

THE EASTWARD POSITION.

A ROMAN INNOVATION IN SPAIN.

BY THE REV. THOMAS J. PULVERTAFT, M.A.

THIS article was contributed by the late Rev. Thomas J. Pulvertaft, M.A., to *THE CHURCHMAN* of February, 1904. That number is long ago out of print. Accordingly the article is here reprinted at the urgent request of personal friends of the late Mr. Pulvertaft who are anxious that so valuable and learned a treatise, on a matter of vital concern, shall not be lost sight of, but preserved and circulated for the wider use of students. Mr. Pulvertaft lent his own copy of the magazine to a friend in 1925, and that friend before returning it took the precaution of having a MS. copy made for his own reference. The only variation from the original print is that the various references are collected together at the end instead of being placed at the foot of each page. The extract from a private letter at the end and the note are supplied by the same friend.

IN the January *CHURCHMAN* [1904] Canon Meyrick wrote: "The eastward position at the celebration of the Holy Communion was unknown in Spain till the eleventh century." This statement, when repeated, usually excites surprise, and appeal is made to the very striking rubric in the Migne edition of the Mozarabic Missal—a rubric textually reprinted from the original (in more senses than one) rubric in the Ximenes Missal of 1500: "In ista Missa et in aliis non vertitur sacerdos ad populum, nisi quando dixerit. Adjuvate me fratres in orationibus vestris."¹ "It is impossible," say the critics, "that the eastward position should be unknown in Spain when the old service-book so strongly emphasizes the position as the only one adopted. In the Roman Mass the priest turns six times to the people, in the Spanish only once."

Pamelius (1571) is even stronger, for he says in the Mozarabic Mass there is "nulla conversio Sacerdotis ad populum. Quamdiu sacris operatur numquam se convertit ad populum."² Further confirmation of this view may be found in a manuscript volume which I carefully read, in the National Library, Madrid. Its author is Francisco de Pisa, Chaplain of the Mozarabians in Toledo. In 1593 he wrote and published, "Cum Permissu Superiorum," a compendium giving an account of the Mozarabic Mass.

The work does not exist in the library in book form, but the manuscript is exceptionally valuable, as it gives the earliest account, in Spanish, of the origin of the service-book, and the position of the writer ought to make his testimony at once important and interesting. He states: "The priest does not turn his face to the people in all the Mass. Not even when he says 'adjuvate me fratres in orationibus vestris' is he accustomed to turn, although in this

particular the Mass permits him ; before this his face is always turned to the altar, in order not to lose sight of it."

If this alone were the evidence forthcoming, it would at once be concluded that THE CHURCHMAN'S article was in error, and that, so far from its having been primitive Spanish custom to ignore the eastward position, no Church more consistently maintained it at the altar.

A careful scrutiny of the rubric and the two commentaries awakens suspicion, for it is seen that the Toledan priest asserts that a change had been deliberately made between 1500 and 1593, and in addition remarks : " Some wish to say that the custom of not turning to the people originated from the fact that anciently the altars were so arranged that the people came to be before the priest, where the reredoses (retablos) now are, as in the case to-day with the altar de prima in the choir of this holy church." This paper will show that the *obiter dictum* of the Chaplain is a statement of fact, and that the development from 1500 to 1593 is simply the natural result of a perversion of history stereotyped by the Ximenes Service-Book of 1500. It will be proved that the old manuscripts differed from the printed editions of Roman Catholic editors, and that as the primitive Liturgy came from the East—the cradle of the faith—it preserved the Eastern custom of the westward position, and that even in the Roman Church of to-day the influence of primitive Spanish custom is to be seen in Spanish founded Churches. The Mozarabic Missal, called by patriot writers a " column and cement of the faith," was the service-book of the National Spanish Church, which existed in complete independence of Rome until the close of the eleventh century. It is so called in consequence of its use by the Mozarabs,³ or Christians, who lived under the protection of the Moors. The Spanish Moors, unlike their modern co-religionists, practised religious toleration, and from the time the country was fairly settled " a Christian Spaniard not only enjoyed personal liberty, but he attended the public administration of his priests." ⁴

According to all liturgiologists, it is closely allied to the Ambrosian (Milan) and Gallican uses, and is undoubtedly of Oriental origin, coming from Ephesus through Lyons (according to some) or through Milan (according to others) to Spain.⁵

It is unnecessary to decide whether Lyons or Milan be the channel of the Transmission of the Liturgy, as the contending schools unite in an unquestioning belief in its Oriental origin.

It was introduced into the West in the fourth century,⁶ and naturally would preserve the customs of the land from whence it came. St. Isidore, the great seventh-century Bishop of Seville, considerably enlarged the Liturgy,⁷ and students of its evolution are inclined to lay great stress on his influence. It was known as his Liturgy, and even to-day it is indifferently called Gothic, Isidoran, Mozarabic.

Rome never tolerated with gladness independent uses. Under Pepin the Short (as seen in a Charlemagne decree of 789) Gaul surrendered her Liturgy, and very little of the use remains.⁸ Gregory

VII—the great Hildebrand—determined that the time had come for the Church of Spain “to emerge from infancy and to pass to perfect age.”⁹

In the tenth century the Spanish Service-Book and Breviary had been declared by a Pope and Council, after examination, to contain nothing to be condemned, censured, or altered.¹⁰

In the following century Gregory wrote to a Bishop of his own name, calling the supporters of the Spanish use “wolves and poisoners.”

He recommended their persecution, even to the shedding of blood, in order that the books might be abolished and the Roman books substituted.¹¹ He gained his end in 1085, when the Council of Burgos ordered the abolition of the Mozarabic Books, and the Measure was completed in 1094 by the substitution of Latin for Gothic characters. It at once follows that if manuscripts survive written in Gothic characters, their date must be placed before the close of the eleventh century, for after that period no copyist would copy in any other letter than Latin.

By special grace the old rite was permitted to be retained in six Toledo churches,¹² and the priests who said the National Mass were men accustomed to say the Roman Mass. After a time the custom became almost obsolete. At the close of the fifteenth century Cardinal Ximenes regretted the decay, and determined to restore the old rite and perpetuate its use by printing the Manuscripts and appointing a chapel in the cathedral where Masses might be said.

Ximenes entrusted the task of editing the manuscript to Ortiz, with the result that the printed volume is an effort to reconstruct the old Liturgy in conformity with the Roman Missal.¹³

From this printed book the eastward position rubric is taken, and we have to inquire, is it taken from the manuscript, and if not, is it the record of a Spanish tradition?

In the eighteenth century a learned and honest Jesuit scholar, Father Andres Marcos Burriel, devoted himself to the task of investigating, cataloguing, and copying the contents of the manuscript rooms of the Toledan Library. By the generosity of the venerable and erudite doyen of Spanish scholars, the Rev. Wentworth Webster, the writer possesses a valuable unpublished manuscript containing reports of Burriel dated 1752, 1754 and 1756, which give detailed accounts of the progress of his work. He narrates how he copied and in some instances made facsimiles of the Gothic manuscripts used by the Ximenes editor. These manuscripts date of necessity before 1094. He records that the manuscripts “differ much in substance and order” from the Ximenes volume, “which mixes some things modern and omits some things ancient.” Of this there can be no doubt, for the printed volume contains Masses for the Festivals of St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anthony of Padua, and Corpus Christi¹⁴, festivals that arose long after the abolition of Gothic writing and the Mozarabic Missal.

Fortunately, the Madrid Library contains the manuscript volumes

by Burriel. They are clearly written, and the facsimile pages are extremely well executed. It is a pleasure to observe the care with which he carried through his work, and my detailed examination of the volumes revealed the fact that they do not contain a single rubric. The names of the Masses and Prayers are simply given, and in no instance is there one word of direction to the celebrant. This is what might have been expected in the case of manuscripts. Even the first printed Missals have scarcely any rubrics, and not until 1485 were the words and ceremonies of the Mass set out together at length.¹⁵ The Ximenes Book of 1500 followed the new plan, and rubrics were added by men who knew only the Roman use,¹⁶ and had perhaps some ancient traditions, more or less corrupt, to guide them in some details.

This at once disposes of the value of the rubric, relied on to prove the eastward position as the traditional use of the Spanish Church.¹⁷

The Missal is of Eastern origin, and preserves several striking Oriental peculiarities (e.g. the division of the host).

Scudamore in *Notitia Eucharistica* (p. 275) remarks: "Everywhere in the primitive Church, as still among the Greeks and Orientals, the seats of the Bishops and Presbyters were against the east wall, and therefore behind the altar. Hence the celebrant officiated with his face toward the people." The following facts prove the retention of this custom in the primitive Spanish Church.

1. Canon XVIII of the fourth Council of Toledo, held in 633, under the presidency of Isidore, now a very old man, reads: "In future, after the Pater Noster the Bread and Chalice shall be united (mixed), then the people blessed, and then only the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord received, and this by the celebrant and the Levites before the altar, by the Clergy in the Choir."¹⁸ The plain interpretation of this canon is that at the benediction the celebrant faced the people, for it would certainly be strange if he blessed the people with his back towards them.

2. The architectural arrangements of Spanish Churches is in favour of the westward position being traditional. "The Coro, instead of beginning to the east of the transepts, is, like the Chorus Cantorum of the early basilicas, extended into the nave, and the central lantern tower is called the Cimborio, in memory, doubtless, of a time when it served as the Cimborium of the high altar now placed in the elongated choir, or, as it is called by the Spaniards, Capilla Mayor."¹⁹

In the old cathedral of Salamanca, dating from the eleventh century, the apse contains the altar in the middle, with seats all around for the clergy.

3. Cardinal Lorenzana, known in Spain as "the great and good Cardinal," took a deep interest in the rite, and in 1770 published in Los Angeles, Mexico, an edition of the Mass Omnium Offerentium with the title *Missa Gothica*. The Mass contains a number of prayers which I could not find in the Madrid manuscripts. At the close of these prayers the rubric reads: Quo facto dat benedictionem

in unitate Sancti Spiritus (vertat se ad populum dicendo Benedicat vos Pater et Filius).²⁰

In his Commentary the Cardinal, discussing the non-turning of the priest to the people, says : " It is permissible to remark that only in this benediction and in the offertory, when the priest goes somewhat away from the altar, the priest turns himself to the people in the Mozarabic Mass. The principal reason of this is the antiquity of the Mozarabic rite, for in the first ages of the Church the altar was placed towards the faithful and the priest looked at the people, wherefore it was not necessary for him to turn when he saluted, as it is necessary to-day, for the people stand behind." ²¹ Lorenzana built a special Mozarabic Chapel in Toledo Cathedral where I heard the Mass ; but he did not place the altar at some distance from the east wall. In this he failed to preserve the old custom, for even now in the sister rite of Milano the altar stands at a distance from the east wall, and is censed all round by a deacon.²²

4. In the edition of the Mozarabic Missal used in the Mozarabic Chapel, Salamanca, we have additional evidence. Its editor is Francisco J. Hernandez de Viesain, who was Chaplain in 1772.

In the course of his Spanish commentary he translates with approval Lorenzana's remarks, and thus shows his acceptance of their meaning.

5. A most striking and unexpected confirmation of this early custom has been brought to our notice by the Rev. W. Webster, who is as ready to give help as he is indefatigable in his efforts to elucidate truth. South America was discovered and colonized by Spain. Its churches were founded and ministered to by Spaniards full of the enthusiasm of the Golden Age of Spain, and to this day the ancient custom of consecrating facing the people is preserved in some of the churches. Not only is it preserved, but in the report (p. 876) of the Latin American Congress held in Rome in 1899 we find Papal permission for the continuance of the custom.

From this short investigation it can be concluded that the East is the source of the Spanish Service-Book ; that Spanish Churchmen before the subjection to Rome in 1085 preserved the primitive westward position at the consecration of the elements, and that in churches founded by Spaniards the custom still exists, although the founders of the churches were subject to Rome. Thus the appeal to antiquity confirms the statement of the historian of the Spanish Church and once more proves that what is Roman is not of necessity Catholic, but is merely a local development forced, it may be, on an unwilling people to further centralized domination at the expense of doctrinal truth and national freedom.

NOTES.

¹ Ed. Migne, p. 120.

² Pamelius, *Liturg. Eccl. Lat.*, vol. i, pp. 642, 643.

³ Mozarab is a participial form of the verb *arb.*, signifying one who has become Arabized (Burke, *Hist. of Spain*, vol. i, p. 115 n.).

⁴ Burke, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 118.

⁶ Duchesne, *Christian Worship* (S.P.C.K.), pp. 90-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁸ Meyrick, *The Church of Spain*, p. 342; Burriel MS.

⁹ Duchesne, p. 103.

¹⁰ Guéranger, *Institutions Liturgiques*, vol. i, p. 268.

¹¹ Meyrick, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

¹² *Grande Encyclopédie*, vol. xxiv (Vollet), and Guéranger, vol. i, pp. 268-78.

¹³ Meyrick, p. 349.

¹⁴ Meyrick, p. 349; cf. Duchesne, pp. 192-204, ed. Migne, pp. 29-40, and on a similar process in Ambrosian Liturgy, Duchesne, p. 89. Hammond, *Liturgies*, p. lxxxv.

¹⁵ V. ed. Migne.

¹⁶ *Cath. Dict.*, Addis and Arnold, art. "Rubric."

¹⁷ Ed. Migne, p. 12.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the character of the printed rubrics, see Migne, pp. 29-40.

¹⁹ Hefele, *Councils*, vol. iv, p. 451.

²⁰ *Dict. Eccl. Antiq.*, art. "Church," vol. i, p. 384.

²¹ Lorenzana, *Missa Gothica*, p. 68.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 132.

²³ Webb, *Continental Ecclesiology*, p. 204.

[Additional authority for the position of the officiating priest in primitive times is to be found in Bingham, *Eccl. Antiq.*, vol. iii, pp. 89, 90; Fleury, *Mœurs des Chrétiens*, p. 150; Guéranger, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 31; Webb's *Continental Ecclesiology*, pp. 204, 302, 303, 480, 485; cf. Mivart, *Essays and Criticisms*, vol. i, pp. 192, 195.]

THOS. J. PULVERTAFT.

When writing to a friend with a copy of the above article the Rev. Thos. J. Pulvertaft says: "In Barcelona the Bishop's throne is behind the Altar and in a Segovia Church I have seen the place for the consecrating Priest similarly marked."

[Note: For indication that the Westward position was probably the Gallican Use, see the *Guardian* of July 10, 1931: "A Holiday Visit to Lyons."]

Many will welcome the appearance of the eleventh edition of Lieut.-Col. W. H. Turton's *The Truth of Christianity*, which has now attained a circulation of 55,000 (Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., Ltd., E.C.4, 2s. net). The value of the work has been attested by all sections of the Christian Church, as is seen from the collection of testimonies from many sources prefixed to the volume. The present edition has been carefully revised, especially in the third chapter, which deals with the existence of God; the fifth chapter, treating of God's Interest in Man; the twenty-first chapter, Conformity of the Truth; and the twenty-fourth chapter, the Evidence for the Creeds in the New Testament. We are sure that in its latest form the book will continue the excellent work that it has always been accomplishing.