

D.J. CLARK

## A DISCOURSE APPROACH TO PROBLEMS IN MALACHI 2.10-16

Dr David Clark is a UBS Translation Consultant based in England

The problems that Bible translators encounter often seem to come in clusters, like traffic on a motorway. Such a cluster occurs in Malachi 2.10-16, and may cause a significant delay in translation progress. In this article I want to discuss the main problems facing translators here, and to consider possible solutions.

In an earlier article in *The Bible Translator* (see the list of references at the end of the article), Ernst Wendland has presented a study of the whole book of Malachi seen as a series of disputes between the prophet speaking on behalf of the Lord, and the people of his time. In this study each dispute contains one or more of each of the rhetorical elements labelled **Assertion**, **Objection**, and **Response**. The passage we are concerned with here, 2.10-16, forms the third of six disputes. In this dispute there are two **Assertion** elements, or at least one element in two clearly marked parts (verses 10-12 and verse 13). The **Objection** element is found in verse 14a, and the **Response** element in verses 14b-16. My approach is based on this broad outline, but I will suggest possible modifications in the interpretation of the elements in verses 14b-16.

In another earlier article in *The Bible Translator* (see the list of references at the end), Graham Ogden discussed the desirability of interpreting this passage as primarily figurative in its references to divorce. I accept the more common view that literal divorce is in mind, and try to resolve some of the difficulties especially in verses 15-16 by suggesting an alternative understanding of the text at the discourse level.

### Identifying the people who are addressed

In the other disputes, Malachi states quite clearly whether the people as a whole or the priests in particular are the ones addressed. In the first (1.2-5), fifth (3.7-12) and sixth (3.13-4.3) disputes, the people at large are addressed. They are referred to by such phrases as "Jacob" (1.2), or "the whole nation of you" (3.9). In the second (1.6-2.9) and fourth (2.17-3.6) disputes, those addressed are identified as "priests" (1.6; 2.1), or "sons of Levi" (3.3). Only here in the third dispute (2.10-16) is it uncertain whether the whole people or just the priests are being addressed. Ogden (page 223) has argued on the basis of the "use of liturgical or religious vocabulary" that those addressed are the priests. It could also be argued that since the people addressed are identified as the priests by vocative forms in 1.6 and 2.1, the absence of any such form in the third dispute suggests that there is no change here. However, other scholars such as Chary (page 255), Mason (page 149), Merrill (page 413), and Petersen (page 195) maintain that the whole nation is addressed. In 2.11 there is a reference to "Judah" as a whole, and in 2.12 there is a reference to "the tents of Jacob" (or as TEV puts it, "the community of Israel"). In 2.10 there is also the suggestive phrase "we ... all"; so on the whole it seems more likely that

the entire nation is addressed. On this view, of course, the priests are part of the nation and so they are addressed along with the rest of the people.

As to whether we should take the references to marriage literally or not, I would only say that the literal interpretation fits well with what is known of the history of the period, in which both laymen and priests had been involved in marriages with non-Jewish women (see for instance Ezra 9.1-2). Adopting this interpretation (with the large majority of scholars) does not rule out the possibility that there is also a symbolic meaning (compare Mason pages 150-151). And a literal interpretation does avoid the special pleading that is sometimes proposed by scholars who wish to maintain a solely figurative interpretation.

### **Selected problems verse by verse**

In this section, we will consider some of the major problems that translators face in working on this dispute. The RSV text is given with the discussion of each verse.

#### **(2.10) Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?**

The first difficulty is to decide who is the father referred to in the question "Have we not all one father?" Ogden, in keeping with his overall view, naturally takes it to refer to Levi, as the ancestor of the priests (pages 224-225). The majority of scholars interpret this question as being parallel with the immediately following one "Has not one God created us?" and thus understand the father to refer to God. This view gains some support from the fact that in the Septuagint the two questions are in the opposite order, which tends to suggest the interpretation of the father as God. A few commentators hold that the father is a human ancestor of the people of Israel, either Jacob or more likely Abraham (Baldwin, page 237). While the majority view is fully acceptable, the possibility that the father might be Abraham is one we will refer to in discussing 2.15.

#### **(2.11) Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign God.**

There is a variety of opinions about the interpretation of the Hebrew word *qodesh*, which RSV renders as "the sanctuary," clearly referring to the Temple. The majority of modern versions share this opinion, though some scholars such as Driver (page 313), Baldwin (pages 238-239), and Verhoef (pages 268-269) hold that it refers to the Lord's people. This view is represented in the first edition (1982) of the German Common Language version (GeCL), but the revised edition (1997) makes the term refer to the Temple. A few versions translate as "holiness" (KJV, RV, NEB), and one (NKJV) as "the LORD's holy institution," presumably referring to marriage. If we understand the whole dispute to be about literal divorce, then it seems most likely that here we have a reference to the literal Temple. The line of reasoning then is that since marriage to non-Jews leads to compromise with non-Jewish religious practices, then the worship of the Lord becomes defiled. When priests and Levites are among those defiled by such marriages, the Temple itself is also defiled.

**(2.12) May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob, for the man who does this, any to witness or answer, or to bring an offering to the LORD of hosts!**

It is not at all clear in detail what is intended by “any to witness or answer,” the RSV rendering for the standard Hebrew (Masoretic) text *’er we’oneh*. The question is made more difficult by the fact that the Septuagint *heos* “until” is apparently based on reading the first of the two Hebrew words differently, as *’ad*. RSV combines the consonants apparently behind the Septuagint with the vowel found in the Hebrew, and so gets *’ed*, which it translates as “witness.” The Hebrew text as it stands is literally “(everyone) who awakes and answers” (NASB).

Since ancient times various ways of understanding these words have been proposed. The first takes them to refer to the practice of learning by memorising, so that the one who “awakes” is the teacher, and the one who “answers” is the pupil. This understanding was adopted by the Latin Vulgate “teacher and pupil,” and is followed in the KJV “the master and the scholar.” A second explanation relates the words to an ancient practice of keeping guard in a camp, where one person would call out and another would answer (compare NASB cited above). This explanation has the virtue that it fits with the metaphor of “the tents of Jacob” earlier in the verse. A third possibility is a legal setting, proposed by those who prefer to follow the text behind the Septuagint (RSV, NRSV, BJ, NJB) and to translate in some such way as “witness and advocate” (NJB). The sense then seems to be that the offender will have no one to speak in his defence.

Whatever the detailed meaning of the original, it is widely accepted that the two terms formed a proverbial pair in which they probably had some kind of mutually related meaning. The combined thrust of the pair was to include everybody, and this is expressed in NIV as “whoever he may be.” Offenders would have no friends or relations left at all. This is the element of meaning that it is most important to preserve, and one version which achieves this in a natural and idiomatic way is the New Living Translation (NLT) with “every last man.” Moffatt also manages to be clear and idiomatic, and to keep something of the sound effect of the Hebrew with “kith and kin” (compare the French TOB *filis et famille* “child and family”). In languages which have some appropriate fixed expression, this may be a good place to use it.

**(2.13) And this again you do. You cover the LORD’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favour at your hand.**

Here begins the second part of the **Assertion** element of the dispute. It is marked as a new topic by the opening words “And this again you do ...” The main translation problem is to decide how the two halves of the following sentence are related to each other, and consequently what conjunction should be used to represent the relationship. RSV understands that the second half states the reason for the first half, and so translates “because.” This is the majority view. Others understand the sense to be that the people’s tears are an (ineffective) attempt to gain the Lord’s favour, and so they translate “but he still refuses” (NEB, REB). Yet others follow the Latin Vulgate in interpreting the second half of the

verse to state the result of the behaviour in the first half (“so that I will no longer take notice of the sacrifice”). Thus the New Jewish Version (NJV) has “so that He refuses to regard the oblation” (NKJV is similar). Some scholars such as Vuilleumier (page 238) and Verhoef (page 273) note the mention of crop failure in 3.10-11, and take this as the proof that the Lord has not accepted the people’s offerings, and thus as the cause of their tears. This observation supports the interpretation that leads to the translation “because,” which is thus the most convincing option.

**(2.14) You ask, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.**

The first sentence of this verse is the **Objection** element of the dispute. The rest of the verse begins the **Response** element. There is no need in this article to discuss any problems within this verse.

**(2.15) Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life? And what does he desire? Godly offspring. So take heed to yourselves, and let none be faithless to the wife of his youth.**

The first half of this verse is one of the most difficult sentences in the Old Testament. Translators must resolve the difficulties in this part of the verse in such a way that it is in keeping with the clear meaning of the second half, and supports the prophet’s general disapproval of divorce as a first step towards marrying a foreign wife. The verse contains problems of several different types, relating to text, syntax, and meaning. Regarding the text, *Critique Textuelle de l’Ancien Testament* considers no less than six textual questions. In this article, in line with the recommendations of that work, I follow the (Masoretic) Hebrew text without further discussion.

However, problems of structure and of meaning are more relevant to the concerns of translators in this passage than the textual problems. It is not clear how many sentences there are in the verse, nor which are to be regarded as questions and which as answers. Within the first sentence, it is not clear whether “one” is the subject or object of the verb “made,” nor who “one” refers to. In terms of the whole paragraph, it is not certain how verse 15 fits in with the flow of the argument.

The opening words in Hebrew are (put very literally into English) “And not one has made and a residue of spirit to him.” The first question is to decide whether “one” is the subject or the object of the verb “has made.” A majority of versions in use today take it as the subject, and then have to decide who “one” refers to. Most take it to refer to God (RSV, NRSV, NEB, REB, Beck, and CEV). Some hold this view without making it as clear as RSV; thus NJV has “One” and NKJV has “He,” with capital letters intended to show readers that those pronouns refer to God. A number of these versions (NRSV, NEB, REB, Beck) add a single dot to the Hebrew text to make it say “has made her” (referring to a wife) instead of just “has made.” A smaller group of versions take “one” closely with “not” and translate “Not one of you” (Moffatt) or “Not one” (NASB; GeCL is similar). Yet other versions take “one” as the object of the verb, and assume God or the Lord as the subject (KJV, RV, NAB, JB, NJB, TEV, NIV, NLT, and NKJV). These versions generally understand

“one” to refer to Adam, the one human being created directly by God. JB for instance has “Did he not create a single being ...” There is also a Jewish tradition which interprets “one” to refer to Abraham. I will discuss this in the alternative treatment of the passage below.

Except for a few including Moffatt, NASB, and GeCL, modern versions treat the sentence as a question, an interpretation that goes back at least as far as the Latin Vulgate. This is certainly possible, but it is not a necessary interpretation. The versions which treat the first sentence as a statement are the same ones which understand “Not one” as the negative subject of the verb.

The next phrase “and a residue of spirit to him” may be taken as qualifying the grammatical subject, either “God” or “no one.” Only by suggesting a change in the Hebrew text to give “flesh” instead of “residue” can they be taken to qualify the object (Adam). For instance JB has “... a single being that has flesh and the breath of life.”

The interpretation which seems to be closest to the Hebrew is the one followed by Moffatt, NASB and GeCL, which treats the sentence as a statement, and “No one” as the subject of the verb “has made.” The second part of the sentence would then function as a conditional clause, and the translation would be “No one has acted like that if he has a remnant of the spirit.” “Like that” would refer back to divorcing a man’s first wife as described in verse 14. In this context “a remnant of the spirit” is best taken as “any trace of moral sense” (Moffatt), or less literally “anything of the principles of the covenant” (similar to GeCL). It is difficult to see what the RSV “spirit of life” is supposed to mean in this context, and it cannot be recommended.

The next words are probably to be taken as a question and answer (as in RSV) and may be literally rendered “And what does the one seek? Seed of God.” Those versions which took “one” to refer to God in the first sentence do so again here (RSV, NRSV, NEB, REB, Beck, CEV). Those which translated as “No one” in the first sentence take “the one” here to refer to a man who has good moral sense and does not divorce his first wife. “Seed of God” is generally understood as “Godly offspring” (RSV, NRSV, NAB, NIV, Beck) or better “godly children” (NEB, REB, NLT). This means children born within the covenant community of God’s chosen people (as in CEV, GeCL). The question and answer may then be translated “What does such a person seek? Children who will belong to God.”

The second half of the verse is more straightforward, and no particular translation problems need to be discussed. It remains only to mention that the Jewish tradition of interpretation has sometimes seen in this verse a reference to Abraham as “the one,” as we noted above in connection with verse 10 (Cashdan, page 347). Catholic interpreters have seen in this verse a reference to God making Adam and Eve one flesh (Gen 2.24; see for instance Deissler, page 646, and Chary, page 261).

(2.16) **“For I hate divorce, says the LORD the God of Israel, and covering one’s garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless.”**

The punctuation in RSV is very strange. The whole verse is enclosed

in quotation marks, including the two verbs of speaking. It seems likely that this is a printing error, since the quotation marks are removed in NRSV. We will ignore the quotation marks in the following comments.

As in verse 15, there are textual problems leading to different interpretations of the verse. As the RSV footnote indicates, the Hebrew text is "he hates" rather than "I hate." This is not a serious problem, however, and can be handled translationally. For instance, NKJV produces much the same effect as RSV without making any change in the Hebrew by translating "For the LORD God of Israel says that he hates divorce."

The real problem is that without changing any of the consonants, the Hebrew can be read with different vowels to give a sense almost completely opposite to that of RSV. Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate apparently read different vowels, which yield the sense "if anyone hates, let him divorce," with "his wife" being the unstated object in both clauses. Among modern versions, NEB and REB follow this approach. If the words are taken to carry such a meaning, they can be seen as contradicting the prophet's general argument through this section. On the other hand, if the rendering of RSV (and most other versions) is followed, Malachi may appear to be contradicting the legislation about divorce in Deuteronomy 24.1-4. Two observations may be made, however. The first is that for the Lord to disapprove of divorce is not the same thing as forbidding it. The second is that the passage in Deuteronomy does not encourage divorce but rather sets restrictions on how it may take place. The two passages are therefore not necessarily in conflict.

The expression "says the LORD the God of Israel" is found only here in Malachi. For a possible explanation of this, see the alternative way of understanding the discourse below. Translators should avoid combining the two direct quote expressions ("says the LORD ..."), even though that is what some modern versions have done, including Moffatt, NEB, CEV, FrCL and GeCL.

The meaning of the words "and covering one's garment with violence" is uncertain. Both the internal structure of the clause and its relationship with the previous clause are open to different interpretations. If the words of RSV carry their ordinary meaning, then they probably speak about getting blood on a garment when making a violent attack on someone else. The phrase would then be a second direct object for the verb "hate" in the previous clause, and the effect of the whole sentence would be to say that for a man to divorce his wife is as bad as to attack an innocent victim (possibly the wife herself). Those versions which, like the Vulgate, translate the previous clause as "If you hate your wife, divorce her" treat this clause as the unwelcome result of such action, and say "however, iniquity will cover your garment." Some scholars and translators treat the word "garment" as a symbolic reference to a wife. They base this view on Ruth 3.9 and Ezekiel 16.8, where for a man to spread a garment over a woman is a symbol of marriage. If this view is accepted, then "covering one's garment with violence" means behaving unjustly towards your wife, perhaps with the sense of assaulting her. This view is apparently represented in REB which has "If a man divorces or puts away his wife, he overwhelms her with cruelty."

It is also possible, though much less likely, that the words can mean “cover violence with his garment.” This possibility is found in NJB, which has “I hate divorce ... and people concealing their cruelty under a cloak.” Other renderings are “I detest divorce ... and covering oneself with lawlessness as with a garment” (NJV), and “I hate divorce ... and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment” (NIV). These last two both depend on adding one letter to the (Masoretic) Hebrew text. Neither rendering, however, succeeds in showing what the relationship is between divorce and violence, so they cannot be recommended.

### A possible translation model

For the whole passage we are considering, Malachi 2.10-16, a possible translation model incorporating the recommendations above is:

<sup>10</sup> Don’t we all have one father? Hasn’t one God created us? Then why do we act faithlessly towards one another, and in this way violate the covenant God made with our ancestors? <sup>11</sup> The people of Judah have acted faithlessly by committing foul deeds in Israel and even in Jerusalem. For the men of Judah have defiled the Temple that the LORD loves by marrying women who worship foreign gods. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD punish each man who has committed such a foul deed by rooting out from the people of Israel every single member of his family, so that there will be none of them left to bring an offering to the LORD Almighty.

<sup>13</sup> And here is another thing you do. You soak the LORD’s altar with tears, weeping and wailing because he no longer takes any notice of the offerings you bring, nor accepts them favourably.

<sup>14</sup> You ask, “Why doesn’t he accept them?” It is because the LORD was witness to the agreement you made with the wife you married when you were young. Now you have broken faith with her, although she has been your close companion and a member of God’s covenant people. <sup>15</sup> No one has acted like that if there is any spirit of faithfulness in him. What would a faithful man seek? Children who will belong to the people of God! So keep watch on your motives, and let none of you break faith with the wife you married when you were young. <sup>16</sup> For the LORD God of Israel says that he hates divorce as much as assault. Keep watch on your motives, then, and do not break faith. This is what the LORD Almighty says.

### An alternative understanding of 2.14-16

As we have noted above, verse 14a gives the **Objection** element of the dispute, quoting directly the words of the prophet’s opponents. Then verse 14b begins the prophet’s **Response**. The traditional interpretation regards this element as continuing to the end of verse 16. As an alternative approach, I propose that some of the difficulties in verses 15-16 would be reduced if they were treated as a continuing dialogue between the objectors and the prophet. Cashdan (page 347) has noted that “the Midrash, Targum, Rashi, Kimchi and most Jewish commentators” regard verse 15 as “an argument between the people and the prophet,” but the

extension of this perspective to cover the whole of verses 15-16 does not seem to have been considered.

On this alternative view, the opening words of verse 15 would be the words of the opponents, and in that case the "one" would be best understood as the ancestor Abraham. The objectors are defending their actions by pointing to the example given by Abraham in sending away Hagar, and saying sarcastically that surely Abraham of all people was not without "a remnant of spirit." This interpretation can claim some support from Isaiah 51.2 and Ezekiel 33.24, in both of which places Abraham is referred to as "one." The next words "And what does he desire? Godly offspring" are the response of the prophet to the **Objection**, a response which continues to the end of verse 15. The prophet is claiming that Abraham's motive in dismissing Hagar was not "lustful gratification" (Cashdan, page 347) but to safeguard the interests of Isaac, the son born according to God's promise.

Thus instead of regarding the whole of verse 15 as the words of the prophet and part of the **Response** element, we would regard them as constituting a second **Objection** element and a second **Response** element in the dispute. It is true that the change of speakers is not actually marked in the text, but this is not an unusual situation in the prophetic books (Hab 1.5 is a good example). And it is, after all, Jewish tradition stretching back to ancient times which has raised the possibility of a dialogue here – it is not merely the suggestion of an eccentric modern scholar. It is strange that Christian commentators do not seem to have taken this possibility seriously.

If we accept the principle of dialogue in verse 15, it is hard to see any objection to continuing it through verse 16. The opening words would be taken in the sense in which the Septuagint and Vulgate understood them, "if you hate (your wife), send her away." This interpretation does not involve any alteration of the consonants of the (Masoretic) Hebrew text, only reading that text with different vowels (*sone'* instead of *sane'*). But once this point of view is seen to come from the mouths of the opponents, then the fear that "such a reading undermines all that the prophet is seeking to convey" (Baldwin page 241, repeated word-for-word in Verhoef) is removed. The opponents would be basing their defence on the legislation of Deuteronomy 24.1-4, and claiming that even the ancestor of the nation did as they do. This would form an attempt to refute the accusation in verse 15 that they lack the spirit of their ancestor. The very word "hate" that occurs here occurs in Deuteronomy 24.3 also. Again, it is interesting to note that the word used by the prophet in 2.11 to describe the conduct of his opponents ("abomination" in RSV) is used in the context of Deuteronomy 24.4 in the context of divorce law.

Continuing with this approach, the opening words of verse 16 would form a third **Objection** element, or at least the first part of it. The quotation formula "says the LORD the God of Israel" should also be seen as part of this **Objection** element. The opponents are claiming that the God of Israel, the chosen nation, is really on their side because the ancestor of the nation did as they do. They are deriding the prophet's claim to speak in the name of the Lord about the ethnic (and consequently religious) purity of the nation. So for them to enlist the Lord on their side by



referring to him as “the God of Israel” is particularly appropriate. This way of understanding the text, then, offers solutions to two problems which have long puzzled commentators. It not only gives a good reason why there are two direct quote expressions (“says the LORD ...”) in one verse, it also explains why a formula unique in Malachi occurs at this particular point, namely because it is **not** the utterance of the prophet himself.

The next words are the prophet’s third **Response**. The opponents may shelter behind the laws of Deuteronomy 24 if they choose, but in their own social context, divorcing Jewish wives in order to marry foreigners is in the sight of God just as bad as assault (“covering one’s garment with violence”). And here the prophet underlines the authority of his verdict with the formula “says the LORD of hosts” used several times at a point of climax or conclusion in a dispute (1.14; 2.4, 8; 3.5, 11; 4.3). This contrasts the narrower nationalistic view of the Lord as the God of Israel with the wider view of him as the ruler of the armies of heaven (“hosts”), whose concerns touch not merely the welfare of Israel, but universal justice. The final words of the third Response, “So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless” not only echo the warning advice of verse 15, but also echo the theme of faithlessness raised at the very beginning of this dispute in verse 10. The result is a satisfying literary form with the theme of faithfulness enclosing the dispute as a whole, a structure technically called an “inclusio”.

To complete our discussion of this approach to the text, the following is a translation model for the whole dispute based on the above alternative understanding of verses 14-16.

<sup>10</sup> Don’t we all have one father, Abraham? Hasn’t one God created us? Then why do we act faithlessly towards one another, and in this way violate the covenant God made with our ancestors? <sup>11</sup> The people of Judah have acted faithlessly by committing foul deeds in Israel and even in Jerusalem. For the men of Judah have defiled the Temple that the LORD loves by marrying women who worship foreign gods. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD punish each man who has committed such a foul deed by rooting out from the people of Israel every single member of his family, so that there will be none of them left to bring an offering to the LORD Almighty.

<sup>13</sup> And here is another thing you do. You soak the LORD’s altar with tears, weeping and wailing because he no longer takes any notice of the offerings you bring, nor accepts them favourably.

<sup>14</sup> You ask, “Why does he not accept them?” It is because the LORD was a witness to the agreement you made with the wife you married when you were young. Now you have broken faith with her although she has been your close companion and is a member of God’s covenant people.

<sup>15</sup> But you say, “Didn’t our one ancestor Abraham do this? Surely there was a spirit of faithfulness in him?” Yet what was that one ancestor seeking? Was it not descendants to belong to the people of God? So keep watch on your motives and let none of you break faith with the wife you married when you were young.

<sup>16</sup> But you say, "The LORD God of Israel says, 'Let anyone who hates his wife divorce her.' " Yet such a person is guilty of assault, says the LORD Almighty! So keep watch on your motives and do not break faith.

## Conclusion

The third dispute in Malachi 2.10-16 is the hardest part of the book to understand. In this article I have first discussed various translation problems within the framework of a traditional approach to the discourse structure of the dispute, and then proposed a new approach to understanding verses 15-16.

This approach has a number of advantages. First, it avoids making any change to the consonantal Hebrew text. Second, it takes seriously the rabbinic tradition which interprets "the one" in verse 15 to refer to Abraham. Third, it allows the opening words of verse 16 to mean what they were taken to mean by the ancient Greek and Latin versions, without the embarrassment of putting them into the mouth of the prophet and making him seem to condone divorce. Fourth, it allows the whole paragraph to keep its obvious reference to a known social problem of the period, without excluding the possibility that a symbolic reference to disloyalty to the Lord is also present. Fifth, it offers a good explanation for the presence of the two quotative expressions "says the LORD the God of Israel" and "says the LORD of hosts" so close together.

Finally, I could also point out that under the new understanding the whole dispute has a chiasmic pattern. The closing comment in the third **Response** (verse 16) corresponds to the general concern with faithlessness in verse 10. The previous comment in the second **Response** (verse 15) corresponds to the concern for the purity and continuance of the nation in verses 11-12. The first comment in the first **Response** (verse 14) corresponds to the problem of rejected offerings in 2.13. The overall pattern of elements is thus A-B-C-C-B-A. This is in fact the same pattern that Wendland proposed (page 116), but differs from it in the detailed components and in that it embraces the whole of the dispute, and not just verses 10-15.

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D. BRUNN

## THE "PURE" VERNACULAR: Are we producing a translation that is understandable today?

Dave Brunn is a Translation Consultant with New Tribes Mission in PNG

*"If archaic words are used, the translation will probably not be used after the older people are gone. Words understood by all speakers of the language are the ones which will be the best choice in the translation."*  
Mildred L. Larson

When I first started studying the Lamogai language of West New Britain Province in Papua New Guinea, I was urged by my language-learning consultant to stop using the trade language, Tok Pisin, as soon as possible. I can still remember his words, "Don't say anything in Tok Pisin that you already know how to say in the local vernacular."

I took what he said seriously. A short time later, I determined that I would no longer use Tok Pisin in any of my day-to-day interaction with the Lamogai people. From that time on, all my conversation with them would be done exclusively in the Lamogai language. When I explained this to the Lamogai people, they eagerly supported my decision, and they promised to help me with it. However, in their enthusiasm, they tended to take things to an extreme – replacing all borrowed words with "pure" vernacular words, many of which were either no longer in use or manufactured from other words.

What I mean by "manufactured" is that in cases where no appropriate Lamogai word (either old language or in present-day use) could be found, they would invent a term. For example, the people of our village told us to refer to "money" as "tree leaves," instead of using the Tok Pisin word *mani*. However, when people from other villages heard us use this term, they almost always interpreted it literally as "leaves."

Eventually, I was the one who was pushing for a "pure" vernacular. My desire to speak pure, uncorrupted Lamogai was spurred on by the guilty feeling I had each time I was forced to use a borrowed word. As a result, my speech became filled with archaisms (old language forms)