

A KWARA'AE TRANSLATION

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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The island of Malaita (or, Mwala) of the British Solomon Islands is only about ninety miles long from N.W. to S.E. But it has six main languages with seven variations of the same for its 42,000 inhabitants. These languages, though similar in grammatical structure have different vocabularies, so much so that members of one language group cannot usually speak, or understand that of another. The *lingua franca* is therefore "Pidgin English", or as it has been lately termed "Neo-Melanesian". All understand this, and constantly use it between one another; it is in reality native grammar with an English vocabulary. The main languages working from north to south are Malu'u, Lau, Kwara'ae, Koio, Areare, and Apae'aa (or Sa'a). The British and Foreign Bible Society have printed the New Testament in Malu'u, Lau, and Sa'a. It has fallen to my lot to translate the New Testament into Kwara'ae, the central and most important language of Malaita. This language will also be understood by the Fataleka folk on its northern border, and by the "Salt-water" folk on islets along its shores, probably by about 8,000 or more people.

The need for vernacular versions

The members of the South Sea Evangelical Mission, and many members of the Melanesian Mission, make use of the English Authorised Version of the Bible, though of course much of its language, especially of the Epistles of the New Testament is beyond their grasp; hence the need of translations. Some teachers have been using the Basic English New Testament, and that of C. K. Williams, and they find these a help. For example in the latter we read, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener" (John 15:1), which they understand. But what, they ask, is a "husbandman" of the A.V.? They understand the husband of a woman, but what is the husband of a man, for in the languages of Malaita the adjective follows its noun? There are very many such difficulties in the A.V.

Ultimately it is hoped that many of the people of the British Solomons will become bi-lingual because the British administration favours the teaching of simple pure English as a *lingua franca*. But this is in the future, and will only apply to the more educated members of the Community. But an indigenous Church must have access to New Testament truths in its own language. Fortunately much of the O.T. is narrative and can be understood as such.

The British and Foreign Bible Society have already printed my translation of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John. These have been widely used. Before the last world war I had in manuscript translations of the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, also the Acts.

These were done in collaboration with Clement Maelalo, now gone to be with the Lord. These were with a view to the completion of the New Testament. But the war prevented further work. About three years ago I was able to revisit the Solomon Islands. I returned to Sydney, N.S.W., with two gifted native teachers, Justus Ganifiri and Arnon Wadili, to aid me in the completion of the Kwara'ae New Testament. They were able to stay with me for 6½ months before returning to the Solomon Islands. We revised the four Gospels and Acts, and by God's help were able to finish the New Testament. I think I averaged about 10 hours daily over the task. It was hard going, but with great relief and thankfulness to God we were able to complete the New Testament before their return to the islands. The manuscripts were then typed out for submission to the B. & F.B.S.

The basic text

I had before me all the time Nestle's Greek New Testament. But I worked mainly from the English Revised Version as being more accurate than the Authorised Version. I consulted other translations, that by J. N. Darbey (an accurate version), Rotherham, Dr. Weymouth, Dr. Moffatt, the Twentieth Century New Testament, Cunningham, C. K. Williams, C. B. Williams, the recent Revised Standard Version (a great help), J. B. Phillips, H. S. Way and others, and of course many commentaries. Each was a help. My endeavour was to keep as close as possible to the Greek consistent with clarity in native idiom.

But the problem had to be faced about what to do when the Revised Version differs in important respects from the Authorised Version, which latter version has been used for many years by our native Christians. For instance the Revised Version omits Acts 8:37 as not appearing in the best Greek manuscripts. In order not to cause the less instructed natives to stumble I have translated such passages, but have enclosed them within square brackets, this indicating to the mature and instructed Christians that the words so bracketted are later interpolations. Round brackets were retained to indicate parenthetical statements (as also in the A.V.), also quotations from the Old Testament were made with inverted commas, with their O.T. references. This is a distinct help to our native readers.

Great care was taken to translate the various parallel passages in the Gospels as uniformly as possible. Sir W. J. Kerschel's *Gospel Monogram*, with its harmony of the Gospels, was a great help here.

Translation problems

The Kwara'ae language is very rich, and has an elaborate grammar capable of expressing many shades of meaning. I have a large vocabulary of over 10,000 words. But one great difficulty is that Kwara'ae has no true passive voice. One cannot say, for instance, "the tree

was blown down by the wind", though one can say "the tree has become blown down"; if an agent is to be expressed the statement must be put into the active voice, and the subject has to be supplied from the context. In some cases a gerund may be used, e.g. "repent and turn again for the blotting out of your sins" (Acts 3:19).

Since the animistic religion of Malaita is propitiatory, no difficulty was found in finding good equivalents for such theological terms as: sacrifice, burnt offering, propitiation, reconciliation, ransom, substitution, redemption. Indeed, it would seem that in their religion there remain traces of a distant divine revelation as intimated in Romans 1:20-23. And many of their ceremonial rites show a resemblance to the Levitical regulations. But they have no knowledge of a Supreme God. They honour, and sacrifice to, what they think are the departed spirits of their ancestors. But mixed up with this worship is certainly demon possession as we find it in the Gospel records.

The verb "to love" is a difficulty. Kwara'ae has a term "to love graciously", that is generally of a superior to an inferior. This word can be used for God's love to men, and often of the love of one man to another; but man cannot use this word toward God. It is possible however to distinguish between the Greek *agapaō* and *phileō*, as in John 21:15-17. "Justify" is rendered by "regard as righteous", the opposite of "condemn".

In Kwara'ae there is no verb "to be" when used as a copula between a subject and a predicate; this relationship is expressed by words in apposition, e.g., "this is My body", is *noniku ninia*, e.g., "my body this (thing) here". Kwara'ae distinguishes between "regret" and "repent" as expressed in 2 Cor. 7:10, the word for the latter meaning to change one's thinking and intention.

Kwara'ae has a beautiful word for "grace", *kwae ofe'ana*, i.e. kindness to one who deserves the opposite.

Tenses in the verbs are expressed by means of verbal particles and adverbial particles; in this way one may express a pluperfect, a preterite, an imperfect, a present, a present continuous, a future, a future perfect, and a deferred future.

As to important theological terms such as "trust in, entrust, claim, repent, forgive, forget, sacrifice, church of assembly, elder, deacon, grace gift", and many others, I collaborated with the late Rev. A. Mason, of the Melanesian Mission, that uniformity might be arrived at, for both missions will use this New Testament.

I was able to distinguish between "sin", the act, and "sin", the inherited propensity, as in Romans 5:12 and onwards to Romans 8:3; this made the passage very much clearer to the reader.

Psychological terms such as "spirit, soul, heart, mind, conscience", presented problems. After long consideration I decided to introduce the word *Spirit* for the Holy Spirit, as Kwara'ae has no adequate term. The Christians already know this word from the English Bible.

It is necessary to distinguish in Melanesian languages between the inclusive and exclusive first person plural pronoun. For example in, "We must go soon or we will lose the tide", "we" here includes the persons addressed. But in, "Wait, and we will be with you soon", "we" here excludes the persons addressed. Two different pronouns are used. Early missionaries, not knowing this, used the inclusive form in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses (yours and ours)". This, of course, had to be corrected.

In speech the Kwara'ae folk have a most disconcerting habit of turning the last syllable of a word round, a metathesis, e.g., *leka ma'i* becomes *leak ma'e* in rapid speech. This metathesis makes their language difficult for the newcomer to pick up until he gets used to it. But in writing letters, or in speaking with emphasis slowly, they often avoid it. I have avoided the metathesis in my translation.

I found the late Miss C. Waterston's translation of the New Testament into Malu'u a great help, for the grammar of the languages is very similar, though the vocabulary differs considerably. My helper Justus Ganifiri knew both, as his mother was a Malu'u woman but his father was Kwara'ae. My other helper, Arnon Wadili, is pure Kwara'ae, and was therefore a check on the former.

GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

LINKED IN KAPAUKU¹

MARION DOBLE

Grace is basic to the concepts of justification and the imputation of righteousness, since justification is the "legal and formal acquittal from guilt by God as Judge, the pronouncement of the sinner as righteous, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ."² This "declaration of righteousness by God . . . runs in advance of the actual practice of righteousness."³

First of all, then, to present the concept of grace: "They wondered at the gracious (*jikoo*) words that proceeded out of His mouth." (Luke 4:22). In *jikoo* 'pleasant', as in the case of truth, love, peace, joy, and all good things, God is the originator, possesses the fulness, and is the ultimate, the beginning and the end. This is expressed by the word *bokouto* in conjunction with the modifier; this combination then forms an abstract noun expression, as:

¹ Wissel Lakes, Netherlands New Guinea.

² W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary p. 285.

³ Sanday & Headlam, ICC *Romans*, p. 30.