

Prologue

Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada was archbishop of Toledo between 1209 and 1247. This was an eventful period in the history of the Iberian peninsula, and Rodrigo stood at the centre of many of its events. In the land of his birth, he is well-known for a long and varied career during which time he acted as scholar, warrior, builder, and leader, all under the rubric of his role as archbishop. He was an instrumental force in turning back the tide of Muslim attacks on Christian Spain and restarting the process of Christian conquests in the peninsula.¹ The wave of victories he helped initiate was to be halted but never reversed. He was a prolific writer and his best-known work was a history in nine books of the Spanish kingdoms up to his own day, a monumental work on the history of Spain that begins with the world unified and cleansed under Noah before it is divided into regions by Noah's sons and fractured into linguistic groups by the fall of the Tower of Babel. This text established the standard narrative for the history of the peninsula to his time, a narrative that remained largely accepted until the last century. He also began work on the Gothic cathedral of Toledo that still stands in that city, replacing the mosque that had been used by archbishops of Toledo as a cathedral since the conquest of the city from the Muslims in 1085. In an age famous for its powerful "princes of the Church," Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's name does not have the familiarity to English-speaking readers like those of the archbishops of Canterbury Thomas à Becket and Stephen Langton or even Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln, but for just the activities I have described here, he deserves to be better known outside his homeland.

Rodrigo was born during the 1170s to noble parents from both sides of the border between the kingdoms of Navarre and Castile. As a young man, he studied in Paris, the most advanced educational centre of his time, and from there he brought back the latest books, methods of study,

1. I use this term throughout to refer to the entire territory of the Iberian peninsula, and I understand it simply as a translation of the Latin *Hispania*. For example, Jiménez de Rada refers to the peninsula either as *Hispania* or in the plural, *Hispanie*, literally, "The Spains," as in his own preferred title *primas Hispaniarum*, primate of the Spains.

and theological trends. He returned to Spain, to the court of the king of Castile, Alfonso VIII, and by 1208 he was bishop of Osma before he attained his final post as archbishop of Toledo in 1209. The Toledo he ruled as both spiritual and temporal head was a polyglot, multiethnic city in which Christians, Jews, and some Muslims lived side-by-side. Even its Christians were a diverse group consisting of Castilians, “Frankish” settlers from beyond the Pyrenees, and the still largely Arabic-speaking descendants of those who had lived under Muslim rule. The members of this last group, called Mozarabs, still preserved their ancient liturgical rituals dating from the time of the Visigothic rulers of Spain.

The Visigoths, with whom Rodrigo identified strongly, had been the Germanic conquerors of Roman Spain in the fifth century, and they made Toledo their capital. Always outnumbered by the Hispano-Roman people they conquered, they converted from Arianism to the Catholic Christianity of the majority in 589 and initiated a century-long persecution of the Jews who lived in the peninsula. Muslims invaded Spain from North Africa in 711, ending Visigothic rule. Their newly conquered land, which they called al-Andalus, was initially ruled by a governor who reported to the caliphs of Damascus. In 756, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I, a member of the Umayyad dynasty displaced by the ‘Abbāsīd takeover of the caliphate in the East, fled to Córdoba and established an emirate there. The emirate was nominally loyal to the caliph, until ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III assumed the title of caliph for himself in 929. By the end of the century, the Córdoba caliph was merely a puppet ruler under a military dictator, and in 1031 the title ceased to exist.

Meanwhile, small nuclei of Christian rule began to coalesce in the north. Kingdoms emerged in Leon, Castile, Galicia, and Navarre. These were consolidated, but only for a time, under the rule of Sancho III el Mayor (1000–1035). Of these kingdoms, that of Leon especially harkened back to the Toledan and Visigothic past. In the east were the county and later kingdom of Aragon, as well as a series of smaller counties among which Barcelona became preeminent, and to the west, the kingdom of Portugal emerged in the twelfth century. Competition for land and power was fierce between these rulers, and moments of cooperation against their Muslim enemy were far fewer than times of conflict between themselves. As the Christian rulers grew stronger and expanded their possessions southward from river valley to river valley, however, they attracted more attention from the Muslim rulers in the south. During the time of the caliphate, Christian leaders paid tribute to

it to protect themselves from attack. After the caliphate ceased, al-Andalus was divided into small principalities, called *taifa* states. This shifted the balance of power in the peninsula. Now, the *taifa* rulers paid protection money, called *parías*, to the Christian leaders. Christian and Muslim allies fought together against their enemies. The flood of money brought into the north by the *parías* expanded the possibilities open to the Christians, especially the kingdom of Leon-Castile, which, under Alfonso VI, was able to retake Toledo from the Muslims in 1085. This king was also instrumental in forming religious and dynastic alliances beyond the Pyrenees.

In order to redress the imbalance of power emerging within the peninsula, the *taifa* ruler of Sevilla invited the Almoravids of North Africa across the straits to help fight the Christians. The Almoravids were a puritanical religious sect of Islam whose nucleus was the Berber tribes of the Sahara. The remedy proved worse than the disease, however, and the Almoravids swept aside the *taifa* rulers. The rule of the Almoravids was short-lived, and in the 1140s, al-Andalus was fragmented again into control by local leaders. Another Berber religious and tribal group, the Almohads, defeated the Almoravids in Morocco and entered the peninsula in May 1146. The Almohad victory initiated a period of persecution against the Jews and Christians living under Muslim rule, and many sought safer homes elsewhere, including in Christian Toledo. The Almohads won a major victory in 1195 at Alarcos against the king of Castile, Alfonso VIII.

It was in this context of Almohad strength and Castilian vulnerability that Rodrigo became archbishop in 1209. Leon and Castile were fractured into two kingdoms hostile to each other. Toledo was on the very frontier where the Castilian kingdom abutted al-Andalus, and the city was subject to merciless Almohad raids. Into this milieu, Rodrigo brought ideas of crusade, imported by him from France, and helped to organize a huge Christian counteroffensive uniting the kings of Castile, Navarre, and Aragon. They defeated the might of the Almohads in 1212 at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. The Muslims never recovered from this victory, and Rodrigo capitalized on his success throughout the rest of his life, expanding his control of lands deep into formerly Muslim territory.

Rodrigo saw himself, and not the king of Castile, as the true heir to the unified Visigothic realm because of his claim to be primate over all Spain, and he harassed a series of popes about matching his title as

primate with effective jurisdiction. To support his claims of sovereignty, he used as his model the historic role of the archbishops of Toledo during the Visigothic period, liberally reinterpreted by himself. He also based his claims on papal assertions of the ultimate sovereignty of the Church over temporal rulers. At the same time, in practice, the pope was far away in Rome, while the kings were close at hand. His relations with the latter were close and productive for both sides, while the popes of his day must have often found him to be a thorn in their sides, with his demands for money, exemptions, and primatial power.

Rodrigo was also a scholar. The master narrative of Spanish history that he wrote was called the *Historia de rebus Hispanie siue Historia Gothica* (*History of the Affairs of Spain or Gothic History*—hereinafter *De rebus Hispanie*), and as its title suggests, it is focused around the Visigothic nation. He also wrote a paraphrase of sacred history from the Creation to the mission of the apostles to the gentiles and a series of histories of the peoples other than the Visigoths who inhabited the Iberian peninsula, including the first Latin account to concern itself exclusively with the Islamic world. He sponsored the work of others. He patronized a translation of the Qurʾān and created around himself a circle of like-minded individuals who shared a common body of theological opinions. He also wrote a work of anti-Jewish polemic, the *Dialogus libri uite* (*Dialogue on the Book of Life*).

The goal of the present book is to examine his relations with Muslims and Jews, a crucial part of his career, both as he idealized these relations on paper and as he worked them out in real life. Rodrigo used the writing of religious polemic directed against Jews together with conquest and settlement of Muslim-held lands and scholarly patronage and literary creation as different facets of a single program of activity. This program was aimed at containing threats, both internal and external, Christian and non-Christian, using practical means both derived from and reinforcing a vision of the world as essentially unified under God, although currently fractured by sin and history. The intended and actual consequences of this program were to allow Christians, Muslims, and Jews to live together under Christian hegemony. Rodrigo saw himself as living in a world that was ideally united under God but that had been fractured by sin. One consequence of this fracture was the division of the world, ideally united under one leader, into different polities. Another consequence was the existence in the world of groups of non-Christians, Jews, and Muslims. These divisions were undesirable but, in

a fallen world, were inevitable. Rodrigo was bound by practical necessity to find a means of accommodating these groups that was both effective and theologically satisfactory. This book studies this process of accommodation in relationship to Rodrigo's other goals as archbishop.

Rodrigo wished for his own hegemony to extend throughout Spain, and over the course of his life he went a long way to achieving his goals, extending the reach of Toledo far beyond what could have been imagined at the beginning of his archiepiscopacy and articulating his vision of Spain and its peoples in his historical, theological, and literary works. But his attempts to exert himself as primate devolved into endless struggles with competing bishops, archbishops, monasteries, and military orders over what he perceived as his rights, while the expansion of the frontier to the south left Toledo distant from the action. He died in his seventies, not quietly in his bed but by drowning in the Rhône River, returning from yet another attempt to impose his vision of his role on the pope, and Toledo never really reached the status of *urbs regia*, royal city, lost with the defeat of the Visigothic kingdom, for which he had worked for so long. Still, in an age before religious tolerance as we understand it, his vision of a world in which Christians could coexist with Muslims and Jews would endure, at least in Spain, for several centuries longer.