The present chapter is concerned with the history of Priscillianism, which troubled the Church in Spain for almost two hundred years. Priscillian, after whom this heresy was named, is a strange, obscure figure about whom little is known with certainty. The precise character of his doctrine has been the subject of much controversy since the discovery in 1885 of some writings attributed to him. It is necessary to narrate the principal events in his life in order to show the influence he exerted upon the people of Spain even after his death. But in keeping with the subject of this dissertation greater attention will be directed to the effect which Priscillianism had upon paganism in Spain, and the efforts of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities to crush this movement.

LIFE OF PRISCILLIAN

Priscillian was born probably about the year 340. According to Sulpicius Severus, our principal authority on the history of Priscillian, he was of noble birth, enjoyed great wealth, was bold, restless, eloquent, learned, and ready at debate. He was also tireless in keeping vigils, could endure hunger and thirst, had no desire for riches, and was frugal in the use of things. But there was also a dark side to his character. He was vain, unduly proud of his profane learning, and was said to have practiced magic from his youth. Priscillian seems to have come under the influence of a certain Egyptian named Marcus, who was reported to be a follower of Manes. Though but a layman, Priscillian began to preach the doctrine of his master and soon became the leader of the new society. His eloquence and ascetical bearing won over to his cause the bishops Instantius and Salvian, and also a large number of the laity.

The teaching of Priscillian and the secrecy which surrounded the meetings of his followers aroused the suspicions of the ecclesiastical authorities. Hyginus, bishop of Cordova, and Hydatius, bishop of Merida, where the movement was strongest, took action against its spread, but their efforts were unsuccessful. The affair became so critical that probably in the year 378 it was referred to Pope Damasus (366-384). The pope ordered that the teachings should be examined in an episcopal synod, and that no one was to be condemned without a hearing. In obedience to this command ten Spanish bishops and two from Aquitania assembled at Saragossa in the year 380.

The following regulations of this council enable us to form an estimate of the practices associated at this time with the Priscillianist movement. Women were forbidden to associate with men during the time of prayer; no one was allowed to fast on Sunday, nor during the Lenten season and the three weeks preceding the feast of the Epiphany to absent himself from church for the sake of seeking solitude in his home or in the mountains; the Sacred Host was to be consumed in church and not brought to one's home; a person excommunicated by one bishop was not to be received into the
church of another bishop; a cleric was forbidden to become a monk on the pretext that the life of the religious was more perfect than that of the secular clergy; no one of his own accord was to assume the title "doctor"; finally a woman was not to be admitted to the ranks of the virgins before the age of forty. The bishops rightly condemned these practices, for, if allowed to go unchecked, they would have produced hopeless confusion in the ecclesiastical organization and would have led to doctrinal error.

Neither Priscillian nor any of his followers appeared at Saragossa. But while Sulpicius says that the council condemned Bishops Instantius and Salvian, and the laymen, Priscillian and Helpidius, the Priscillianists in the letter to Pope Damasus stated that none of them had been accused or condemned at Saragossa. The author of the letter to Damasus stated that none of them had been accused or condemned at Saragossa. The bishops at Saragossa delegated Ithacius, bishop of Ossonuba (Faro in modern Portugal), to promulgate the condemnation of the practices mentioned in the canons.

The choice of this bishop was most unfortunate. According to Sulpicius, he was bold, loquacious, impudent, extravagant, and given to gluttony. Ithacius, and Hydatius, bishop of Merida, were to be the principal enemies of the Priscillianists.

Shortly after the Council of Saragossa some of the Priscillianist leaders went to Merida to effect a reconciliation with Bishop Hydatius of that city. According to their version of what followed, Hydatius not only refused to receive them but even permitted the people to maltreat them. Angered at this conduct, and encouraged by the support of their new members, Symposius, bishop of Astorga, and Hyginus, bishop of Cordova, the Priscillianists decided upon a bold move. Bishops Instantius and Salvian consecrated Priscillian bishop and placed him in charge of the see of Avila in the northeastern section of Lusitania. This ordination violated the canons of the Church regarding the time that should elapse before a candidate might be admitted to further orders. Hydatius seized this opportunity of appealing to Gratian, the reigning emperor of the West, and secured from him a rescript against "pseudo-bishops and Manicheans." Though the imperial order did not mention the Priscillianists by name, they realized that Hydatius would not hesitate to apply it against them. Consequently, Bishops Instantius, Salvian, and Priscillian boldly set out for Rome, determined to win the support of Pope Damasus. But the pope and later St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, refused to grant them an audience.

Dudden censures the pope for not listening to the appeal of Priscillian. Caspar believes that no ecclesiastic, not even the pope, could intervene in a matter that had already been judged by a lata sententia of an imperial rescript. It would seem, however, that Villada is correct in interpreting the refusal of Damasus and Ambrose on religious grounds: they considered them as religious disturbers or even heretics. During their stay at Milan, Priscillian and Instantius (Salvian had died at Rome) succeeded in winning the favor of Macedonius, the magister officiorum and an enemy of Ambrose. Through the mediation of this official the imperial rescript was revoked and the Priscillianists were restored to their churches in Spain. At the news of the turn events had taken, Hydatius disappeared and Ithacius only escaped arrest by fleeing to Gaul and remaining there in hiding.

This good fortune of Priscillian and his followers was of short duration. In 383 the legions of Britain revolted and acclaimed as emperor Maximus, one of the officers in the army. When the usurper entered Treves in triumph, Ithacius came forth from his hiding-place and requested him to take action against the Priscillianists. Maximus was willing to win the favor of the Catholic hierarchy, and ordered the vicar of Spain and prefect of Gaul to cite the persons suspected of Priscillianism before an episcopal synod at Bordeaux. Instantius was first summoned and after an ecclesiastical trial was declared
unworthy of the episcopate. (22) Whether or not Priscillian had determined before the condemnation of Instantius to have his case tried before the civil courts, the fact is that he appealed to the bishops and obtained their permission to be tried by a civil magistrate. (23)

The Pretorian Prefect Evodius, a stern and just man, presided over the trial of Priscillian, which took place at Treves. Bishop Ithacius appeared there, and charged Priscilian with teaching Manichean doctrines and engaging in magical practices. The accusation of magic could be easily made and was difficult to refute. (24) At this trial Priscillian "was convicted of magic, and did not deny that he had devoted himself to obscene doctrines, and that he had nocturnal meetings with evil women, and was wont to pray while naked." (25) Torture was doubtless used in extracting this confession of magic from Priscillian. (26) The other crimes which the accused did not deny were probably connected in some way with the practice of magic. (27) Thus the word "obscoenus" (obscene) was often equal to "ominosus" (of evil augury). (28) The meetings with evil women might easily be construed as the magical meetings forbidden by law. Nudity, either partial or entire, was usually required at such gatherings. (29) After the sentence of death was passed by Evodius, Priscillian had to appear for a second trial before the Emperor Maximus. The emperor confirmed the sentence of Evodius and Priscillian and some of his followers were put to death. (30) Others, like Bishop Instantius who were not regarded as serious violators of the law, were merely fined or sent into exile.

Soon after these executions at Treves, Pope Siricius (384-398) requested Maximus to forward to him the acts of the trial. In the letter which accompanied the documents (31) Maximus said that the executed persons were Manicheans and were guilty of crimes which he blushed to mention. The principal charge, however, was magic, for at this time the penalty of death was inflicted upon those guilty of magic, but not upon those who were known to be Manicheans. Maximus in this letter to the pope probably emphasized the crime of Manicheism because the law permitted him to seize the property of all such heretics, and Maximus was in need of money. (32) Priscillian was not condemned to death for heresy, but for the civil crime of magic, and his condemnation cannot be regarded as the prototype of the mediaeval inquisition. (34) The leading churchmen of the time looked with horror upon this trial of an ecclesiastic by a civil court. Sulpicius tells us that St. Martin of Tours, who was in Treves when the trial of Priscillian was going on, pleaded with Maximus not to allow the condemned bishop to be put to death. (35) After the execution of Priscillian, St. Ambrose visited Treves and refused to associate with the bishops who were actually seeking to have the followers of Priscillian put to death. (36) In a letter to Bishop Thuribius of Astorga on Priscillianism Pope Leo I (440-461), however, approved of the salutary effects that had resulted from this trial by the civil ruler. (37) Maximus was therefore justified in saying to St. Martin that the heretics were condemned by the secular courts rather than by the persecution of the bishops. (38)

[57] THE DOCTRINES ATTRIBUTED TO PRISCILLIAN

While political motives played a part in the executions at Treves, the question naturally arises whether Priscillian was guilty of the charge of Manicheism brought against him by Bishop Ithacius. Before attempting to answer this question it may be well to summarize the principal tenets of Manicheism. (39) The religion named after Manes was mainly a synthesis of the doctrines of Zoroaster and Christ. It was based upon the essential contradiction between good and evil. Light was the principle of good, Darkness was the principle of evil. All things "spiritual" - the sun, moon, planets, and the soul of man - were good because they proceeded from the principle of light; all things "material" - the world, human flesh, and certain kinds of food - were evil in themselves because they were made by the principle of
darkness. There were so many pagan elements in Manicheism that F. Cumont calls it "the last form of idolatry received in the western world." Some of these pagan doctrines of Manicheism are to be found in a more or less modified form in the teaching of Priscillianism.

St. Jerome refers to Priscillian as the author of "many works" but does not mention their titles or contents. For a long time there were no writings of Priscillian extant except his summary of the doctrines of St. Paul, arranged in the form of canons. But in 1885 eleven tracts written by an anonymous Priscillianist about the year 384 were discovered in the library of Würzburg and published four years later by G. Schepss in the CSEL. From the tone of authority with which the writer spoke, and from his description of the journey to Pope Damasus in 382, Schepss unhesitatingly concluded that Priscilian himself was the author. The tracts, therefore, were carefully examined in order to discover the teaching of Priscillian. It was found that when speaking of the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation the writer used terminology that was open to suspicion. There is noticeable throughout the eleven tracts a constant emphasis upon the opposition between the soul and the body, and a frequent mention of the two classes in the Church, the Elect and those striving to become Elect. Such language, though not clearly unorthodox, might be interpreted in a Manichean sense. The writer, however, condemns absolutely all Manichean doctrines. If these tracts were really written by Priscillian, he did not deserve the severe fate that was meted out to him at Treves. H. Leclercq even declares that Priscillian was perfectly orthodox. It is necessary accordingly to see first whether Priscillian really wrote the tracts and also what his contemporaries or those who lived shortly after him said of his doctrine.

The attribution of these tracts of Würzburg, not to Priscillian but to Bishop Instantius, was first suggested by Dom Morin in 1913. He agreed with Schepss that the eleven tracts were all written by a man who had made the journey to Rome and who had played a prominent part in the Priscillianist movement, but he claimed that Bishop Instantius and not Priscillian was the author. Morin's arguments are in brief as follows: the first and longest of these tracts is addressed to an assembly of bishops, and the writer refuted certain specific charges that had been brought against him and the group whom he represented. These charges were a belief in the teachings of Manicheism and the practice of magic. But no such charges were brought against the Priscillianists at the Council of Saragossa in 380, for the writer explicitly excluded this council when he asserted that none of them had been accused at Saragossa. It seems evident, therefore, that these charges were made at the Council of Bordeaux in 384; as Priscillian refused to be tried by the episcopal synod there, he could hardly have been the author of this first tract. Morin also points to the fact that while Priscillian was the popular leader of the movement named after him, yet at this time (384) Instantius was the nominal leader, and this fact may explain why he was the first to be summoned before the bishops at Bordeaux. The second tract is addressed to Pope Damasus and the important part of this letter is the discussion of the legality of Priscillian's ordination to the episcopate. The logical person to justify this ordination was not Priscillian, who was under suspicion, but rather Instantius, who had been one of his consecrators.

If Priscillian is the author of these tracts, it is difficult to explain their heavy and involved style, and also the mediocre defense which he makes of his doctrine, for Sulpicius Severus had praised his literary skill and intellectual ability very highly. On the other hand if Instantius is the author, these difficulties in regard to the style, and doctrine quickly disappear, for Bishop Instantius was probably a man of ordinary ability, who represented a less harmful tendency in the Priscillianist movement, and hence was not executed at Treves, but only sent into exile. To the present writer Morin's reasoning appears conclusive, and hence he believes that the tracts of Würzburg do not enable us to pass final judgment upon the orthodoxy of Priscillian. It will be necessary then to examine the writings of the late
fourth and fifth centuries in order to form some idea of the doctrines known under the name of Priscillianism.

Filastrius, bishop of Brescia, wrote his work on the various heresies about the year 383, when the Priscillianist controversy was at its height. In this book he refers to a group of people in Spain, known as the Abstinentes who teach and practice the harmful doctrines of the Gnostics and Manicheans. Filastrius goes on to say that these Abstinentes - probably the Priscillianists are meant - persuade married people to separate and teach that food is something evil because it has been made by the devil.

Further light is thrown upon the teachings of Priscillianism by a council held at Toledo in the year 400. At this council, attended by nineteen bishops, there was a condemnation not only of the errors of the Priscillianists in regard to the Trinity and the Incarnation, but also of two doctrines of the Priscillianists that are strikingly similar to those of the Manicheans: the existence of a Creator different from the one mentioned in Sacred Scripture, and the belief that the soul of man is a portion of the divine substance.

One of the principal authorities on Priscillianism is Orosius, the friend of St. Augustine. According to St. Braullo, a seventh century writer, Orosius had once been tainted with Priscillianism. In a letter written about the year 414 to St. Augustine, Orosius explained the doctrine of the Priscillianists in regard to the origin and opposition between the soul and the body. Priscillian, according to Orosius, was worse than the Manicheans for he sought to defend his heresy by appealing also to the Old Testament (as well as to the New). Priscillian taught that the soul of man came from a sort of warehouse. In the presence of God the soul professed its willingness to fight for Him and was instructed by the adoration of the angels. The soul thence descended through different circles until it was seized by the rules of evil and, according to the will of the victorious principle, was cast into various bodies upon which a bond was placed. Priscillian asserted that magic (mathesis) prevailed and that Christ loosened this bond by His passion and affixed it to the cross. In proof of this assertion Orosius quoted a fragmentary passage from a letter of Priscillian in which it was stated: "The first wisdom is to understand the nature of the divine virtues in the types of the souls (and to understand) the composition of the body, in which the heavens and earth and all the powers of the world seem to be joined together; to overcome these relations is the duty of the saints. The patriarchs hold the first circle and the divine bond of sending souls into the flesh - a bond fabricated by the consent of the angels and God and all the souls. Those opposite have the work of formal welfare . . .." Here the letter breaks off abruptly, and we have no means of restoring the part that has been lost. Orosius goes on to add that Priscillian taught that the names of the patriarchs were given to the members of the soul, while the signs of the heavens were placed in the body of man, as Aries in the head, Gemini in the arms, etc.

From the words of Orosius and the fragmentary letter of Priscillian we learn that the soul comes forth from a warehouse, professes its allegiance to God, and is fortified by the prayers of the angels. When the soul reaches the first circle, which belongs to the patriarchs, a divine bond "made with the consent of the angels and God and all the souls" is placed upon it. Henceforth the patriarchs rule in the different parts of the soul. Proceeding further on its journey the soul encounters the opposition of the evil spirits and is overcome by them. These evil spirits now cast the soul into a body, "in which the heavens and the earth and all the powers of the world seem to be joined together." Just as the patriarchs rule over the different parts of the soul, so the signs of the heavens, such as Aries, Gemini, rule over the different parts of the body. A bond is placed upon the human body, and it is this bond which Christ by means of magic loosened and nailed to the cross. It is the duty of the saints to recognize this distinction between the soul and the body, and to overcome the body. This fanciful origin of the human soul and body is evidently unorthodox. The opposition between man's soul and body that is here given is very similar to
the Manichean dualism. (60)

St. Jerome was probably secretary to Pope Damasus at the time [63] when the three bishops, Salvian, Instantius, and Priscillian arrived in Rome, and presumably became acquainted with their doctrine. He learned to know the Priscillianists better through his friendship with Orosius and from the numerous Spaniards who came to visit him at Bethlehem. (61) In his De viris inlustribus, written about 392, Jerome does not pronounce judgment upon Priscillian, (62) but later is outspoken in his condemnation. In a letter written about 415 he calls Priscillian "pars Manichaei," and says that his followers claim to have the secret of perfection and knowledge. (63) He goes on to accuse them of immorality and of associating with women at night; at these meetings (probably the magical meetings referred to at the trial), they chanted the words of Virgil's poem: "Then almighty father Aether descends into the bosom of his fertile spouse in fructifying showers, and great himself, mingling with her great body, nourishes all her offspring." (64)

St. Augustine, who also wrote against the Priscillianists, was in a position to know their doctrines. He was in Rome and Milan, 383-386, was a friend of St. Ambrose and Orosius and corresponded with two Spanish Bishops Ceretius and Consentius. Augustine attributed to Priscillian and his followers the doctrine that the human soul is a part of the divine essence; that on its journey to earth the soul passes through the seven heavens and is cast into the human body by the "prince of evil"; that man is bound to fatal stars; that certain foods are unclean; that marriages are evil and should be broken up. (65) In a letter to Bishop Ceretius he especially condemned the [64] Priscillianists for their immorality saying that the dirt of all the previous heresies had flowed into their doctrine in horrible confusion. (66) The fact that Augustine identified Priscillianism with Manicheism is a valuable proof of their likeness to each other, for he himself had been a Manichean for a number of years.

Finally we may mention the condemnation of Priscillianism by Pope Leo I (440-461), who had been informed of this doctrine by Thuribius, bishop of Astorga. (67) In his letter to Thuribius, in 447, the pope asserts that the doctrines of Priscillian included not only the errors of previous heresies, but also the pagan doctrines of magic and astrology. (68) Later on in this letter Pope Leo mentions that the Priscillianists in the middle of the fifth century taught that the soul of man was a portion of the divine substance, and in punishment for sins committed in heaven had been sent upon earth. The devil, according to them, was the principle of evil, and the human body which he formed in the womb of the mother was essentially bad. The Priscillianists also preached the doctrine that the stars exercised a determining influence upon man's conduct, and that the harmful influence of certain stars could be obviated only by the practice of astrology. (69) Hence the pope judged that the Manicheans and [65] Priscillianists differed in name, but were united in the same sacrilegious practices. (70)

The canons of the first council of Toledo and the writings of Filastrius, Orosius, St. Jerome, St. Augustine and Pope Leo I were composed between the years 383 and 447. It is hardly possible that these contemporaneous writers were mistaken in judging Priscillian as unorthodox in many of his teachings. Even if it be admitted that Priscillian accepted the Holy Scriptures, the Sacred Humanity of Christ, and taught that the origin of sin was due to the weakness of the will - doctrines which the Manicheans rejected - still it is difficult to explain the unorthodox doctrines known under the name of Priscillianism, if Priscillian himself were not in some way to blame. (71) But whatever may be said of Priscillian himself, the important point in the present study is that in the early part of the fifth century the movement bearing his name inculcated many pagan principles. It is now necessary to study the means taken by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities to put an end to this teaching.
Soon after the execution of Priscillian at Treves, Maximus resolved to send soldiers into Spain in order to put down the Priscillianist movement by armed force. He was dissuaded from this hasty step, however, by St. Martin of Tours, who foresaw the evils that would follow. \(^{(72)}\) In the year 388 Maximus was defeated in battle by the emperor of the East, Theodosius the Great, and executed at Aquileia. Immediately there was a strong reaction in favor of Priscillianism, though the reason for this is difficult to understand. Popular resentment was aroused against the enemies of Priscillian. Bishop Ithacius of Ossonuba, who had been the principal accuser of Priscillian at Treves, was deposed (probably \[^{66}\] by an episcopal synod) and Bishop Hydatius of Merida voluntarily resigned his see. Meanwhile the body of Priscillian was carried back to Spain, and there buried amid scenes of the greatest splendor. His followers who had formerly venerated Priscillian as a saint, now began to invoke his name as a martyr. The movement that Priscillian had started passed into Galicia, where it was to become most deeply rooted. \(^{(73)}\)

To combat the evils of Priscillianism nineteen bishops of Spain assembled at Toledo in the year 400. Bishop Patruinus of Merida in the address opening the council hit at one of the causes of the recent evils in the Spanish Church, the ordination of laymen to the ranks of the clergy without observing the necessary intervals before admission to sacred orders. It was decided that the decrees of the Council of Nice (325) on this subject should be put in force. After enacting a number of disciplinary measures which concerned the ordination of priests and the penalties to be inflicted upon clerics who violated the vow of chastity, the bishops drew up a profession of faith and twelve anathemas against the Priscillianists. \(^{(74)}\) The \[^{67}\] council next proceeded to examine the Priscillianist bishops of Galicia who had been summoned to Toledo. \(^{(75)}\) Of these ten bishops four refused to renounce their allegiance to their executed leader and were consequently deposed. The other six bishops abjured their errors, among them Bishop Symposius, who seems to have become the leader of the Priscillianist movement after 385, and his son, Bishop Dictinius. These six bishops were permitted to retain their sees. Such leniency aroused the opposition of the bishops of Baetica and Carthaginiensis. The matter was submitted to Pope Innocent I (402-417), who upheld the decision of the council and threatened with excommunication the bishops who refused to allow the repentant Priscillianists to retain their sees. \(^{(76)}\)

The opening decade of the fifth century also saw the civil authorities taking action against the Priscillianists. In an edict issued at Rome in 407 the emperors, Arcadius, Honorius, and Theodosius II, ordered that the rulers of the various provinces were to treat the members of this society with the greatest rigor. Any negligence in the execution of this edict would entail a heavy fine. The Priscillianists were denied the right of making a contract or of drawing up a will. Their children, if members of the society, could not legally inherit property. An owner who allowed these heretics to meet on his estate was threatened with the seizure of his property; if the meeting had been held without the owner's consent, the agent who connived at it was subject to the penalty of deportation or of labor in the mines. \(^{(77)}\) A law issued a year later at Rome declared \[^{68}\] that Catholics were permitted to seize the churches and property of the Priscillianists. \(^{(78)}\) This civil legislation very probably remained ineffective, for in 409 the barbarian invasions of Spain began, and the whole of the Peninsula with the exception of eastern Tarraconensis was removed from the control of the emperors. \(^{(79)}\) In 414 Orosius wrote to St. Augustine: "We are more grievously torn asunder by evil teachers than by the most cruel enemies." \(^{(80)}\)

About the year 420 St. Augustine was called upon to settle a problem that had arisen in Spain as a result of Priscillianism. Bishop Dictinius before his abjuration of the Priscillianist doctrines at the first
council of Toledo had written a book entitled *Libra.* Although this work is no longer extant, yet from the words of St. Augustine, it is clear that Dictinius defended the lawfulness of lying in certain cases, and especially of concealing the Priscillianist doctrines from outsiders. This book continued to be read by the Priscillianists even after Dictinius had ceased to be a member of their society. Some Catholics in Spain thought that it would be legitimate to pretend for a time that they were Priscillianists, hoping thus to learn the secrets of this society in order later on to be in a better position to refute its false doctrines. Augustine refused to countenance this [deception which, he said, would only harden the Priscillianists in their habit of lying. He suggested instead that the Catholics could easily learn the secrets of the Priscillianists from those who had renounced its errors, and the surest means of uprooting false doctrines was by instructing the people in the sound doctrines of the Catholic religion.

In spite of the efforts of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities the evil of Priscillianism continued to grow. In the year 447 Bishop Thuribius of Astorga wrote the letter previously mentioned to Pope Leo I, in which he mentioned the erroneous doctrines of the Priscillianists. In his answer dated July 21st of the same year the pope suggested that a council of the bishops of Spain be convoked and effective action taken against the heretics; if circumstances did not permit the holding of this "general" council, at least the bishops of Galicia should not fail to assemble. As no official record of any such council exists, and as Idacius, the principal source for the history of Spain in the fifth century, did not refer to any meeting of the Spanish bishops in 447, it was thought that the bishops found it impossible to carry out the pope's command. But a careful study of the extant source material makes it reasonably certain that a council was held in Spain shortly after the arrival of the pope's letter to take action against the Priscillianists. The reasons are as follows:

At a council held in Braga in the year 561 Bishop Lucretius of Braga in his opening address referred to a council which the bishops of Spain held in obedience to the command of Pope Leo I. He added that on this occasion the bishops had drawn up a rule of faith which they had forwarded to Bishop Balconius of Braga. Secondly, in the *Hispana* edition of the first council of Toledo there is mention of a rule of faith against all heresies and especially against Priscillianism which was composed by the bishops of Tarraconensis, Carthaginiensis, Lusitania and Baetica in obedience to the command of Pope Leo I and forwarded to Bishop Balconius of Galicia. It is therefore very probable that the Symbol and eighteen anathemas before mentioned, which in the *Hispana* edition are listed under the first council of Toledo were really drawn up at the meeting of the Spanish bishops in 447. Aldama believes that the attribution of the Symbol and anathemas of this council to the first council of Toledo was due to a mistake by the compiler of the *Hispana.* This compiler had before him the Symbol and twelve anathemas of the Council of Toledo in 400, and also the clearer and more precise Symbol and eighteen anathemas of 447. Out of this material he arbitrarily made up his own edition of the first council of Toledo and attributed to it the Symbol and anathemas of the council of 447. Against these positive proofs in favor of a council in 447 the argument drawn from the silence of the chronicler, Idacius, loses all its force. Idacius wrote his chronicle in the last years of his life, when he might easily have forgotten to record this meeting of the Spanish bishops. It is to be noted that while Idacius mentions the letter of Pope Leo to Thuribius, he forgets to add the command of the Pope that a council be held. It seems reasonably certain, therefore, that a council did convene in 447.

The first twelve anathemas of this council in 447 are almost identical with those drawn up at the Council of Toledo in 400. The thirteenth and fourteenth anathemas are directed against the errors of the Priscillianists in regard to the Incarnation and the Blessed Trinity. The following anathemas condemn the Priscillianist belief in magic and astrology, and their false teachings in regard to human
marriage (93) and the eating of meat. (94) The last anathema condemns those who follow the teaching of Priscillian and who seek for salvation "in opposition to the chair of St. Peter." (95) The results that followed this council of 447 are not known with certainty, but it did not put an end to the Priscillianist movement. The troubled political situation in Spain in the second half of the fifth century, caused by the barbarian invasions, made it impossible for the ecclesiastical authorities to take effective action against the Priscillianists. Moreover the Suevian rulers of Galicia, where the Priscillianist movement was strongest, joined the Arian heresy in 464, and for almost a century were out of sympathy, if not openly antagonistic to the Catholic hierarchy. (96)

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST PRISCILLIANISM DURING THE SIXTH CENTURY

Very little is known about Priscillianism in Spain during the first half of the sixth century. In fact our only sources of information for this period are two letters of Bishop Montanus of Toledo and a (72) letter of Pope Vigilius (538-555) to Bishop Profuturus of Braga. Bishop Montanus lived about the middle of the sixth century. In one of his extant letters to a monk named Thuribius he praised him for his successful efforts in uprooting the detestable and shameful practices of the Priscillianists. (97) In another letter, however, to the clergy of Palencia he censured some of them for holding the name of Priscillian in veneration even though they did not put his doctrines into practice. (98) The letter of Pope Vigilius was written in 539 in answer to some problems which Bishop Profuturus had requested him to solve. (99) One chapter of his letter concerns Priscillianism. The pope condemned the erroneous belief of the Priscillianists that certain foods were evil in themselves and should not be eaten, and ordered that no Priscillianist was to be admitted to the Church until he first renounced this false doctrine and any other errors in which he formerly believed. (100)

The second half of the sixth century marked a definite turn in the struggle of the Spanish Church against Priscillianism. In the year 550 Chararich, the Suevian ruler of Galicia, renounced Arianism and embraced the Catholic faith. The king's example seems to have been followed by many of the people of Galicia, and eleven years later the Catholic hierarchy of this section was in a position to hold a council and take action against Priscillianism.

The presiding prelate at this first council of Braga (101) was Bishop Lucretius of Braga, but the most noted member was St. Martin, at this time bishop of Dumium. The bishops proceeded to draw up a list of the eighteen anathemas against the dogmatic errors and Manichean teachings of the Priscillianists that had already been condemned at the councils in 400 and 447. (102) There do not seem to (73) have been any Priscillianist bishops at this time in Galicia, but one of the disciplinary measures of the council indicates that some of the clergy were tainted with Priscillianism. The council ordered that a cleric, who did not eat meat, should at least be obliged to taste vegetables cooked with meat in order to free himself from the charge of Priscillianism; if he refused to do so, he was to be regarded as a Priscillianist and cut off from membership in the Church. (103) Most of the other canons of this council were concerned with bringing about uniformity in the ceremonies of the liturgy. As an organized cult Priscillianism disappeared after this first council of Braga. (104)

Even if Priscillian himself were not unorthodox, still it is clear from the testimony brought forward in the preceding pages, that the heresy named after him taught pagan principles, such as the origin of the world from a being intrinsically evil, and the condemnation of the flesh and marriage. Priscillianism also inculcated the practice of astrology, which had disastrous effects in the moral order, for if the stars exercised a decisive influence upon man's life and conduct, the individual was no longer responsible for the sins which he had committed.
Priscillianism survived longest in Galicia, and prevented the ecclesiastical authorities there from giving the people a thorough training in the teachings of Christianity. The result was that pagan survivals were found in Galicia even during the closing years of the sixth century. Once Priscillianism had disappeared the Catholic hierarchy was able to turn its attention against the survivals of paganism. Fortunately from an extant sermon of St. Martin of Braga, we are able to know the kinds of pagan practices that continued in Galicia, and the means which St. Martin recommended to counteract them.

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Notes for Chapter Three


3. *Chronica*, II, 46. St. Jerome in his brief biography of Priscillian, *De viris inlustribus*, chap, 121, says that Priscillian was reported to be a follower of the Gnostic teacher, Marcus, against whom St. Irenaeus wrote at the end of the second century. Perhaps as Bardy, *op. cit.*, col. 391, suggests, Jerome misinterpreted the reports which linked the teaching of Priscilian with that of Marcus, and regarded the second century heresiarch as a contemporary of Priscillian.


5. "Nemo illic nostrum inter illa reprehensus tua potissimum epistula contra inprobos praeualente, in qua iuxta euangelica iussa praeceperas, ne quid in absentes et inauditos decerneretur." - *Liber ad Damasum episcopum, Opera Priscilliani*, *CSEL*, XVIII, 35. The authorship of these eleven tracts will be discussed later on in the chapter.


8. Canon 3.

9. Canon 5.


12. Canon 8.


15."Ithacius...fuit audax, loquax, impudens, sumptuosus, ventri et gulae plurimum impertiens." - Chronica, II, 50.

16.An account of this incident is given in the Liber ad Damasum episcopum, op. cit., pp. 40, 41.

17.Chronica, II, 47.

18.The Life and Times of St. Ambrose, I, 229.


22."Instantius prior iussus causam dicere, postquam se parum expurgabat, indignus esse episcopatu pronuntiatus est." - Chronica, II, 49.

23.Loc. cit.


26.Sulpicius, Chronica, II, 51, mentions that torture was used. It is hardly probable, as E. Suys, "La sentence portée contre Priscillien," Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique, XXI (1925), 531, n. 4, thinks, that Priscillian was tortured only at the second trial before Maximus. The trial before the emperor merely ratified the sentence passed by the Pretorian Prefect. For a careful discussion of the trial of Priscillian, cf. Dudden, op. cit., p. 231 ff.

27.Such is the opinion of Suys, op. cit., pp. 530-536.

28.Cf. Georges, Ausführliches lateinisch-deutsches Handwörterbuch, and Benoist-Gelzer, Nouveau dictionnaire latin français, 10 ed., s. v. obscoenus. The words turpis and obscoenus had no proper juridical value and their presence in the law may be explained by the oratorical style customary in the legislation of the fourth century. Cf. T. Mommsen. Römisches Strafrecht, p.600.


30.Chronica, II, 51. The pagan orator, Pacatus, in an address to the Emperor Theodosius the Great in 388, probably refers to the execution of Priscillian and his followers. - Migne, P. L., XII, 504.


32.C. T., XVI, 5, 3.


34.A. d'Alès, Priscillien et l'Espagne chrétienne, p. 76.

35.Martinus non desinebat...Maximum orare ut sanguine infeliciun abstineret." - Chronica, II, 50.

36."Postea [dicit Ambrosius] cum videret Maximus me abstinere ab episcopis qui communicabant ei vel qui aliquos, devios licet a fide, ad necem petebant, commotus eis iussit ut sine mora regredi." - Migne, P. L., XVI, 1039. O. Seeck, Der Untergang der antiken Welt, V. 193, 194, believes that St. Martin and St. Ambrose resented the death of Priscillian merely because he was condemned by a secular court, which action they regarded as a check upon their lust for power. This same writer also claims that the bishops did not want to see the laws in regard to magicians applied to Christians. He
offers no proof for either of these statements.


38."Haereticos jure damnatos, more judiciorum publicorum quam insectationibus sacerdotum." - Sulpicius, Dialogus, II, 12.


40. The Oriental Religions in the Roman Empire, p. 123.

41."Priscillianus, Abilae episcopus, qui factione Hydatii et Ithacii Treveris a Maximo tyranno caesus est, edidit multa opuscula." - De viris illustribus, chap. 121, ed. E. Richardson, Texte und Untersuchungen zur altchristlichen Literatur, XIV (1896), p. 53.

42. Opera Priscilliani, CSEL, XVIII, 110-147. These canons have been revised by an anonymous writer. Cf. Bardenhewer, Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur, III, 410-412.

43. The most careful analysis of the doctrines in the tracts is by d'Alès, op. cit., pp 75-118.


46."Anathema sit qui Manetem et opera eius doctrinas adque instituta non damnat; cuius peculiariter turpitudines persequentes gladlo, si fieri posset, ad inferos mitteremus." - Opera Priscilliani, p. 22.


50."Denique in conuentu episcopali qui Caesaraugustae fuit nemo e nostris reus factus tenetur, nemo accusatus..." - Opera Priscilliani, CSEL, XVIII, 35.

51. Sulpicius, Chronica, II, 49 See above, p. 54.


53."Alii sunt in Gallis et Hispanis et Aquitania ueluti Abstinentes, qui et Gnosticorum et Manicheorum particulam perniciosissimam aeque secuntur eademque non dubitant praedicare, separantes persuasionibus coniugia hominum et escarum abstinentiam promittentes, quae non ex legis praecepto, sed promotionis caelestis et dignitatis causa uluntati hominum talis a Christo concessa est gratia... Hoc autem ideo faciunt ut, escas paulatim spernentes dicant eas non esse bonas, et ita non a deo hominibus escae causa fuisse concessas, sed a diabolo factas ut adserant, ita sentiunt." - Diversarum heresear liber, CSEL, XXXVIII, n. 56.

54. The critical edition of the anathemas of the first council of Toledo is by J. de Aldama, El simbolo
Toledano I, pp. 30-36.

55."Si quis dixerit atque crediderit, ab altero Deo mundum fuisse factum, quam ab illo de quo scriptum est: In principio, etc., Anathema sit." -- Anathema, n. 9. "Si quis dixerit atque crediderit, animam humanam Dei portionem vel Dei substantiam, Anathema sit." -- Anathema, n. 11.


57.Letter to St. Fructuosus. Migne, P. L., LXXX, 693, Braulio is the only authority for this statement.

58."Priscillianus primum in eo Manichaeis miserior, quod ex uteri quoque testamento haeresim confirmauit, docens animam quae a deo nata sit de quodam promptuario procedere, profiteri ante deum se pugnaturum et instrui adoratu angelorum: dehinc descendentem per quosdam circulos a principatibus malignis capi et secundum voluntatem uictoris principis in corpora diversa contrudi eisque adscribi chirographum. Unde et mathesim praeualere firmabat, adserens quia hoc chirographum soluerit Christus et adfixerit cruci per passionem suam..." -- Commonitorium ad Aurelium Augustinum de errore Priscillianistarum, CSEL, XVIII, 153.

59."Haec prima sapientia est in animarum typis divinarum uirtutum intellegere naturas et corporis dispositionem, in qua obligatum caelum uidetur et terra omnesque principatus saeculi uidentur adstricti; sanctorum uero dispositiones superare. Nam primum circulum et mittendarum in carne animarum diuimum chirographum, angelorum et dei et omni animarum consensibus fabricatum, patriarchae tenent; qui contra forsmalis militae opus possident..." -- Loc. cit.

60.This paragraph summarizes the interpretation of Davids, op. cit., pp. 227-230; for a brief explanation of the Commonitorium of Orosius, cf. d'Alés, op. Cit., pp. 17-20. Babut, Priscillien et le Priscillianisme, p. 281 ff., challenged the authenticity of this passage attributed by Orosius to Priscillian. D'Alés, op. cit., pp. 123-127, answers his objection and suggests that Orosius is giving the notes taken by an auditor from an oral instruction of Priscillian.


64."Tum pater omnipotens foecundis imbrisbus aether Conjegis in gremium laetae descendit et omnes, Magnus alit, magno commixtus corpore fetus." -- Georgics, II, 325, 326.


68. "Denique si universae haereses quae ante Priscilliani tempus exortae sunt diligentius retractentur, nullus pene inventetur error de quo non traxerit impietas ipsa contagium, quae non contenta eorum recipere falsitates qui ab Evangelio Christi sub Christi nomine deviarunt, tenebris se etiam paganitatis immersit, ut per magicarum artium profana secreta et mathematicorum vana mendacia, religionis fidem morumque rationem in potestate daemonum, et in effectu siderum collocarent." - Ibid., col. 679.

69. Ibid., col. 679-689

70. "Faciunt hoc Priscillianistae, faciunt hoc Manichaei, quorum cum istis tam foederata sunt corda, ut in solis nominibus discreti, sacrilegiis autern suis inveniantur uniti." - Ibid., col. 689.


72. Sulpicius, Dialogus, II, 11.


74. There is a difficulty in regard to the Symbol and number of anathemas drawn up at this first council of Toledo, which arises from the fact that the extant manuscripts give two different versions of the Symbol and anathemas. The larger collection of manuscripts contains the Symbol, the conciliar acts of the first council of Toledo, and eighteen anathemas. The smaller group of manuscripts contains only the Symbol and twelve anathemas, which agree almost word for word with the first twelve anathemas of the larger group. Three reasons indicate that the smaller group of manuscripts is prior in time. First, the word "Filioque" is found only in the larger group of manuscripts. The tradition of the smaller group of manuscripts goes back to the end of the fifth century. At this time no theological disputes such as those with the Greek Church in the ninth and tenth centuries could account for the omission of this word after it had once entered into the text. Hence the Symbol without the "Filioque" is undoubtedly prior in time. Secondly, in the Symbol of the larger group of manuscripts there is also a clearer and more precise definition of the dogmas of the Church than that found in the shorter group of manuscripts, which is a further indication that the Symbol of the smaller group is prior in time. Finally, the anathemas 13-18 of the larger group of manuscripts are directed against errors such as the belief in astrology, the condemnation of marriage, etc. It would be just as difficult to explain why these six anathemas should have been omitted from the smaller group of manuscripts as the omission of the word "Filioque." As it is evident from the Acts of the first council of Toledo that the bishops drew up a profession of faith against the Priscillianists, it is reasonably certain that the Symbol and twelve anathemas were the work of the council in 400, while the Symbol and eighteen anathemas were drawn up at a later Spanish council; see below, p. 69. The reasons just given summarize the careful study of the manuscript tradition of the first council of Toledo by J. de Aldama, El simbolo toledano, I, pp. 25-51. B. Altaner in an excellent review of this book, Theologische Revue, XXXIV (1935), 337-341, accepts Aldama's conclusions.

75. A brief contemporaneous account of this examination of the Priscillianist bishops at the Council of Toledo is given in Mansi, III, 999, 1000, under the heading exemplar definitivae sententiae.

76. Edited in Migne, XX, 483-494.

77. C. T., XVI, 5, 40.

78. Ibid., XVI, 5, 43.

79. A law, issued in 410, at Constantinople (C. T., XVI, 5, 48), forbids the "Priscillianistae" to enter the
army. As there is no mention in the extant sources that the followers of Priscillian existed outside of Spain, it is very probable that the heretics meant were the followers of Priscilla, one of the leaders of the Montanists. Cf. D'Alès, op. cit., pp. 160, 161.

80. "Dilacerati grauius a doctoribus prauis quam a cruentissimis hostibus sumus." -- Commonitorium ad Aurehium Augustinum de errore Priscillianistarum, CSEL, XVIII, 151.

81. The name Libra is thus explained by St. Augustine, Contra mendacium, CSEL, XLI, 477: "... tum deinde Dictinii librum, cujus nomen est Libra, eo quod pertractatis duodecim quaeestionibus velut unciis explicatur. ..."


83. "Ex quo colligitur perniciosius aut, ut mitius loquar, periculosius mentiri Catholicos, ut haereticos capiant, quam mentiuntur haeretici ut Catholicos lateant ..." -- Ibid., p. 476.

84. Ibid., p. 483, 484.

85. Migne, P. L., LIV, 692; see above, p. 64.


87. The Hispana is a collection of Oriental, African, Gallic, and Spanish councils, and also of about one hundred letters of the popes beginning with Pope Damasus (366-384) and ending with Pope Gregory the Great (590-604). The Hispana was drawn up on various occasions. For a brief discussion of this collection, cf. P. Fournier and G. Le Bras, Histoire des collections canoniques en Occident, pp. 68, 69; 100-106; A. Cicognani, Canon Law, pp. 219-221.


89. Aldama, El Símbolo Toledano, I, pp. 51-63.

90. Ibid., pp. 58, 59.

91. Cf. Bardenhewer, Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur, IV, 632; Aldama, op. cit., p. 60 ff

92. "Si quis astrologiae vel mathesiae (sic!) aestimat esse credendurn, Anathema sit." -- Anathema, n. 15.

93. "Si quis dixerit vel crediderit, coniugia hominum, quae secundum legem divinam licta habentur, execrabilia esse, Anathema sit." -- Anathema, n. 16.

94. "Si quis dixerit vel crediderit, carnes avium seu pecudum, quae ad escam datae sunt, non tantum pro castigatione corporum abstinendas, sed execrandas esse, Anathema sit." -- Anathema, n. 17.

95. "Si quis in his erroribus, Priscilliani sectam sequitur vel profitetur, ut aliud in salutare baptismi contra sedem sancti Petri faciat, Anathema sit." -- Anathema, n. 18.
96. The religious history of the Sueves will be treated more in detail in the following chapter.

97. Migne, P. L., LXV, 54-57. This Thuribius, a monk who lived in the sixth century, is not to be confused with Thuribius who was bishop of Astorga in 447, and to whom Pope Leo I sent the letter that has been frequently mentioned.

98. Ibid., cols. 57-60.


100. Ibid., chapter 1, cols. 830, 831.

101. The council supposed to have been held at Braga in 411 is now generally regarded as spurious. -- Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles*, II, 168.

102. Mansi, IX, 29-33.

103. "Item placuit, ut quicumque in clero cibo carnium non utuntur, pro amputanda suspicione Priscillianae haeresis, vel olera cocta cum carnibus tantum praegustare cogantur; quod, si contempsserint, secundum quod de his talibus sancti patres antiquitus statuerunt, necesse est eos pro suspicione haeresis hujus officio excommunicatos omnibus modis removeri." -- Canon 14. The Council of Ancyra (314), canon 13, Mansi, II, 525, had recommended this method of finding out whether any of the clerics were Manicheans or not.

104. There is no proof for the assertion of K. Künstle, *Antipriscilliana*, pp. 68-73, that the creeds drawn up at the various councils of Toledo were directed chiefly against the errors of Priscillianism. An examination of the reasons given at each council of Toledo for drawing up a Symbol proves that it was done principally that the decrees enacted at the council might be built upon the solid foundation of the Catholic religion. As Aldama, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 155, well says: "... lo que último término les animaba a hacerlo [el símbolo], era el querer que todo el edificio de sus decretos y ordenaciones se edificase sólidamente sobre el fundamento de la fe expuesta y confesada."