

Institute of Catechesis and Pastoral Studies—a residential one, taught by permanent and visiting experts in collaboration with *Lumen Vitae*? Could there not be Summer schools of at least a month, for so many years, entitling those who follow the course to a diploma of catechetics? Here again, Spode House has already organised something similar for doctrinal studies. Could there not be, in centres other than London, Saturday or residential Week-end Courses for teachers, similar to those run so successfully for Belgian teachers? Could we not do what another religious order has done in France: have a Summer School of experts on a theme such as the teaching and study of scripture, or of kerygmatic theology, or moral theology, and then follow that up by correspondence courses throughout the year, with an examination at the end. The Religious Diploma taken by so many hard-working Religious is on a correspondence basis, but those who have studied for it know how great is the strain during a heavy teaching year. (Moreover, this diploma is not catechetical in outlook; it aims at giving the basic, sound theological training.) If the correspondence course envisaged in this catechetically orientated course of studies could have the back of the work broken by a Summer School, the strain in term-time would be considerably lessened. But if much remains to be done, much already has been done, and we may be thankful for it.

The Spirit In The World—VI: African School Essays

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We awoke in the aircraft high over the Southern Sudan, flew parallel to a tremendous red line of dawn, and touched down at Entebbe, on Lake Victoria, to a melodramatic roll of thunder. But the thunder did not quench or contradict the dawn: as even something so commonplace as a bunch of middle-school terminal examination papers goes to show. Perhaps school essays in King Alfred's school in the tenth

century showed a similar dawn. Here are some extracts: first from a young girl, who wrote:

'It is clearly seen that there are very many primitive people in this country. Poor people have no religion and they believe in spirits. Such are the people in my native land.

In 1954 I went to live with my grandmother who was surrounded by pagans. There was a village nearby in which there was a newly-married couple. . . The woman had no surviving child, (and) everyone in the village sat wondering why the children died. . . Fathers and mothers-in-law and other relatives met one day, and the conclusion they came to was that they had grudged sacrifices to their grandfathers who had died, so these dead grandfathers were after some gifts and therefore they prevented this woman's children from growing.

Well, a day was arranged and a witch doctor was invited to come and find out which grandfather's spirit was troubling the village. Do you know what he had to do? He had to "close the way", as they call it, from which the spirit was coming.

The woman was again pregnant, and all the members of the family gathered in the woman's house. Since I was so stupid and keen, I went to see what was to happen.

The people curiously waited for the setting sun to disappear. When the dark came, the witch doctor arrived with a very black-coloured hen. Remember that all the witch doctors who do such things never do them by day. Everyone sat silently and looked forward to the arrival of the man. It was completely dark outside.

First he preached a long time while everyone sat silent. He then called the woman and told her to squat in the doorway with her back facing outside. She was told to expose her stomach. The man then took some stuff, black in colour, and made a cross upon the stomach, saying many words as though he was reading them. He announced very loudly, "If this child is a boy, you will call it Kwangokho, and if it is a girl, name it Kubotsa". He then called upon the spirits to let the children be.

You know that sitting all the time is tiring, so from time to time I was dozing off and missing some ceremonies. It chanced that I slept, and when I woke I found that a grey powder like ash was being given to everyone to lick. I, as a Christian, couldn't lick such things. So I took it and poured it away and watched.

Now this man ordered a black sheep to be brought. You know black sheep and hens are always used for such things. They killed it and placed it horizontally across the passage.

The ceremony had taken nearly the whole night and now it was nearly dawn. Everyone in the house was led out to jump over this sheep. We all got out but I managed to escape jumping over it. The man took clay and made two images while we were shivering in the cold night outside.

I wondered now what would come next. Our man led the way and ordered the rest to follow him. Meanwhile he had cut a piece of meat to give to the spirits so as to satisfy them. I followed, of course, and quietly we moved on till we found an old path which no one uses. He led the way, following this path.

When we reached the "bush", he took two branches, placed them across this path and taking his two images, he placed them under the branches. Then he took meat and threw it over the branches, saying, "Here! Do not trouble us any more. Eat your meat and let us bring forth children to be called after your names. Here! We hold nothing bad against you. There! Farewell!" Pronouncing these words he ordered us to turn back, but none should look behind lest they follow us again . . . We went back to the house where speeches went on and ashes were passed for people to lick. They took a gourd and sounded it over the woman's head to chase away whatever spirit might still be there, then they waited for the next day. Very early the man rushed home, for it was a kind of secret meeting. The remaining people roasted the mutton and ate it.

For the rest of the day one could hardly tell whether people had met, for they were scattered and were doing their usual daily duties.

I have wondered about it ever since. But I am surprised to see that the woman's children never die. She has four now, and everyone says, "Look! Indeed the spirits were sad in the beginning".

'Every Catholic African', remarked a young African man, 'feels the pull of pagan superstition'. Whether this particular girl did or not, she seems, in her narrative, to be quite aseptically detached. Or perhaps it is a workaday sort of early Christian fortitude.

It is a violence to speak of spring in Central Africa, but for a European imagination, there is a very clear note of a pure early spring in these stories. For instance, a girl who is an African sister wrote as follows:

'I had a friend who was in the same form as myself. One day she came to me with a broad and unusual smile to pour out the happy news to me that she was leaving for a convent. I was a little bit disturbed because from human motive I wondered why on earth she should leave me alone and go to the convent. . . A week after she had left I

went to see her, and she told me the following story. "I was so happy", she said, "when the morning which I had longed for came when I had to say to my dear ones, 'Farewell, God be with you till we meet again, if not in this world, then at Jesus' feet.' I did not leave by bus for I wanted to notice every tree, bird and person I met on the way", she said, "and the strange thing I noticed about these things was that when I stood for a time to look at them once more, I saw some birds on the tree and one young woman in her garden, and the trees were more bright and green than ever, and all seemed to stare at me and seemed to say to me, 'We think where you are going you will always remember what is in your home country.' Then I reached the convent at ten o'clock . . . When the time of taking meals came I was brought to eat with the aspirants and I felt myself to be now a sister, and so I have found myself to be among the Angels of God who are ever before his Holy Presence". And so she ended her story.

After a short time—for these words were always ringing in my ear—I also came to join the same convent, and now we are both among the Angels of God to serve him in this world'.

Mission hospitals—gradually routing the witch doctor—are not always as prosaic as they sound. Here is another African sister writing: "Once when I was still a small child, my mother brought me to the hospital. After three days I saw a white person entering the room where I was, who at first frightened me greatly; but when she came closer and closer to my bed my fear was changing; I wondered who that wonderful person would be—for I had not yet seen a nun close-by, especially Europeans.

When she reached my bed, she bent over me and touched my forehead. "Poor child", she said, "may I take you for my own child?" She took me into her arms, sat on the bed and began talking to me. "Mother is not here," she said, "but we all who work here in this hospital are mothers to you". At this word "mothers" she kissed me. It is quite true if I admit that I felt the natural warmth of a mother in her arms, the tender, loving look in her face—and something more which was not in my mother. I saw and felt it, but I could not tell what the thing was . . . And the thing I had seen in that sister that morning never left my memory. What was it? I could not tell . . .

As often as I heard (my mother) say her prayers, I heard the following words: "Bless and keep all those who work for you, and look with contentment on my daughters and sons". These words always pleased me, I also wished to quench the thirst of my mother. But never did I

ever dream, or even now do I dream of being the one chosen to sit at the feet of the Lord.

My mother told me—on my clothing day—that God had worked through the kindness of the nursing sisters to call me to the religious life.

You may be asking: what was the thing you saw in (the nursing sister) when you were in the hospital? My answer is: If I gave myself to her and forgot that I was there, she or God could make me into a great saint'.

Even a fictional biography can be very revealing of the cultural background both of the author and of the source material. Another girl wrote this story: 'There once lived a group of people who did not want to accept the Christian faith. It was an aggravating problem to the missionary. Whenever a catechist gave these people a warning, they welcomed him with an outburst of laughter. Then an old man died, leaving a daughter who called a catechist . . . After the first catechism lesson in the village the girl told the villagers, "I cannot do without this mysterious person who can be a King and at the same time a piece of bread, in the Church and everywhere." She stopped, and her eyes were lit bright with happiness. "Oh! Please may I go with you to the priest and be baptised quickly, for I want to be a queen of this mysterious King". The people went to the catechist and said, "Leave this siren alone . . ."'

There is another odd story about two legionaries who vowed virginity, then married, then went melodramatically mad. 'The woman went to be consoled by fortune-tellers and wizards, and has since repented.' There is a story reporting a magical transformation of stolen school property—'a wonderful story, but it is true that such things happen in Uganda in the reserve'—and a powerful, quite imaginary dream in which a demon uses snakes to parody the blessed Trinity: 'to this very day I see a faint hollow pit with shimmering stars that reminds me of that night'.

There seems to exist, then, an imaginative life of some vigour, a Dark Ages kind of imagination of sombre power. There may too occur in such a society emergent into Christianity a rank growth of superstition, myth-making, hysteria, in neglected places. There seem to exist signs of a possible emergent Christian creative imagination, still imperfectly related to the rather esoteric literary pieties of the literature syllabus of the Cambridge Overseas Examination — oddly remote sometimes, precious and prim. The people who compose

the syllabus are, doubtless, out of touch with this odd Dark Ages spring, and the L.S.E. type of African administrators to succeed them may be out of sympathy. Catholic schools carry the cables from both sides. The Church, as usual has to be the lightning conductor. *A fulgure et tempestate, libera nos, Domine.*

Reviews

FÉNELON ET LA BIBLE : les origines du mysticisme fénelonien, by Bernard Dupriez; Bloud et Gay, 12 NF.

Few names in the history of religious thought in France in the second half of the seventeenth century have given rise to such conflicting opinions as that of Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai. Any work, therefore, that tends to a better understanding and clearer appreciation of the great Archbishop is to be welcomed. The present study is such a work, and a very interesting and important study it is. From a detailed investigation of Fénelon's use of the Bible, M. Dupriez has been led to the conclusion that the main source of the Archbishop's thought and teaching is to be found in scripture. Moreover, this study is noteworthy for the method of enquiry that is employed in it. To see, therefore, how the author has carried out his undertaking, it will perhaps be most helpful to glance at the main divisions of his work.

The book is divided into three principal parts. The first of these is devoted chiefly to an account of the early life, education and career of the Archbishop, particular attention being paid to the part the Bible played in them. Much that is stated here concerning Fénelon's formative years is necessarily conjectural. These years were not the golden age of Catholic scriptural exegesis: that epoch had closed. The leading minds in the world of biblical studies in Fénelon's day devoted their attention to historical research and to critical editions of scriptural documents of preceding ages. This trend, however, does not seem to have noticeably affected Fénelon's study of the Bible; and M. Dupriez states that Richard Simon, a leader in it (who was later strenuously opposed by Bossuet), if known in Fénelon's circle, was suspect. Of more interest to many readers will be the attempt made in this section of the work to assess the influence on Fénelon of such notable personalities as M. Tronson who instructed him in the spirit of M. Olier, and of the great Bossuet who was much impressed by Fénelon at the meetings of the *Little Council*. This select body, founded by Bossuet, was chiefly devoted to scriptural studies. The meeting of the young