Under the Administration of the Bishop

Many people, against that which is established in the canons, request the consecration of churches which have been built [by them] in such a way that the endowment they gave it not fall under the administration of the bishop, which thing was displeasing in the past and is forbidden in the future. Rather, everything is [now] under the administration and power of the bishop, in accordance with the ancient edicts.

XX. That the Bishop May Not Impose Exactions or Tribute upon His Diocese

The complaints of many require this decree, because we have known that bishops in their dioceses act, not in a sacerdotal manner, but cruelly, and . . . impose tributes and afflictions upon their dioceses. Therefore, excepting that which the ancient canons command the bishop should receive from his par-
ishes, they shall be denied all that to which they now presume, that is: they may not fatigue presbyters and deacons with exactions or taxes. Let it not appear in the Church of God that we deserve the name of tax collectors more than that of God's pontiffs. And those clerics who feel themselves oppressed by the bishop, whether local or from the diocese, should not hesitate to bring their complaints before the metropolitan. . . .

XXI. That It Is Forbidden for Judges to Make Exactions of Clerics and Servants of the Church

Because we are aware that in many towns servants of the church, of the bishops, and of all the clerics are bothered by diverse exactions from judges and [other] public authorities, the entire council has asked of the piety of our most glorious lord that henceforth he prohibit such abuses, and that the servants [or: slaves] of the above-mentioned officials [be free to] labor on their own or the church's business. And if any judge or civic official wishes to employ some cleric or some servant of a cleric or of the church in public or private business, let him be a stranger to the communion of the church, which he is obstructing.

XXII. That the Bodies of [Deceased] Religious Be Processed [to Burial] amid the Chanting of Psalms

The bodies of all religious who, called by God, depart from this life, should be carried to the grave amid psalms and the voices of the chanters only, but we absolutely forbid burial songs, which are commonly sung for the dead, and the accompaniment [of the corpse] by the family and dependents of the deceased, beating their breast. It suffices that, in the hope of the resurrection of the Christians, there be accorded to bodily remains the tribute of divine canticles. For the Apostle forbids us to mourn the dead, saying: "I do not wish you to sadden yourselves about those who are asleep, as do those who have no hope" [1 Thess. 4:12]. And the Lord did not mourn the dead Lazarus, but rather shed tears for his resurrection to the hardships of this world. Therefore if the bishop is able, he should not hesitate to forbid all Christians to do this. Clerics, too, should not act in any other way, for it is fitting that throughout the world deceased Christians should be buried thus.

XXIII. That Dances Be Prohibited on the Birthdays of the Saints

That unreligious custom which the vulgar people practice on the feast days of the saints must be completely destroyed. That is, that the people who ought to attend to the divine offices instead dedicate themselves to unseemly songs and dances, injuring not only themselves, but also interfering with the
offices of the religious. The holy council commends [this] to the care of the bishops and judges: that this custom may be banished from all of Spain.

Here Begins the Edict of the King in Confirmation of the Council

Our most glorious lord, King Reccared: [That] divine truth which makes us lovers of all those living under the power of our rule, [also] primarily inspired our understanding to command all the bishops of Spain to present themselves to our highness, in order to restore ecclesiastical faith and discipline. And after careful and considerate deliberation, we know that [these things] have been decided, with all [due] maturity of feeling and weightiness of intelligence, concerning both what is convenient for the faith and the correction of customs. Therefore, we command with our authority all men who are [citizens] of our kingdom, that no one be allowed to disdain or presume to neglect anything that has been established in this holy council held in the city of Toledo in the fourth year of our felicitous reign. For these decrees which have so pleased our intelligence and which, [because they are] so much in accord with ecclesiastical discipline, have been promulgated by this synod, should be maintained and observed in all their authority by [everyone], as much clerics as laypeople, and by every manner of person. . . .

We decree that all these ecclesiastical rules which we have summarized briefly above [should be] maintained with eternal stability as is amply explained in the canons. If any cleric or layperson does not wish to obey these decrees, [let them be punished as follows]: If they are a bishop, presbyter, deacon, or cleric, let them be subject to excommunication by the entire council. If they are laypeople of substance in their region, let them give [as a fine] half of their possessions to the fisc, and if they are people of inferior status in their region, let them lose [all] their possessions and be sent into exile.

I, Flavius Reccared, have signed as confirmation these decrees which we established with the holy synod.

[There follow the signatures of the bishops, etc.]
4. VISIGOTHIC LEGISLATION CONCERNING THE JEWS

The laws issued under Visigothic rule were remarkable in that they continued the Roman tradition that the head of state had the right and responsibility to legislate. Other Germanic successor-states to the Roman Empire issued law codes that were little more than lists of penalties for specific offenses. They limited their lawmaking in that fashion because they held to the primitive Germanic conviction that law was the immemorial custom of the people. Visigothic kings, by contrast, imitated Roman emperors in this regard.

The following selections demonstrate Visigothic legislation concerning the Jews. The first text, the third canon from the Sixth Council of Toledo (held in 638), adds serious political consequences to a general principle regulating the relationship between two religious communities. The council was summoned by King Chintila and attended by forty-eight bishops from all of Spain and part of southeastern Gaul, as well as by clergy representing five other dioceses—in other words, the entire church under Visigothic rule. This anti-Jewish legislation makes important statements about the vices these churchmen perceived as inherent in the Jewish community and seeks to bind present and future kings to that attitude. This canon became part of a chain of theoretical precedents which influenced monarchs as distant as Ferdinand and Isabella, who used the church tribunal of the Inquisition as an instrument for enforcing religious conformity.

The second selection comes from the Lex Visigothorum, also known as Liber judiciarum / Book of Laws or Forum judicum (and hence as Fuero juzego in its influential thirteenth-century Castilian translation). This is a comprehensive law code in twelve books, each dedicated to a specific topic. Its orderly structure and length make it unique among early medieval Germanic law codes. Book XII deals with religious deviancy. The second of its two original subdivisions is entitled “On Amputating All the Errors of All Heretics and All Jews.” Of its seventeen articles, the tenth (legislated by Recceswinth in 653) extends legislation passed twenty years earlier. What had been a penalty reserved for Christian converts who had returned to Judaism became a disability severely limiting the capacity of any Jew or Christian of Jewish descent to achieve redress or defend himself or herself in any Spanish court. The second half of this law had a long life in medieval regulations of the rights of conversos—Christians of Jewish descent. (ORC & JdQA)

A. Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo (638)
Translated from Latin by Jeremy duQ. Adams

Keeping Watch of the Jewish Faith
It seems that the inflexible infidelity of the Jews has finally been forced to bend to the powerful piety of heaven. The whole world is aware how, thanks to

the inspiration of God on high, the Most Excellent and Most Christian Sovereign,\(^1\) inflamed with the ardor of the Faith and in union with the bishops of his kingdom,\(^2\) has chosen to obliterate the very foundations of the superstitious prevarication [of the Jews], and does not permit anyone who is not Catholic to reside in his kingdom. We give thanks to God, the omnipotent King of Heaven, for the fervor of [the King’s] faith, for having created so brilliant a soul and filled it with His own wisdom; may He grant him long life in this world and eternal glory in the future. It is however our farsighted concern and a worthy object of our vigilant attention to issue a decree whereby neither his ardor nor our labor may grow lukewarm and be undone in time to come.

Therefore with one heart and voice fully in accord with [the King] we promulgate a judgment pleasing to God, and with the consensus of the magnates and illustrious men [of the kingdom] arising from their deliberation, we decree sanctions therefor: to wit, that whoever in time to come shall attain the highest authority in the kingdom shall not ascend the royal throne until he shall have sworn, among the other provisions of his oath, not to permit [the Jews] to violate the Catholic Faith; he shall not favor their infidelity in any way whatever, nor from neglect or covetousness shall he grant access to the prevarication of such as hover on the brink of faithlessness. Rather shall he see to it that what has been achieved in our time by great effort be maintained hereafter; for it is pointless to accomplish positive results if their preservation be not evident.

Indeed, if after having assumed the government of the kingdom in the aforesaid ritual, [any king] shall have the temerity to violate this promise, let him be anathema Maranatha\(^3\) in the sight of the eternal God and let him become fuel for the eternal fire, along with any bishop, priest, or other Christian who shall have incurred the same condemnation. We for our part so decree and thereby confirm what has been written in previous general councils\(^4\) concerning the Jews: we know that those provisions were necessary for their salvation, and hence judge it important that they be maintained in full vigor.

---

1. King Khintila (r.636–639).
2. A union expressed by this council, which met at Toledo in the large church of St. Leocadia outside the city walls. As early as the Third Council of Toledo (589; see Text 3), these ecclesiastical councils had become symbols of the solidarity of church and state in Visigothic Spain.
3. That is, let him be excommunicated in the most serious manner possible.
4. Either previous councils legislating for the Church of Spain as a whole (rather than for one or another province thereof), or councils of the whole church. Canons 57–66 of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) deal with several issues of Jewish-Christian relations.
B. *Lex Visigothorum* (653)
Translated from Latin by Jeremy duQ. Adams

X. That Jews May Not Testify Against Christians [and When It Shall Be Lawful for Any of Their Descendants to Give Testimony]

If a lie discovered before men both renders its perpetrator infamous and incurs a sentence of condemnation, how much the more should not one found defective in regard to the divine Faith be utterly excluded from giving testimony? Deservedly therefore Jews, whether baptized or not baptized, are forbidden to give testimony in court.

But if any born from their stock be found acceptable for upright behavior and integrity of faith, permission to testify truthfully along with Christians is granted them; but not unless they shall fully satisfy a priest, the king, or a judge in all particulars as to their behavior and faith.

5. KING KHINDASWINTH AND QUEEN RECIBERGA

Eugenius II of Toledo, Poetic Epitaphs (ca.650)
Translated from Latin by Jeremy duQ. Adams

This pair of royal epitaphs by Bishop Eugenius II of Toledo (646–657) suggests several things about the relationship of church and state in Visigothic Spain. Khindaswinth (r.642–653) seized power after a civil war, but reestablished the shaky Gothic monarchy on firm bases of legislative redirection and cultural patronage. The dynasty he established produced the king (Roderic) who fell in the Muslim invasion of 711; later kings of León would claim descent from Khindaswinth's line.

Eugenius, metropolitan bishop of Toledo, was a gentleman-versifier in the Roman tradition. The acute contrast between the deference shown in other epitaphs by Eugenius and the scathing language of his epitaph for the king (one wonders whether the monarch could still have been alive when it was written) is all the more striking since it was Khindaswinth who had appointed Eugenius bishop of Toledo, and hence the ranking prelate of the Spanish Church. The ferocious criticism in this epitaph suggests the tensions inherent in any political office dependent on the approval of religious authorities. In contrast, the epitaph for Khindaswinth's young queen bespeaks a sympathy between the king and his bishop, each the embodiment of Hispano-Roman and Hispano-Gothic patriarchy. Of Reciberga we know practically nothing besides this poem: her signature appears on a charter (unfortunately dubious) to a monastery in the Asturian mountains.

Roman culture was still desirable as an assertion of legitimacy in the middle of the seventh century, and Eugenius composed the king's epitaph in elegiac couplets, a metrical form made standard for funeral verse by Catullus and others. Reciberga's epitaph is composed in the heroic meter of poems by Virgil and Lucan, basic models for Latin verse in Spanish schools from those poets' lifetimes on. Lucan, whose family came from Córdoba, was a particular favorite. These free translations try to echo the rhythmic form as well as the highly rhetorical tone of the original poems. (OCR & JeDQA)

For Khindaswinth

Mourn for me, all you within the orb of the world!
So may your shame be cleansed by appropriate floods.
So may Christ in his clemency cancel your debts,
So may the shining gate of high heaven swing open.
Let funereal wailing burst now from contrite hearts;
Let them bring forth the tears of pious general grief.
Send up your sighs to God, give vent to groans of sorrow,
And on my wretched behalf cry mercy, I pray.
I am Khindaswinth, ever the friend of mischief;

Perpetrator of crimes Khindaswinth am I.
Impious, obscene, scandalous, shameful, wicked,
Never willing the best, always up to the worst.
Whatever depraved desire can do, injury seeking,
That have I done, and have been even worse.
There was no crime I did not wish to commit,
In vice I was always the best and the first.
Behold: these ashes that wore royal robes have yielded the scepter;
The earth now weighs upon one who took off the purple.
The chartered trappings of kingship now profit me naught,
Naught the green jewels, the diadem's luster.
Silver aids me not, there is no help in bright gold,
The imperial seat does me harm, and treasure pleases me not.
All the glory of mud-sprung life is deception:
It flies away like a breath, melts in swift dissolution.
Happy indeed is he, in the grace of Christ happy,
Who has always abhorred the weak, windy wealth of the world.

For Reciberga

Were it allowed to exchange gold and jewels for death,
No ills could have broken apart the life of these monarchs.
But since one common lot shatters everything mortal,
Wealth cannot exempt kings, nor grieving the poor.
Hence I, O wife, unable to overcome fate,
Commit you with these rites to the care of the saints
So that, when devouring flames come to consume the earth,
You may arise a worthy member of their company.
So now Reciberga, my beloved, farewell:
Thus I, King Khindaswinth, prepare my beloved's bier.
All that remains is to state the brief span of time
That contained her life and our union.
The pact of our marriage endured almost seven years;
She was then twice eleven years old, plus eight months.

1. English cannot convey the original play of words. The adjective luteus, with a short initial u, as here, means “made of mud” (from lutum, very like the material God shaped into Adam in Gen. 2:7); with a long initial u, luteus means “golden,” or at least “yellowish in color.”
2. Here there is either a problem with the manuscript or another entirely Eugenian pun: the flagitis of the oldest manuscript may be an error for fragilis (“weak”) or flabiliis (“windy”), or a highly exceptional construct playing on both meanings as well as suggesting the rare form flagio, a variant for flagro, from which derives the English flagrant—all of which would be quite typical of the literary conceits favored by late survivors of the classical tradition like Eugenius. North of the Alps, the classical twilight had ended a century earlier.