

TEACHING ABOUT THE CHURCH IN THE OLD SPANISH LITURGY (MOZARABIC) – ITS CLOSE RELATIONSHIP TO DAILY LIFE

Before embarking on our theme we must make a few quite brief remarks about the Old Spanish Liturgy in general. The Old Spanish Liturgy (OSL) is a Latin, non-Roman Liturgy of the West. It flourished during the transition from Christian Antiquity to the Christianity of the Early Middle Ages (6th/7th century), but in its text material it reaches back into the fourth century. It was used, as the name implies, in Spain, particularly under bishops Leander, Isidore of Seville, Ildefons and Julian of Toledo – to name only the most important. As a genuine Western Liturgy it is not essentially different from the Roman; the distinctions lie rather in an exceptionally large collection of texts and forms in the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacraments. The OSL has its own history which must be located in the troubled period of the history of the Spanish Church under Visigothic and later (from 711) under Arab domination. On this account the Liturgy is often called the ‘Mozarabic’ Liturgy. Yet this name is inappropriate for the Liturgy since it was essentially complete by the time of the Arabic invasion around 711.

Texts have been chosen from the following liturgical books:

Le Liber Mozarabicus Sacramentorum et les manuscrits mozarabes, ed. M. Férotin (Paris 1912: Monumenta Ecclesiae liturgica VI) = LMS.

Le Liber Ordinum en usage dans l'Église wisigothique et mozarabe d'Espagne du V au XI siècle, ed. M. Férotin (Paris 1904: Monumenta Ecclesiae liturgica V) = LO.

Liber Orationum Psalmographus. Colectas de salmos del antiguo rito hispánico. Ed. J. Pinell (Barcelona-Madrid 1972: Monumenta Hispaniae sacra, series lit. IX) = LPs.

Orational Visigótico, ed. J. Vives (Barcelona-Madrid 1946: Monumenta Hispaniae sacra, series lit. I) = OV.

LMS corresponds more or less to the Roman Sacramentary (Missal). It includes the priest's audible and variable prayers for the celebration of the Mass. LO corresponds to the Roman Rite. OV contains sermons for Sunday and Feast-days and was used only in the cathedral Office. LPs is also specially for the cathedral Office but, in contrast to OV, is only for week-days.

When we go through the liturgical prayers the richness in forms of expression and theological content attracts our attention. The

statements about the Church take up a significant part of the theological content. They contain doctrines regarding the Church which all give evidence of a large measure of practical concern. This close relating of the teaching about the Church to everyday life reveals itself in three ways.

1. In the topical references of the Liturgical Prayers

Let us choose some typical examples. The Spanish people which lived under foreign domination and was indeed for the most part poor, could, on good grounds, describe itself as 'poor and in want from its youth up'.¹ Likewise the urgent prayer to God '... amoue barbarica bella . . .'² (take away barbaric wars) has its *Sitz im Leben* since the Visigoths as well as the Arabs were, in the eyes of the Spaniards, barbarians who plundered the land with the help of war and struggle. These wars did not come to an end without persecution of the Church so that she complains in prayer that many folk are persecuting the little flock of Christ and tearing it to pieces.³ The persecution must clearly have gone the length of inflicting horrible death if the Church beseeches the Lord as shepherd to protect his flock so that it may not be torn to pieces by the biting of wolves.⁴ It could, however, give too gloomy a picture of the real situation out of which these prayers were composed and offered if one were to overlook those texts which preach an ever-recurring present salvation. 'Now' (in the mass celebration) salvation is accomplished, the past becomes present, as, on Christmas night when it is said that Christ is born *to-day* – namely in the Church.⁵ This is only one of the eight 'hodie' (to-day) occurrences in the Christmas Office. In the same relevant way each Sunday is celebrated as a day of resurrection.

2. In Deeply-felt and Highly Emotional Texts

The Church prays altogether in the popular idiom. The people sighs to God and stands utterly childlike in helplessness before God and prays to Christ to act as mediator with the Father since it does not know what it is to say in its defence.⁶ In the Church's own view 'Mater Ecclesia' stands in the foreground. What is in fact already warm human contact with the Mother Church is for the individual Christian still further enhanced when in one prayer it calls out '... ut Ecclesia utilitatum nostrarum mater atque virtutum, ita omnia desideria in suo amore contineat, ut omnibus bene desiderata dispenset . . .'⁷ ('that the Church, the mother of our benefits and virtues, may in her love so control all desires that to all she may dispense what is rightly desired . . .'). The mother-love and care of the Church for her children could hardly be more

humanly expressed. So elsewhere the deep joy of all finds expression in the idea that repentant schismatics, who were equivalent to dead members, after being freed from the plundering of wolves, have again found catholic pasture in Christ.⁸

The popular character of the texts of our prayers is unmistakable. Similarly we can understand how expressions like 'people', 'your family', and above all 'your people' (with distinguishing labels like 'fostered people', 'the Lord's people', 'the faithful people', 'a people dedicated to your name', or even the diminutive 'plebicula tua' – ('your little people')) had a place among the favourite expressions of OSL. The people, the Church, approaches to God in a truly intimate and family manner of speech: 'Tibi familiariter offert Ecclesia'⁹ ('the Church as a family offers you'), 'credentem tibi populum a peccatis expurges'¹⁰ ('purge *your* believing people from their sins'), 'atquisitum tibi populum et mundas et saturas'¹¹ ('cleanse and satisfy your chosen people') and similar formulae.

These deeply felt and highly emotional texts are only understandable in a liturgy that has grown up in a country which has from the beginning produced from the character of her countrymen a great religious enthusiasm – an enthusiasm which often climbs to excessive heights.

3. In Metaphor

The teaching about the Church also affects the life of the believer through its use of metaphor. The Liturgy makes use of plant life as a metaphor to represent the Church when it portrays the Church as a tree whose roots are Christ, whose branches are the martyrs and whose leaves are the confessors.¹² The Liturgy has a special preference for illustrations from human life. It does not shrink from describing the relationship of the Mother Church to the Christian by means of the intimate mother-child relationship when it speaks of: 'securi intra sinum sancte Ecclesie residentes . . .'¹³ ('remaining safely in the bosom of mother church'), or 'ut famulum tuum . . . castis uberibus matris Ecclesiae admoueat'¹⁴ ('that you may direct your servant to the chaste breasts of mother church'), or 'ut ubera suggestentes matris Ecclesiae numquam precidamur ad invicem',¹⁵ ('that, while sucking the breasts of mother church we may never be cut off from each other') or 'Ecclesia, quae in murmure fellifuga eius dogmatibus refugos aluit cum pietate materna'¹⁶ ('the Church which, with a gall-free murmur, by means of its teachings nourishes the fugitives with motherly piety'). Security in the Church is indeed the security of young birds in their nest.¹⁷

In describing the eucharist, the pleasure and festivity of an earthly feast are taken over.¹⁸ There is a recollection of glittering riches in the prayer: 'Aedifica, Domine, muros Jerusalem, . . . neque ut

auro vel gemmis compta resplendeat, sed sanctitate praeferat.¹⁹ ('Build up, Lord, the walls of Jerusalem, . . . not that she may be resplendent in gold and jewels, but that she may gleam with sanctity.') – Inheritance is bound up with riches. Thus the Church is portrayed as the inheritance of Christ²¹, heaven as the inheritance of the church²¹ and Christ as the eschatological inheritance of the Church²². But the Church is still only in the way to this inheritance. This 'being on the way' of the Church is graphically described in terms of the everyday experience of seamen and harbour workers. That is to say the Church is viewed as a ship whose navigation can be symbolically transferred to description of the progress of the Church. Thus the ship 'Church' journeys through the evil waters (of the world) to the haven of salvation.²³ The journey through the poverty of life is on foot, so it happens that one's powers grow weak and one's bones are in a bad way.²⁴ Strong military terminology is used in the prayers which have as their subject the struggle against heresy: e.g. ' . . . dolorosum arcum ac iacula perversorum dogmatum'²⁵ ('the grievous bow and arrows of perverse doctrines') or 'qui contra te linguas suas exacuerunt ut gladium, saluberrimo conquisiti devorentur ecclesiae morsu'²⁶ ('let those who have sharpened their tongues against thee like a sword be sought out and devoured by the wholesome bite of the Church'). Metaphors which are close to daily life can also attract attention through their offensive contrast as when the prayers state that those outside the Church are annihilated by the abyss of unbelief while those inside the Church are killed by the violence of temptations.²⁷ Thus it will also be demanded of sinners that they should, through repentance, re-establish their souls which have been torn down through the destruction (of sins)²⁸.

The illustrations are not always used as metaphors, but here and there also as similes: 'Aduva ecclesiam tuam, quam adversarius noster nititur suscipere devorandam, sicut leo ad predem'²⁹ ('Help thy church which our adversary seeks to take up and devour like a lion attacking its prey').

The description, with its richness of metaphor, can often make use of a strongly anthropomorphic and unambiguous terminology as, for example, when Christ desires for his bride, the Church, 'ne nuptialis habitaculi respuat consortes, quos sub ueterum umbraculo peccatorum inueniet dormientes . . .'³⁰ ('that he may not refuse to have as companions in the bridal dwelling those whom he will find sleeping under the canopy of ancient sins . . .').

In conclusion we can maintain the following points about the close association of the teaching about the Church with daily life. In OSL there exists no deep gulf between daily life and the service of worship since the contact with daily life is again and again

restored by the relating of the language to such topics. The liturgy was so much *in* life, in the midst of it and within it! The consequence is that the prayers, by reason of their emotional and deeply-felt intensity, are so much in tune with the characteristic southern popular temperament. Further, the prayer language is very graphic since it derives its illustrations and comparisons from the life of the people. In this way difficult theological statements can readily be made comprehensible to the people. It is to be supposed that OSL, because its prayers have a national style, could influence men in such a way that they were able to retain in their memory much of what they had heard and, through associating it with their daily life and their surroundings, to recall it even if the Liturgy itself had quite faded away. On the evidence of its textual witnesses OSL should also be credited with a large measure of homiletic power. This meant that the teaching about the Church could lead to a lively understanding of the Church on the part of the individual Christian.

NOTES

1. . . . ut, *qui pauperes et erumnosi ab adolescentia sumus*, deliciis aliquando recreati celestibus, eterna nos vestibus immortalitatis letemur (OV 689). (. . . that we, who are full of poverty and woe from our youth, may sometimes be refreshed with heavenly delights and always rejoice in the garments of immortality).
2. LO295.
3. Exurge, Domine, non a somno, non a loco, non e tempore, inmensae pervigil sempiternae; ut quia pusillum gregem tuum multi persequuntur, multi lacerant, tu propugnator sis atque defensor, spes a turbine, umbraculum ab aestu . . . (LPs 472). (Arise, Lord, not from sleep, not from place, not from time, the measureless, unsleeping, eternal one. Many are persecuting your feeble flock and tearing it to pieces; therefore be its defender and protector, its hope in the whirlwind, its shade from the heat of the sun . . .).
4. . . . petamus ab eo, ut pius pastor gregem suum tueatur, ne a lupis rapacibus lanietur . . . (LPs 560). (. . . let us pray that, as a good shepherd, he may guard the flock from being torn to pieces by ravening wolves . . .).
5. Antifona: Ego adnuntio. – Te, Domine, favente adnuntietur nobis sancto angelicoque ministerio gaudium magnum, quod populo sit christiano in toto iam mundo: Christus enim Dominus *hodie natus est* omnium salus, adque salvator aeternus, in civitate David, quae est ecclesia; in ea quoque sine fine regnabit, dum eam usque ad finem custodit ac regit: presta ergo: ut eam regnum suum ex toto efficiat, dum in toto mundo dilatata, et celestium aeternitati adsociat (OV 279). (Antiphon: I bring you news. – By your favour, Lord, let there be announced to us with the help of saints and angels the great joy which is for the Christian community in the whole world now. For Christ, the salvation of all, the eternal saviour *has been born to-day* in the city of David, that is the Church. In it he will reign for ever, guiding and guarding it to the end. See to it, therefore, that he may make it completely his kingdom while he extends it throughout the world and unites it with the eternity of the saints in heaven.)
6. . . . sit vox tua interpellans patrem pro populo christiano, quia nescimus quid loquamur in defensionis nostrae suffragio . . . (OV 663). (. . . let your

voice be importuning the Father for the Christian community, for we do not know what to say in making our defence.)

7. LMS 1131.
8. *Reconciliatio Donatiste*: . . . idcirco schismaticorum conuenticula, que se de Ecclesie tue choro inpiissime preciderunt, abhorres, et quasi membra mortua nisi ad te redeant despicias. Clementiam ergo tuam supplices in Ecclesiam tuam deprecemur, omnipotens Deus, ut hec ouicula, (tua) virtute abstracta a luporum rabie, fugiens, introytum tuum reseratum inueniat, ut bonus Pastor ueniendi ad te per te aditum pandas: ut coniuncta gregi tuo, non Donatiste uel cuiuslibet, sed tui sit nominis christiana. Catholica pascua in te inueniat; sub manu tua ingrediens et regrediens abundantiam habeat, et uitam eternam accipiat nemoque eam ulterius de inuicta manu tua rescutiat (LO 105, 5-17). (*The Reconciliation of a Donatist*: . . . therefore you abhor the little groups of schismatics who have most wickedly cut themselves off from the main body of your Church, and you look on them as dead limbs unless they return to you. Therefore we humbly pray for your mercy towards your church, Almighty God, so that this poor little sheep, snatched from the ravening wolves by your power, as it flees may find your gate unlocked. As a good shepherd keep open the way of approach to you and through you. Let the little sheep be united with your flock and let it be called Christian by virtue of your own name and not from the name of Donatist or any other. Let it find Catholic pasture in you. Let it have all it needs, going out and in under your protection. Let it receive eternal life and let no one ever again 'rescue' it from your mighty hand.)
9. LMS 1464.
10. OV 1178.
11. LMS 580.
12. *Oratio in die S. Eulalie*: Mira satis, Domine, arbor est radix tue ecclesiae, que proficit et crescit usque ad perfectum diem, cuius rami martires, cuius prepedicula effecti sunt confessores, inter quos beatissima martyr Eulalia, quasi vitis vera fructificans, dum odorem gratie fidelibus propinat in seculo eterno promeretur consolari de premio . . . (OV 161). (*Prayer for St. Eulalia's Day*: The root of your church, Lord, is a very wonderful tree. It flourishes and grows right up to the last day. The martyrs have become its branches, the confessors its leaves. Among them is the blessed martyr Eulalia, bearing fruit like a true vine. She offers the perfume of grace to the faithful and deserves to be comforted in eternity with (her) reward . . .).
13. LMS 256.
14. LO 106, 13.
15. LMS 276.
16. LMS 915.
17. *Oration zu Psalm 35*: In protectione alarum tuarum, Domine, filios hominum sperantes nequaquam detegas; sed tanquam pullos, quo possimus supernis volatibus praeparari, fovendo enutrias; nec deripi nos laceratione insidiantium sinas, nec a nido Ecclesiae tuae avolare permittas; sed dum nos tegmine tegis paterno, ad ubertatem domus tuae adiuti tuo veniamus auxilio (LPs 348). (*Prayer on Psalm 35*: O Lord, do not take away your protection from the sons of men who trust in the shadow of your wings, but cherish and rear us like young birds that we may be prepared for heavenly flights. And do not allow us to be snatched away by the cruel claws of those who lie in wait for us, nor let us fly away from the nest of your Church. But, while you keep us under your fatherly protection, may we with your help come to the richness of your house.)
18. . . . deprecemur ut ad huius delectabilis mense celestes epulas inuitati, dono

pacis eterne in hoc Paschali mereamur conuiuio recreari (LMS 715). (We pray that we who have been invited to the heavenly banquet of this joyful table may be considered worthy to be refreshed with the gift of eternal peace at this Easter feast).

19. LPs 370.

20. LPs 53.

21. *Oration zu Psalm 104, 8-11*: . . . verbumque tuum, in mille generationes mandatum, quod Abrahe dispositum, Isaac pollicitum iuramento, et Israel aeterno est in testamento firmatum, nobis emitte; . . . ut funiculo hereditatis tuae, quos emisti de saeculo, hereditas aeterno mansuros in regno (LPs 568). (*Prayer on Psalm 104, 8-11*: Send forth your word to us, the word entrusted to a thousand generations, which was lodged with Abraham, promised with a solemn oath to Isaac and confirmed to Israel by an everlasting covenant . . . that you may inherit as the lot of your inheritance those whom you have purchased from the world to remain in your eternal kingdom.)

22. *Oration zu Psalm. 73*: Memento, Domine, congregationis tuae, quam ab initio potenter creasti, quamque mirabiliter . . . tui sanguinis pretio redemisti; et quia hanc ipsam in possessionem tui de gentibus elegisti, libera ergo virgam hereditatis tuae a subplantatoris incursibus; ac sic eam rege iustificando praesenti in saeculo, ut ipsam hereditas in saeculo postfuturo; et quae regnum tuum advenire divina traditione exorat, ad idem regnum indulto piaculo hereditaria successione perveniat . . . (LPs 539). (*Prayer on Psalm 73*: Be mindful, Lord, of the congregation of your people which you created in the beginning by your power and wonderfully redeemed at the price of your own blood. And because you chose this particular group out of the nations to be your own, set free the rod of your inheritance from the attacks of the destroyer, and, in the present age, train and correct it in such a way that you may inherit it in the age to come. And may the congregation which now prays for the coming of your kingdom, according to the divine instruction, have its sins forgiven and come at last to that kingdom as heirs in the succession.)

23. . . . Tu Ecclesiam tuam inter procellosas commotionum secularium undas pius gubernator tuere, et quotidiane gubernationis amminiculo ad portum salutis eam facito pervenire (LMS 140: 65, 41-66, 3) – Cf. LMS 666; OV 609; LPs 430. (Keep safe your Church among the stormy waves of worldly disturbances like a good steersman and help it to reach the harbour of salvation by the daily assistance of your captaincy.)

24. Antifona: Infirmatus est in paupertate vigor meus. – Domine Jesu Christe, non infirmetur, quesumus, in peregrinationis huius paupertate vigor ecclesiae tuae; ac, si contigerit in nobis virtutum ossa pro tempore conturbari, exemplo passionis tuae erecti, non incidamus usquequaque in laqueos inimihi (OV 613) (Antiphon: My strength has grown weak in poverty. Lord Jesus Christ, let not, we pray, the strength of your Church be weakened in the poverty of this pilgrimage. And, if it should happen that the bones of our virtues are for a time dislocated, let us be raised up by the example of your passion and nowhere fall into the snares of the enemy.)

25. OV 582.

26. OV 665.

27. OV 797.

28. LMS 1344.

29. OV 590.

30. LO 212, 24-30.

ANTON THALER, Vikar, Buchs, Switzerland

(Translated from German and Latin by Ian and Kirsteen Moir)