

of the glorious Church with Christ enthroned, the instruments of the passion borne aloft by angels, and the book of the doom lying open before the cross. The heavens are unrolled, the earth consumed by fire, and made new again as Christ's face appears in the centre of a new universe.

Herrad, living at the end of the twelfth century, is conscious of new influences, but is at the same time so deeply familiar with the whole of Christian tradition that she, like most of her contemporaries, can only visualize God's creation and the history of salvation as a carefully worked-out pattern. There are no loose ends, no insoluble problems. She shows us, with no conscious effort, her conviction that everything is contained in the wisdom of God, just as Hildegard sees all things contained in the vast cosmic Christ of her visions. We may call such conviction naive. We may comment on the fact that it was destined to pass, as the twelfth century tradition came to its fulfilment in the thirteenth, and from then on flamboyantly declined. But we cannot deny that, for all its incidental imperfections, the twelfth-century outlook as embodied in the *Hortus Deliciarum*, to take one masterpiece at random, is essentially valid, satisfying, and worthy.

## Lumen Vitae

SISTER JOSEPH OF THE ANGELS, S.N.D.

'The most significant factor of the last one hundred and fifty years is the urbanisation of the world' said Fr Houtart, Secretary of the International Centre for Research in Religious Sociology. Addressing the members of the International Catechetical Year at *Lumen Vitae*, he compared the revolution caused in society by this phenomenon to the barbarian invasions of the fourth century, which changed the face of the world as it was then known. This signifies, he said, far more than an increased density of population in the cities; it is a real transformation of social life. M. Labbens, President of this Society, also speaking during this course of lectures in religious sociology, went so far as to assert that 'The world is about to give birth to a new civilisation'.

This urban life is a recent phenomenon because it depends essentially on the techniques of production. Such a revolution in human society could not be without grave consequences for religion. All institutions and cultural patterns have been changed; the Church has necessarily been affected, because it is to men that she addresses herself. In other words, religious life tends to be seen as one function among many others; it is often considered a work of supererogation when compared with the pursuit of the economic necessities of daily existence. In Europe, for example, de-Christianisation is largely an urban problem. Before this industrialisation, human life was centred on the village or small town. The dwelling place, place of work, centre of leisure and social activity were all situated in the village or district; the only dimension of human life was that of geographical unity. In such a society, the priest knew everyone, was aware of all the current of thought and the influences which played on them; the village church was indeed the centre of life.

In Christian antiquity, the Church was an urban phenomenon; the very words used for the still unconverted person show this ('pagan' meant countryman; 'heathen' meant dweller on the moors). After the barbarian invasions, the Church so successfully adapted herself to the predominantly rural life which was their aftermath, that even to this day its framework contains rural-life elements. For instance, men have been working in shifts for well over a hundred years, yet not till recently has there been any change in the times for mass and the eucharistic fast. The Church of antiquity conquered the urban world in three centuries; after the disaster of the invasions, she conquered the rural world almost as quickly. Now we are at the beginnings of a new adaptation. The Church is already aware of the changed framework of life, and is gradually making the requisite changes for coping with the altered situation. There is no need for gloom; indeed M. Labbens calls this period in which we are living one of a 'new and prodigious upsurge of Christianity'.

The modern catechetical movement is one aspect of this quickened vitality. We in this country can have little or no conception of the trough into which religious practice fell in certain parts of the continent, but while we have missed the worst features, we may, if we are not alive to modern trends, miss the upsurge which is gathering momentum daily in all parts of the world.

One of the great institutions in the forefront of this drive to 'gain all for Christ' in the conditions of the contemporary world, is that of

*Lumen Vitae*, devoted, as its name implies, to illuminating the world, in so far as it lies in its power, with the 'light of life'. For we are in a *diaspora* situation—a believing minority amid a pagan or neo-pagan majority. The Church is, by her very nature, apostolic, missionary, but as Cardinal Gracias said at the opening of the recent Eichstätt conference:

Speaking of enlightened Catholicism, there seems to be no more crying need, all the world over, than that our laity should know better the riches and treasures to which they are heir as Catholics. Both he and other prelates at this congress singled out *Lumen Vitae* for special mention in this work of enlightening and training clergy and laity, so as to fit them to take part in the new Pentecost of the Church. For twenty-five years *Lumen Vitae*, which began in the Jesuit faculty of Theology at Louvain in 1935, has never ceased to enlighten the minds and warm the hearts of those within the radius of its living rays. It began in a small way as *The Catholic Documentary Centre* providing an international library and documentary service in connection with religious education throughout the world. Exhibitions held in various Belgian centres, and later in Milan, gave experts and local priests and teachers an opportunity of profiting by this on the spot, and also of exchanging news and views on catechetical progress with people from other countries. An important publication by Fr Delcuve appeared two years later, in 1937. This was *Où en est l'Enseignement Religieux?*, which we may translate as 'where are we up to (and what are we up to) in religious education?'; it was a descriptive international bibliography. This very revealing document led, in its turn, to a fresh development which has spread the name of *Lumen Vitae* all over the world. Realizing that a catechetical renewal was gaining momentum in religious education, and that research which could bring such help to this movement was only made known to the learned few in specialized reviews, Fr Delcuve and his colleagues resolved on and in 1946 carried into effect a two-fold plan. A new international review, devoted exclusively to religious education, was launched; this was given the name *Lumen Vitae*. At the same time, the international character of this movement was still further stressed by the transference of its headquarters, thenceforth called the International Centre for Studies in Religious Education, to Brussels.

At first, the international information service was carried out mainly by means of its magnificent library. Here are housed over 20,000 volumes of works on religious education, in six languages

(English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish and Italian). In the Review Room are over 300 Reviews in the principal languages, while a whole floor of the building is devoted to teaching aids; specimens of the best wall pictures, film strips and so forth to be obtained in the various parts of the world. The generous help given to enquirers from far and near, the contact with experts whose articles were published in *Lumen Vitae*, the fine research carried out and published by the team at the Centre itself, and the various publications undertaken, such as text books for schools, monographs and longer works on specialized subjects, led to another important development. *Lumen Vitae* informed its readers that in August 1956 an International Session would be held at Antwerp, entitled 'Religious Education for Today'. Here the 450 people assembled from 33 different nations had presented to them, in a masterly way, the broad panorama of the modern catechetical renewal, and the programme envisaged by *Lumen Vitae* for religious education in the modern world. So great were the riches set before us in the fortnight of the Congress that from all sides came requests to Fr Delcuve to found a 'Study Year' to exploit, at greater leisure and to greater depth, this rich vein whose surface we had barely scratched in the days at Antwerp. Thus was born the 'International Catechetical Year', which began its sessions in October 1957.

This 'Year' has now reached its fifth session, has more than doubled its numbers and improved its technique, profiting each time by past experience and by the suggestions of its members, whose advice is asked for at the close of each session. Still, nothing can take away the special cachet of being one of the 'founder members', whose pioneering spirit set the tone for the succeeding years. Though in 1957 we were from 25 different nations—fifty of us, all told—a wonderful spirit of unity, truly a family spirit, was apparent to all who had any contact with 'Our Year'. Though there was an ingenious system of simultaneous translation of the lectures, when these were over it was amazing how, even in the first few weeks, each language audible in the babel of tongues that burst forth was able to make itself comprehensible to those from other lands. The daily opportunities given for exchange of ideas and warm, friendly contact with those of other races and cultures was one of the finest and most enduring values of the 'Catechetical Year', and forged links which neither time nor distance can efface. These ties are perpetuated by the *Journal des Anciens* sent gratis every year to all past pupils. This gives news of former students, of the Centre itself, and of important projects and publications. No matter how remote the field

of labour of the *Lumen Vitae* alumnus, by this Journal and by the *Lumen Vitae* review itself he is kept in the front line of all the important catechetical developments throughout the world. But how is this help made available to all?

First of all, by the publication *Lumen Vitae* itself. Published in French and English editions, this quarterly devotes each issue to one aspect of catechesis. For example, the titles since 1959 have been:

- 1959 Liturgical orientations in Catechesis  
Church History in Religious Education  
Training Religious Educators  
Parish and Catechesis
- 1960 Religious Initiation of the Child  
Towards a personal religion: Adolescents  
Youth: On the Threshold of Life  
Towards Religious Maturity
- 1961 A Christian View of Morals  
Studies in Religious Psychology  
Christian Apologetics.

Moreover there is a detailed critical bibliography of all books on religious education recently published. Besides this, specialized books are produced and printed at the Centre. While most of these are in French, some have been translated into English, one of these being Fr Ranwez' *Together towards the Lord*. This book, dealing with religious education in the home, is equally valuable for the teacher, especially of young children. Other specialist books concern Faith (by Dr Arnold); African mentality—an account of another of its Congresses; *Ecoute, mon Fils*—the religious education of children aged three to seven; *Catechèse pour notre temps* (the report on the Antwerp Congress) and so on. The Centre also assists in the setting up of affiliated catechetical centres. Moreover, it provides training for Belgian teachers. It issued a diploma to those teachers who followed a three-year Saturday course at the Centre. Since 8th March of this year *Lumen Vitae* has become a School of Higher Studies in catechetics. Moreover, the scope of the International Catechetical Year has been profoundly modified. Instead of one general course, as it was in the pioneer year, when everybody followed everything, it is now organised in four sections, which means that it can now take increased numbers (at present 110 as against the original 'ceiling' of 50). A glance at the contents of the new brochure recently received from Fr. Delcuve will show the scope of the present 'Year', which is now entitled *Institut*

*International de Catechèse et de Pastoral:*

Section I. Catechesis and pastoral studies, for those with degrees in theology.

Section II Catechesis (with specialisation in one age-range) for priests, religious (men and women), and laity.

Section III. Pastoral (A year of pastoral training).

Section IV Apostolate of the Laity, for layfolk who are not engaged in religious teaching properly so called.

The principal aspects of the work are listed under Religious Life; Teaching; Personal work, Seminars, work groups; Practical Formation; Life in Common; Study Tours. There are eighty courses of lectures and practical work from which to choose. These are given by lecturers drawn mainly from the various countries of Western Europe, though advantage is taken of the occasional presence in Europe of experts from other parts of the world to ensure their aid in the work.

So far, this article has considered the 'set-up' of *Lumen Vitae*, but there is a positive side to its analysis of the contemporary scene and how to face it. 'What exactly is *Lumen Vitae*?', one person asked quite recently, 'Is it a glorified school shop with lots of those nice little books full of pictures . . . ? Has it got any analysis? Does it see the problem any differently from the way we do? Does it believe, for instance, that the present form of Catechism memorizing is sufficient? What categories is it interested in?'

*Lumen Vitae* stresses first of all that the end and purpose of the whole of education is the Faith. Faith is on the part of God a free act, a gratuitous divine intervention, and on the part of man a free act likewise, a free human decision. God gives faith, not the teacher or catechist, who is simply 'a minister of God's word, and a mediator between man and God, to bring man to a personal decision by which he is induced to commit himself to God'. One of the great tragedies of the past—unhappily still true today in many places—is that the teacher is merely a 'teacher' and not a 'mediator', nor an 'educator' in the full rich meaning of the word. What we are aiming at is personal commitment to a person; the act of faith is not merely an assent of the intellect, it is also an act of trust, an adhesion of the whole person. There is a vast difference between believing in a number of doctrines and believing in a person. Pope Pius XI said: 'Religious ignorance is a running sore in the divine plan. There is an urgent duty for all of us, for Catholics that they *live* their religion; for the nations that they reach a know-

ledge of the Faith'. Moreover, faith is a seed; it is destined to grow; it lives by acts. It should not be 'imposed' from without. Faith is something which enables us to enter into the intimate life of God; we are orientated for life: 'I am come that they may have life' says our Lord. Its object is love, and it requires love on our part. 'By this has the love of God appeared in the world'. God gives himself at the same time that he is revealing himself. Faith is God's penetration into the world. Our faith is also apostolic; it depends totally on the apostles; it is from them that faith comes to us; but for us it must be an 'option', a personal relationship with Christ. For the Christian there should be a perpetual *metanoia*; it is based on love, not on a system of thought. How very different this is from the abstract 'learning the Catechism' method. Dr Arnold, of Tübingen, one of the greatest scholars in this vital question of faith, and one of the visiting professors at *Lumen Vitae*, sums it all up by stating:

The time has come to remedy the impoverishment and unilateral aspect of catechetical teaching . . . The supreme objective of all religious training remains undoubtedly this faith which dares in God; which puts all its hope in God; this faith which moves mountains and accomplishes miracles of charity; this faith which . . . remains firm in the midst of danger; this bold faith which no earthly perplexity can defeat because it knows that God is sufficient in all things and in all difficulties; . . . this faith which hopes against hope . . . stronger than all the threats of the world, than all armies and kingdoms. This faith, founded on Christ crucified, a scandal to the Jews, to the Gentiles foolishness, but for us, the elect, the strength and wisdom of God—this faith is the way of salvation . . . the luminous goal of all religious education.

God did not reveal himself in formulas but in deeds. The old Catechism started from philosophical, abstract concepts, but God works in the opposite way. He reveals himself first in words and actions; he is wise, faithful, powerful, loving; and so we come to recognize him. It is in this way that religious teaching should be concrete—'God is the greatest catechist'. So to discover what is the best way of importing the message of salvation, *Lumen Vitae* has gone back to the sources to study what that message was, as originally given by God and by the apostles, and how they gave it. Where, first of all, did God reveal himself? In the Bible. Hence we have the biblical movement, which is such a characteristic feature of the modern catechetical revival.

The biblical renewal started off with a great initial difficulty, in that

the Protestant Reformation had claimed the Bible as the sole authority. Thus it came about that at one time advanced biblical research was looked at askance by many, as dangerous matter for a Catholic. But the very challenge from Protestant and free-thinking biblical scholars made it imperative that the Church should defend her own tradition by a study of the Bible (as apart from its constant use in the liturgy). This biblical renewal has been accomplished in three stages. First came the work of exegesis, such as authenticity and textual criticism. After this came a more properly theological study. Biblical theology is the attempt to rediscover in the Bible the great themes of revelation. Here the theological and the biblical revivals are closely allied. Then came biblical spirituality; this is quite a natural development. After having recovered the text by exegesis, and the content of the text by theology, the spirit is sought for and found. For the last few years, many priests and layfolk have meditated on the Bible. Besides the effect on the spirituality of the people, this biblical and theological renewal has had a profound effect on teaching. Up to now, we have had Catechism and Bible History: a set of stories either told independently or as 'illustrations' of the Catechism. Now we are seeing these in their proper context and restoring them to that unity they should never have lost; the revelation of God, found in the Bible and expressed in the Catechism. The new Catechisms themselves are changed; they take their origin from the tissue of the Bible itself; the 'matter' of the Catechism is the very word of God itself, as authentically interpreted by the Church. The Bible is to be understood with the mind of the Church; in the liturgy the Church re-enacts the history of salvation; all the 'signs' are lived out in her. Her liturgy is an action enshrining and conveying the mystery of Christ. From the educational point of view, the liturgy is well adapted to our nature; by active methods, by symbolism and gesture, it forms the whole person for life in the Church and in society. The best way to understand a truth is to live it.

Our faith is apostolic and missionary. Our Lord would have every one of us witness to the faith that burns within us, this faith-life that is revealed in the scriptures and lived out in us in the liturgy. This personal witness which he expects of us is an incarnation of Christ and Christian values, the manifestation of the life of Christ acting as a leaven in all the actions of everyday life. Our fellow men are not easily reached by doctrinal preaching, but they respond readily to the witness of a true Christian—someone caught up by this living faith and love of God; they are ready to be impressed by seeing how a true Catholic lives,



suffers, works—and dies.

The 'Four Routes', as *Lumen Vitae* calls them, along which the gospel message comes to us to transform our life, are therefore doctrine, Bible, liturgy, and the personal witness of a life transformed. All these elements can be seen and studied in the first apostolic preaching—that of St Peter on the day of Pentecost. That is God's message to us, but we must also consider the terrain into which the seed is sown. Hence *Lumen Vitae* has studied religious sociology, while its work on religious psychology, done by Fr A. Godin and his collaborators, is acknowledged to be outstanding. Research is going on in these two important aspects of human life and has already rendered valuable aid to the teacher of religion.

How does all this affect us, here in England? the reader will probably be asking. Certain partial answers to this question are clear enough. Anyone who has the chance of becoming a member of a future Catechetical Year would never regret such a step. Moreover, all can read the *Lumen Vitae Review* (obtainable at Ducketts, 35s. yearly). Some specialist works are already translated in English; others can be read by those who know French.

But could not something be done here in England, inspired by what *Lumen Vitae* has done abroad? True, we have the Catechetical Centre in London, and that is an outcome of *Lumen Vitae* inspiration in the partial sense that the first formulated request for such a centre came from the English group at Antwerp, swelled by those who joined the yearly *Lumen Vitae* sessions in London. (It must not be forgotten, however, that this is not the whole story; if the need for such a centre had not been widely felt by both educators and hierarchy, the National Centre would never have become a reality.) But it is teachers in London who mainly profit by the library and courses organized by the National Centre which organizes the yearly Catechetical session. But it already has more than enough to cope with. The prospect, moreover, for the vast majority of Catholic teachers in 'the Catholic North', the Midlands, and the outposts of Catholicism in predominantly non-Catholic areas such as Wales, East Anglia and so on, is not nearly so advantageous as for their London colleagues. This is where Spode House with its frequent short residential courses in a 'family' atmosphere has already done something to bridge the gap.

The aim of this article is not to solve the problem, but simply to state certain desiderata which arise in the mind from the study of *Lumen Vitae* and its experiences. Could there not be here too a Higher

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

MARY JACKSON

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