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THE APOSTLES' CREED.

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Aberdeen, Scotland.

I believe in God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead;

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

For the title borne by this document there was early invented a brilliant justification. The twelve apostles, it was believed, after the ascension of their Lord but before any of them had gone forth to evangelize the world, met at Jerusalem and, by a common impulse or inspiration, uttered in succession the twelve articles of which, it was assumed, the Apostles' Creed was composed. Certain of those by whom this report was transmitted from generation to generation went so far as to assign to each apostle the exact words which had issued from his

TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO THE BULUBA LANGUAGE OF CENTRAL AFRICA.

BY W. M. MORRISON, D. D.

This article is not intended as a learned discourse on Biblical translation. I leave that for the philologists or others more capable than myself of doing it. But my purpose is to give simply a running account of our translation work as thus far accomplished, mentioning some of the problems we have had to meet and some of the processes or steps which we have followed in trying to give to the native people the Holy Scriptures.

Upon the first arrival of the missionary within the borders of a heathen tribe or nation his overwhelming impulse, as the people stand about him jabbering in an unknown tongue, is to catch in all this flood of unmeaning sounds the words which will enable him to say to them, "Our Father which art in heaven," or, "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son," or, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Now begins the long, hard, never-ending task of language study, which of course must precede every serious attempt at Bible translation. The white trader who has gone into Africa only for barter needs to know only a few words, and these may be very ungrammatically expressed. The same is true of the government official or the globe-trotting book-writer, for even the later is already beginning to infest central Africa. Not so with the missionary: he is to deliver the Gospel message, and he must put into the hands of the natives, at the earliest possible moment, at least parts of the Holy Writings which will be able to make them wise unto salvation. It is fortunately true that the plan of salvation, in its essentials, is so simple that a very limited knowledge of the language will suffice to tell it, together with many of the simpler Bible stories. But we can readily see that more than a superficial knowledge of the language is essential for any serious Bible translation.

The key words to any language are the questions, "What is this?" and, "What did you say?" Once these are gotten, the way opens up, and the language begins to unlock. And these phrases are best gotten by taking a seat in a group of persons and pulling out from the pocket a knife or some other article with which the people are not familiar. Now, listen with all ears, for some one in the crowd is almost certain to utter the mystic word, "What is that?" When it has been gotten, the names of all the more familiar objects can be obtained at once. By intent, never-tiring listening the more common verbs will begin to come, then adjectives and other parts of speech, together with phrases and sentences, the meaning of which is known, but the grammatical construction of which is still a mystery. It is unnecessary here to go into all the intricacies of language study—the getting of words and sentences and idioms, and the working out of the laws of inflection, concord, etc. To complete all of this—if indeed it can ever be said to be completed—is the labor of many weary days and months and years. And yet this has been for me a work fraught with much pleasure. Some of the happiest and most exhilarating moments of my life have been over the discovery of some new word for which I had been searching perhaps for years, or over the solution of some grammatical construction which had baffled me for so long. Often I have jumped up, leaving my astonished language teacher behind, and have run across the station crying out, "Eureka," in order to announce to my colleagues the discovery of such a word as "Saviour," or, "Redeemer," or, "Comforter." It was more valuable than a diamond dug out of the rubbish—this word that would be a gem through which could flash new light and beauty into benighted souls.

And may I say just here that many otherwise intelligent people here in the home land have the idea either that we missionaries gave them their language, or that the native languages of the tribes of central Africa are only an incoherent gibberish, more like the chattering of monkeys than the intelligent talking

of human beings. Both ideas are untrue, for we not only did not give them a language, but we found their languages highly developed, having well defined laws of grammar, rules of syntax, and words with which to express all the ideas they have. Not only so, but the Buluba language, with which I am best acquainted, and which is only one of the many distinct tongues in Africa, is much more regular in its construction and laws than is the English language. To such an extent is this true that, though all down the ages they have had no written language, yet it has been preserved with wonderful purity, and even small children never make mistakes of grammar. In fact I have often gotten nice grammatical constructions from children, because they do not speak so rapidly as the grown-ups.

And this leads me to say that most fortunately we arrived on the scene before the natives began attempting to use writing of their own manufacture. How much would our Chinese and Japanese missionaries—to say nothing of those in many other parts of the world—give if they could only do away with the unspeakably stupid written language with which they have to contend. The result is that, in the writing of the Buluba language, we use our usual Roman letters, with all words spelled phonetically, each letter having only one sound. This certainly gives us a tremendous advantage over the hopeless confusion in our English spelling. The result is that any intelligent person can, after a few minutes practice, read right off anything we have written. Using the continental sounds of the vowels, and remembering that “x”= “sh” and “c” = “ch,” we have the first two verses of the 23d Psalm: “Yehowa udi mulami wanyi, cien nsua cintu. Yeye udi undadika mu mitoloko ya maxinde, udi undombola hehi ne mai kuikixa.”

Now that we have our grammar and dictionary and exercise book, and owing to the regularity of the spoken language, and to the ease of reading the written language, we have had the case of missionaries who were preaching to over 1,000 people in our Luebo tabernacle within eight months after

arrival on the field. Owing also to this situation, our new missionaries are put to teaching in the native schools the day after their arrival on the station. They can thus both teach and learn at the same time.

Owing to paucity of workers and other causes, but little systematic work had been done in the Buluba dialect upon my arrival on the field in 1896. After some months I was placed in charge of the language and translation work, though feeling my great incompetence for such a responsible task. The other missionaries who preceded me to the field had gotten together a goodly number of words, but the grammatical laws of concord, syntax, etc., had not been worked out. After spending many months on this task, all the while getting new words and idioms, I felt that the time had come, as we now had a few in our schools who could read a little, to try some Bible translation. Of course the first thing was to be the New Testament, beginning with Matthew. I got out my Greek Testament, with all the other helps I could lay hands on, even down to the Twentieth Century New Testament. My language boy was all expectancy, and I had taken occasion to inform others of the fact that in a few weeks or months at the most the New Testament part of the Word of God would be in their hands. But I had not gone over half a line until I ran amuck of the word "generation," and a little further down came the long list of proper names, and still further down the words "birth," "espoused," "public example," "virgin," etc., with many other grammatical constructions which I did not know how to translate, if I conformed strictly to the idiom and construction of the original.

Then I began to do some serious thinking. First of all, I was forced to the conclusion that my knowledge of the language was not extensive enough to warrant me in undertaking an exact translation of the Scriptures at that time. Not only so, but as I thought over the matter, I became more and more convinced that our people, then all of them only babes in Christ, would not be able to get much good out of an exact translation, however perfect it might be, that the whole Bible in their hands

at that time would only puzzle and confound and discourage rather than help them. The thought then came that perhaps simple paraphrases of some of the familiar passages which we had been teaching to them verbally would not only be helpful but far more profitable to them at that stage of their advancement, and this I proceeded to do, bringing out a small edition of some of the more important parables of our Lord paraphrased. This thus became our first effort looking to Bible translation. Later on, in order to give a little stronger meat, I brought out, after consultation with my colleagues, paraphrase translation, with division into sections, of Romans and I Corinthians.

This paraphrasing work has proved of immense value, and I believe it will take a permanent place in our School and Bible study work. Perhaps it is for this same reason that it is Caedmon's Paraphrases of the Scriptures, and not the more ordered and exact translation, which have been preserved for us as almost the earliest literature in the Saxon tongue. These paraphrases were simpler, they were put into every day language, and they laid hold on the life of the people in their spiritual infancy, and everything learned in infancy sticks for life.

While I was on my former furlough some years ago, more translation was needed, and Mr. Martin got out the Sermon on the Mount, and Mr. Hawkins a paraphrase of some of the Bible miracles, and these have proved most helpful. Upon my return to the field in 1906, after consultation with my colleagues, it was determined that I should begin a book which should be called "Malesona a mu Mukanda wa Nzambi," "Lessons from the Bible." We had never before seen such a book gotten up in this way, but we felt that it was what we wanted for our now more advanced reading classes, and especially for use in our growing evangelistic and Sunday School work. The idea was to translate as accurately and as exactly as could be done certain selected passages, chronologically arranged, corresponding roughly to those used in the International Sunday School Lesson series. These passages were to be

printed in bold type. Then between these was to be put in smaller type, and in paraphrase form, any other matter of interest, especially such things as were mentioned in both Testaments.

I then undertook this work. While my knowledge of the language had increased very much since the day when I attempted Matthew some years before, yet the usual difficulties in Bible translation were soon encountered. But many of these, to some of which I shall refer later, were overcome, and in course of time the work was published at Luebo on our press there, having been completed through the Acts of the Apostles, with a number of important lessons taken from the Epistles. This book has proved of incalculable value. It has given a goodly number of the most select passages in the Scriptures, translated as accurately as we can do it now, besides containing in the paraphrases a great amount of matter which is most helpful in connecting up the passages translated and in clarifying references which would otherwise be obscure. It is hardly necessary to say that all our translation work has been greatly delayed and hindered by the fact, that, owing to inadequate missionary force on the field, I have not had the time to give to it uninterruptedly.

But just before I sailed for the home land a few months ago, it was decided by the mission that I should bring a native man on with me as far as London and there finish up all the remainder of the Bible in the same manner. This I did, and now the whole work, with revision of that done several years ago, is ready for the press. This will give us a complete running story of the Bible, much of it exact translation, from Genesis to Revelation, and all of it matter which they can study and take in. I know of one mission on the Congo which has translated the New Testament, and yet it has done nothing from the Old Testament. One wonders how, in such circumstances, a single page in the New Testament could be understood by a native reader without having a missionary at his side.

But now the time has come when the complete Bible must

be translated, for nothing can take its place. But this will of necessity be a work of several years, perhaps of many years. Already Mr. Sieg has in manuscript form the Gospel of Mark. But in the meantime, and no doubt for all time, this "Lessons from the Bible" will remain a book of wide usefulness in our Sunday Schools, Catechumen classes, day schools and Bible training schools. While I write these lines a letter has just come from a good lady of our church giving the money—and it is no small sum—for the publication of this book of over 400 pages. Could any better investment be made?

It may be of interest to note some of the many problems we have to deal with in Bible translation, especially into a language of central Africa, where the people are so backward in every way that their language must of necessity be a very defective vehicle for the conveyance of the great truths of the Bible. For instance, we have had great difficulty in finding adequate words for the expression of such important ideas as "love," "duty," "purity," "holiness," "sin," "righteousness," "conversion," "pardon," "repentance," "thanks," "home," "wife," "husband," "virgin," "faith," "hope," "ought," "must," "pray," "soul," and many others that I could easily mention. One's soul cries out in agony for these great words which mean so much to us. Sometimes there may be a word in common use which would quickly suggest itself as an equivalent, but upon investigation, how inadequately it expresses the idea we want to convey! For instance, for our great word "love," we must use a word *kusua*, which means anything from a mother's love for her child to her liking for a certain piece of cloth, or her preference for a certain kind of bead. "My wife" is simply "my woman," "my home" is simply "my house." "Purity" and "holiness" can only be expressed by a very weak word used for almost anything and meaning "good" or "pretty." "Hope" can only be expressed by a word meaning the looking out for a person whom you are expecting from a journey.

But it is not surprising that there should not be found certain strictly Biblical and religious terms. For this reason we

have sometimes introduced and nativeized certain words. Sometimes these are taken from the Hebrew or Greek (as *Nyuma* from *πνεῦμα*), and sometimes (as in the case of weights, measures of distance and time, coins, etc.) from the French, since the latter is the official language of the government of the Congo. And this corresponds exactly to what was done for the English language at the time of the introduction of Christianity in the sixth century. Such words as "creed," "candle," "priest," "Psalm," "organ," "church," etc., came in at that time. But it is a principle with us not to introduce foreign words except as a necessity. We prefer to let native words grow up from a common into a Biblical use just as the words "Holy Ghost," "atone," etc., have done in English. Even the Hebrew word for "to sin" is "to miss the mark," and "to pardon" means only "to cover up." Consequently for "to thank" we use a word meaning to do obeisance to a superior for a favor done; for "to pardon" we use a word meaning to hide by covering up; and for "to repent" we use a phrase meaning "to turn over the liver."

Another difficulty in translating is to steer between a too free paraphrastic form and a too slavish adherence to the original languages. Wycliffe's first edition was so full of the Latinisms of the Vulgate that it was hardly intelligible to the masses of his readers. If there is to be a fault in this matter I have leaned to the paraphrastic for the sake of greater simplicity. I almost wish I had done it more in some instances, for, after all, every translation must of necessity be something of a commentary interpreting the translator's idea of the meaning of the original. It is this same desire to be sure that the native gets the truth rather than a mere jumble of meaningless phrases which induced the missionary to the Esquimaux to translate "lamb" by the word meaning "young seal." I myself have often wondered if the word for "a young kid" would not be nearer the real truth than the young of the miserable hairy sheep found in the Congo. But thus far I have not been quite so bold as my confrere to the Arctics. And this leads me to say that we can easily get "rain-stones"

for "hail," but there is great confusion in missionary language circles as to how to translate "snow" and "frost," to say nothing of many other words equally as common to us. But lest my readers should get the idea that the native language is incapable of being a medium for the conveyance of spiritual truth I hasten to say that it is very rich in many ways. It has many strong words and apt expressions which are wanting in English. In fact we missionaries, in speaking English together, so often interject these native words, that we would not be understood by one who could not speak the language. And that makes it so difficult for us to use pure English when we come home.

For the proper names in the Bible we have taken as the basis, not the English, but the original Greek or Hebrew. Hence Isaac becomes *Isaka*, Jacob becomes *Yakoba*, Samson becomes *Ximixona*, James becomes *Yakobo*, etc.

It is a most fortunate fact that the Buluba dialect is spoken, with more or less variations, over a great area in the Congo basin, and its influence is being extended daily. It is fast becoming the *lingua franca* of many tribes which do not speak it naturally. As result of this, anything printed in this language will be widely understood even far beyond the bounds of the tribes to whom this dialect is a mother tongue.

Thus it can be seen that, while much has been done toward the completed translation of the whole Bible, much remains yet to be done. I wonder if it would be asking too much of the readers of these lines to remember us in prayer now and then, as we labor away, under such great disadvantages, at this holy task? With our greatly increased missionary force on the field, we hope to be able to proceed with this work more uninterruptedly.