

uncommon in the flexible structure of the sect. Nevertheless the Lord's Supper is celebrated three times a year, very likely not without reference to the forgiveness of sins.

This sect is noteworthy in spite of its small size, because here without any apparent foreign, i.e. European, influence ideas have originated independently, which in the history of the Christian and non-Christian religions frequently appear in the same combination: communism under the control of an inspired leader, rejection of private property and of the use of money, sexual abstinence, and vegetarian diet. Although we see clearly in this combination original power and logical coherence, we cannot on the other hand disregard in it a reaction against European civilization. Clothes are rejected in keeping with ancient African custom, and work is paid for by natural products.

The missionary may criticize the teaching and practice of Filipo and his followers. Any considerable expansion of the sect is extremely improbable as long as it adheres to its present forms, yet this community is a welcome sign of the spiritual independence of the African and of his ability to find original forms for Christian worship. This strengthens the hope so frequently expressed, that the young Christian Churches of Africa will create forms adapted to their own character, preserving at the same time the traditions of the Church.

(Communicated by the late PASTOR G. STOEVE SANDT, Bremen.)

Translation into Vernaculars.

At a meeting of the informal Linguistic Group which meets under the Chairmanship of Professor Westermann, Major H. A. Harman introduced a discussion on the following points: (a) How scientific terms can be represented in the vernacular, and how far it is possible to deal with scientific subjects in African languages; and (b) Whether vernacular languages are so far developed that they can be used for this purpose.

Major Harman said that he spoke as one asking for information and not as one giving it. He had tried to make his remarks provocative of discussion and therefore inclusive of the varying points of view on the subject. There is, he said, a large body of workers who are giving attention to the production of vernacular literature—a necessity stressed by every authority controlling or connected with African education—who find themselves in difficulties because of the lack of suitable vernacular words in which to express their meaning. The more timid give up the task, and excuse themselves by saying that the subject with which they are dealing is best postponed until it can be studied in English.

There is a strong, and probably unassailable, case so far as British West Africa is concerned for anything of the nature of advanced science being

studied only in English. The principal reason for this statement is that every pupil who is likely to take up such study will from the nature of the education given to him be able to study in English.

Scientific and specialized terms generally are, however, not confined to advanced study. They are matters of every-day use, both by literates and illiterates. Thousands of children will never, under existing conditions, have an opportunity of receiving satisfactory elementary instruction in English, so that if the subjects requiring words of a scientific nature are not taught in a vernacular they will not be taught at all. There is an alternative, and that is for English to be learnt from the child's earliest days, the vernacular being allowed to drop out as an unsuitable medium of instruction.

Now that conclusion is so distinctly at variance with the opinion of the Executive Council of this Institute as expressed in the resolution passed at the meeting held in October 1930 that it must be regarded as both wrong and harmful, and the question is only mentioned here because that conclusion is undoubtedly reached in many cases solely because of the inability to overcome the difficulties met with in translation. Further, the second side of the subject under discussion seems to hint that there is a possibility of the vernaculars being unable to do the work, making it necessary for English to be called in.

Language is the vehicle for the communication of thought, and should enable a man to do more thinking, to think more clearly, and to think about a wider range of subjects. A man will not do more thinking if he does not enjoy it, and thinking in a foreign language is not so pleasurable as thinking in one's own. We are probably agreed that teaching in a vernacular enables a child to think more clearly about simple matters such as the beginnings of arithmetic, or the grammar and construction of speech material. On the other hand if a Welshman or an Akan has only one word for *collect* and *deliver* it is reasonable to assume that his thinking on those points will not be particularly clear. The vernaculars apparently are the means of increased and clearer thinking, but need expansion if they are to live. Without growth they must decay.

The inadequacy of the vernaculars is most marked when we consider their failure to provide a widening range of thought. The African's life demands a widening range most urgently, and if he cannot get it through his vernaculars he himself will abandon them. Pride in a vernacular will not restrain him. What pride he has was largely inculcated by Europeans, and it is probable that the initiative for the widening of vocabularies must emanate from the same source. It is urgent, for unless it comes soon, the ground already gained will be lost. But it is not essential that the work should be done by Europeans, it is the initiative that they must supply.

It is a sad thing that so much of the work in Africa has to be done by Europeans. How much easier it would be if Africans themselves were writing

the books or making the translations. When looking for literature on this subject he found that the Japanese had introduced hundreds of words into Chinese, though their work seemed unlikely to last. But when the Chinese student returns home from abroad he feels the needs of new words to express his aspirations, and he invents them with what has been described as a finer feeling for the niceties of the language. Such words, being more in accordance with the speech-feeling of the language, will be more natural, more likely to arrest attention, and more easily absorbed.

Hence it seems worth while to note with some care what the African has already done. First of all, he has stretched his language, he has made old words take on new meanings.¹ But this is apt to be clumsy, as when a flat-iron is described as 'the iron which is taken to smooth something', or a telephone is absorbed as 'string-talk'. Professor Huxley, in *Africa View*, quotes an excellent example of how this stretching when performed by Europeans results in distortion, and we most of us know the apocryphal story of the hymn, 'Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing', which became what to the native meant, 'O boss, kick us out quickly'. If stretching words is desirable it must be performed by natives, and in his experience the cumbrous circumlocutions often invented tend to give way before other words created by one of the other methods to be mentioned. But advice is needed to assist in peeding up this part of the work.

A second method of development of a language is by taking the foreign word and projecting it straight into the language in an unchanged form, but this produces appalling incongruities of sound.

Possibly this second method is only a stage in what might be described as the third method, in which words are taken into the language and assimilated according to the laws governing such processes in that tongue. Examples are: *buku* (book), *sementi* (cement), *Enyirese* (English), *butru* (butter), *watse* (watch), *inkyi* (ink).

It is probably in this third way that alien speakers of the language will be best fitted to suggest new words. Here, too, it is possible to seek for rules governing the admission of new words. Some such are easily recognizable:

(1) The separation of consonants by vowels. Englishman-*Enyiriseni*.
Exceptions, *n* and *r*: *pensere*, not *penisere*.

n and *t*: *sementi*, not *semeneti*.

p and *r*: *kapre*, not *kapere*.

(2) Ending words in a vowel, either by dropping the final consonant or by affixing a vowel. *buku*, book; *suku*, school.

(3) Repetition of the strongest vowel. *torofo*, telephone; *hwidi*, wheel.

(4) The mutations of *l*, *r*, and *d*.

The collection and recognition of any such existing principles will always

¹ The examples given here are taken from Akan.

help the introduction of new words. Something of the same sort in English might have prevented the creation of such a word as *antibody*.

There is, in his opinion, a movement for the recognition of certain words as universal or international, so that *radio* may be preferable to *wireless*. This may affect our choice of words to recommend for introduction to vernaculars. But in such a scheme it seems of little value to fight for the preservation of the form of the word in its derivatives. We may try to insist on the elements *t, l, f, n* being used so as to recognize a possible international word, *telephone*, but the language may require its plural to have the elements *t, l, f, t*, and possibly yet other differences when the word becomes a verb. And where Europeans co-operate with Africans in the coining of new words there will need to be a change of attitude on both sides. Africans were emphatic in expressing their wish to keep their language pure. So the Twi pedant will fight for the retention of *kyerew-aduru* (writing-medicine), while the schoolboy says *inkyi*. Perhaps he says *adubiri* (black medicine), but the black element sounds odd when he comes to refer it to 'red ink'. Here, incidentally, seems to be the chance of resurrecting uncommon dialect words, and giving them specialized meanings. They would not offend the African ear any more than the Chaucer scholar is worried by asking for a 'pot of treacle', when his studies have familiarized the word in quite a different sense.

The African must also learn to welcome rather than to resent the presence of variant words for expressing the same idea. If one finds, it has been said, a great many words to express an idea in the language of any nation, it is a sign that there is a great deal of that idea in the nation. So if people want the word 'lorry' it is foolish to say that *teaseenam* (sit down and it walks) already exists. In the same way the European purist will have to give way. If the African feels that *cine* is a good word why fight for *cinema*, against which our own purists fought in vain some few years ago? Why not look on *krasin* as a good adaptation of 'kerosene' instead of a ludicrous corruption of it?

It has already been shown how words have been adopted and assimilated. Of course they will not all be English. One can imagine in such a place as Togoland that there may easily be two or even three words influenced by English, French, or German. Then, too, the number of onomatopoeic words such as *keteke* (train) and *kpokpokpo* (motor-cycle) should be noted. This has been a perfectly regular method of forming words in all languages, but it is not one for other than native speakers to attempt to use. Lastly, there is the class of words which define by their forms the objects they denote, as when *trousers* become *legdress*. Here again it will require the genius of the African to coin such terms for his own languages.

When words have been formed there remains the question of popularizing them, a task which in most countries is performed by the press, though railways have done much to standardize new terms. But the vernacular

press in West Africa is negligible; even the publicist and the most nationally minded writers express their ideas in English. Intentionally or otherwise one great result of this action is that they are assisting the decay of their own tongues, or at the very least are failing to assist them to keep abreast of the times in which they live.

To sum up, definite steps must be taken by Europeans to encourage the forming and adoption of new words to express the various ideas which must now form part of the consciousness of the African if he is to use his own language as a thinking medium. To avoid offences against the speech-feeling of a language the work will be best done by Africans, but they will need guidance. Where words do not naturally grow they must be coined. If they fit an international need so much the better, but they must at any rate be capable of ready assimilation by being euphonicly consistent with the language. Lengthy circumlocutions are best avoided; dialects may provide much material for words in a specialized sense. The press may give some assistance but the teacher will give most. The rigid conservatism of the older men may be disregarded; it will be quite enough if we get at the younger generations by the help of the school staffs and fit them for the problems and situations they will have to face.

The Study of African Life and Languages in South Africa.

It is the common experience of new countries that the European rulers have rarely shown real interest in the customs and institutions of their subject tribes. South Africa forms no exception to this rule. Accounts of Native life were published by travellers and missionaries, the Bible was translated into various native dialects, and a number of grammars were written. The general public, however, paid little attention to this kind of literature, nor was any pressure brought to bear upon the government to study the social life of its native subjects. Sir George Grey was, I believe, the only high official who actively encouraged linguistic research. His librarian, Dr. Wilhelm Bleek, laid a sound foundation for the development of Bantu philology with his scholarly *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages* and collected valuable material for the study of Bushman languages. Sir George's enlightened policy was unfortunately not continued by his successors in office, and the study of native culture was once more left to missionaries and visiting scholars from Europe. In South Africa Native customs were apparently not considered worthy of scientific investigation nor of official recognition. Only Native law had of necessity to be taken into consideration by the law courts. The general attitude of the South African public is well illustrated by the fact that a number of books could be published on the almost extinct Bushman people while the thriving Bantu tribes were practically neglected.

This state of affairs continued until quite recently. Evidence concerning