

gives the African new knowledge and new standards and denies him the opportunity to make them effective in practice, are absent from the French system, it may perhaps fall into the error of neglecting those educational agencies working through native institutions to which Professor Malinowski draws attention. And all alike could profit by consideration of the way to give through education 'the maximum preparation for contact with the white community'. (*Communicated by Dr. L. P. MAIR.*)

*A Conference of South African Bantu Authors.*

THIS Conference was convened by the Editor of the *South African Outlook* and was held in October, 1936, at Florida, Transvaal. It was the first meeting of its kind; the languages represented were Northern and Southern Sotho, Tswana, Xhosa, and Zulu. The Conference began its work by considering how the existing obstacles to the publication of manuscripts could be overcome. These obstacles are many, and the chief among them is that Africans have not yet fully developed a habit of buying or even of reading books, and that books intended for general reading command a small circulation, so that the difficulty of financing publication causes many a valuable manuscript to remain unpublished, not in South Africa alone. It was also intimated at the Conference that where publishers are willing to risk financial loss, African authors are often unwilling to part with their works without a lump sum payment. There was general agreement that a royalty on sales is the fairest form of recompense for authors. An informal survey undertaken at the Conference revealed a fairly extensive and varied amount of unpublished material in various languages. They comprised poems, folk-songs, and lays, plays, novels, short stories, folk-lore, histories, and biographies.

In view of the financial disabilities attending the publication of works in Bantu languages, attention was given to a plan to create an endowment fund to assist in the financing of Bantu publications, and steps were undertaken to approach several bodies for this purpose. An endowment fund for Bantu publications might become a real help in promoting vernacular literature. Production in African languages is still too young and too feeble to stand on its own feet; it needs assistance in order to grow strong, and this assistance must be financial. The manuscripts are there, the habit of reading and the number of buyers would increase if sufficient attractive books were available at moderate prices. If the South Africans succeed in collecting an endowment fund, it might set an encouraging example for other parts of Africa, where the need for help and encouragement is no less urgent.

The Conference expressed its appreciation of the competitions conducted for the direct encouragement of creative work by this Institute and by two South African Trusts. It was felt that the existing competitions are adequate and sufficient for the present.

'No conference of this kind would be complete without a discussion on orthography,' says the *South African Outlook*, on whose report the present note is based, 'but on this occasion the discussion was notable for calm and dispassionate argument.' There was general agreement that the new Zulu and Xhosa orthographies made those languages infinitely easier to read, and that children can teach their parents to read in the new orthography. A resolution was passed urging that the Education Departments concerned and the Inter-University Committee for African Studies take steps to re-open the question of orthography in the Sotho group, particularly in Tswana, and to ensure that there is adequate representation of competent Africans at any discussion on this matter.

Though the Conference was primarily concerned with literature in Bantu languages, African authors were definite in desiring the 'utmost freedom to use whichever language they desired'. The discussion on this point was evidently influenced by recent political movements and was directed against the efforts of those who wish to confine Africans to 'development along their own lines'. The Conference fully agreed with the views expressed by the African authors, by expressing its conviction that African authors should be entirely free to use any language-medium they desire, and that those who use English or Afrikaans are fully entitled to help and encouragement in their efforts to produce works of merit.

The fact that African authors met in a conference to discuss questions of literary production is significant. In this respect South Africa is far ahead of any other part of Africa. In South Africa there is a group of authors who have published and are publishing works of genuine literary value. Some of these have been translated into English and have found a considerable number of readers in Europe. Works of a similarly high standard have not come to light from other parts of the Continent. It is fortunate that South African authorship is receiving the warm support of the Inter-University Committee for African Studies and of other friends who take the keenest interest in the matter.

The desire of Africans not to be restricted to the use of African languages in their literary activity is so legitimate and natural that it will be approved by everybody. A European language may be particularly desirable in works of a scientific and technical character, such as linguistic or anthropological studies or history. But when it is a question of creative production—novels, drama, poems—the native language should be preferred, because only when the author can express his feelings and imagination in his mother-tongue will he be able to reveal to the full his creative personality and to give his work that freshness and originality which is the proof of real poetry. If such works are of outstanding merit, they will certainly be translated and published in a European language and so find the publicity which African authors justly strive to attain. It is doubtful whether a book like Thomas Mofolo's

*Chaka* could have been written in a European language with the same truly poetic vigour and simplicity which characterize this work and have made it famous.

*L'art congolais au service du culte.*

DES collaborateurs à cette revue ayant souligné à plusieurs reprises déjà la grande part de l'inspiration religieuse dans les réalisations artistiques indigènes, ont, en présence de la décadence de l'art africain, exprimé leur espoir dans les possibilités de régénération que l'introduction de la religion chrétienne apporte. Aux lecteurs qui voudraient se rendre compte de l'état actuel de la question au Congo, nous signalons le dernier numéro de *L'Artisan Liturgique* — revue trimestrielle d'art religieux appliqué — consacré exclusivement à 'L'art congolais au service du culte'.

En tête de cette publication, Mgr Dellepiane, délégué apostolique, rappelant l'attitude traditionnelle de l'église en la matière, attire spécialement l'attention des supérieurs de missions sur l'utilisation de l'art indigène à des fins chrétiennes et leur recommande d'en faire un large usage dans l'édification et la décoration des églises ou chapelles comme dans l'élaboration des objets du culte et de la liturgie. Il salue notamment dans l'inauguration de l'exposition d'art religieux à Léopoldville (18 juin 1936) — la présentation très soignée d'un grand nombre d'illustrations donne quelque idée des pièces qui y étaient exposées — l'aurore de l'art religieux congolais.

Parmi les articles publiés, nous aimons de souligner particulièrement 'L'art indigène et nos missions'. Le délégué apostolique estimant que les efforts tentés pour sauvegarder et christianiser le patrimoine artistique des populations indigènes soulèvent une série de problèmes délicats que les chefs de missions avaient intérêt à aborder et à discuter en commun, avait, en élaborant le programme de la Deuxième Conférence Plénière des Chefs de Missions du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, réservé une séance à traiter cette question. Mgr Vanuytven, rapporteur, a introduit le sujet sous le titre indiqué plus haut. L'auteur se montre bien convaincu que 'la religion chrétienne doit produire dans l'art indigène au Congo, ce qu'elle a produit parmi tous les peuples où l'église a fait luire la lumière de la foi. Il s'agit de découvrir l'art vrai indigène, de le conserver, de le protéger et de le perfectionner. L'église désire lui faire parler le langage de la foi; elle charge de ce travail les artistes chrétiens et le clergé accepte avec enthousiasme toutes les coopérations. Le peu d'art que nous voyons autour de nous ne réalise pas, sans doute, l'idéal que nous devons poursuivre et atteindre: cet art n'est pas chrétien, il n'est même pas religieux, mais il peut le devenir. Pour guider son évolution, il faudrait s'abstenir d'imposer des productions d'art religieux européen; surtout qu'il existe une quantité innombrable d'images et de statues et d'objets d'église qui n'ont de religieux que le sujet