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The Impact of the KJV in Caribbean Bible Translation Work: An Exploratory Introduction

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Abstract
The KJV has impacted the English-speaking world linguistically, culturally, and literarily. In the area of Bible translation, specifically in Creole languages in the Caribbean basin, the phenomenon arises where historical translations like the KJV become pseudo-originals, functioning as the standard for subsequent translation work in any vernacular, even non-English based Creoles. While the actual history of the KJV translation strongly supports autochthonous language and subsequent theological emancipation, the historical reality is that it has been used incorrectly to disavow such efforts, including the acceptance of other valid translation types.

Keywords
KJV translation; Bible translation; Caribbean; Creole language development; Creole language emancipation; English-based and non-English-based Creoles

This paper was first presented at two symposia hosted by the American Bible Society and Nida Institute to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the King James Version, first at the Society of Biblical Literature's annual meeting in Atlanta November 2010 and then at the American Bible Society in July of 2011. Its inclusion in this Festschrift issue to honor Roger Omanson is most appropriate, since my own first personal experience traveling and working with Roger was in French Guyana, where he was the consultant for the Creole French translation project,

before handing the baton over. It was actually in Haiti where Roger labored more intensely with a Caribbean Creole language project over many years, serving as translation consultant for the Haitian Study Bible team until his retirement. Roger has not only contributed to an excellent legacy of scholarly work in exegesis, translation studies, and text criticism, ultimately all to the service of the translator in the field, but he has always been unapologetic as to the need to treat all people groups and languages as equals, that is, in a just and fair manner according to the values of the Kingdom.

1. The Caribbean reality and the KJV

In trying to map out the possible explicit or implicit influence of the King James Version on Bible translation work in the Caribbean, one encounters a plethora of challenges.[1] First, the Caribbean is a multilingual community of different islands with different statuses and relationships to the European colonizers. Second, there is a considerable lack of research in the area of translation use, not only in the Caribbean but on a global level. And last but not least, it is only recently that Bible translation as such has been engaged in the francophone and anglophone Caribbean. Faith and language communities where the Creole subsists with the acrolect[2] (English-based Creole vs Jamaican Standard English; French-based Creole vs French) tend to underestimate the need for translation in their own mother tongue. Likewise, a significant group even maintains that Creoles are not languages. The defense of Creole Bible translation in the face of major European translations goes as far back as 1830, when the very first written treatise on the defense of a Caribbean Creole was written in London by Harold Greenfield, the superintendent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, as a reaction to an anonymous attack on the Moravian translation of the New Testament into Sranan Tongo, the historically English-based Creole of Suriname.[3] This attack, coming from England, was surely based on the framework forged by the dominant use of the KJV over the centuries and predates the modern linguistic era. Thus only the Authorized Version, as the KJV is sometimes called, was regarded as sacred text and, since Creole was seen as "broken English,"

[1] I would like to thank David Burke for his comments on an earlier version of this article and Stephen Pattemore for his guidance as to this final version.
[2] See de Rooij 1994.
[3] For socio-historical and linguistic reasons Suriname has been considered part of the Dutch Caribbean since 1674. Dutch is the official language until this day.

not a language in its own right, the anonymous author lashed out against this specific translation.[4]

Subsequently, we have seen the translation of complete New Testaments or portions of Scripture into different Caribbean Creoles such as Papiamentu, the Iberian-based Creole of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, and Haitian Creole, which do not have a direct link to the KJV tradition. Nevertheless, the same adversity was encountered even at a later stage in the 1980s and 1990s when the same Papiamentu and Haitian Creole-speaking communities produced the first complete Bibles (including deuterocanonical books) in a Creole.

When we speak about the KJV's influence on translation in the region we will need to limit ourselves to three components: (1) the KJV's influence on modern Creole translations such as those in Jamaica and Belize; (2) the influence of the KJV's textual tradition on modern translations in the Caribbean, even on indigenous language translation as in Guyana; (3) the more widespread influence of the KJV on the way people in the Caribbean perceive translation and modern translations. This last aspect is of greater interest, because it relates to the direct or indirect role of KJV use in either promoting or discouraging Caribbean emancipation in theology and thought. Translations like the KJV—and its French equivalent, Louis Segond, or the Spanish Reina Valera—function as pseudo-originals, "sacred texts" standard in church language formation and development which unconsciously shape the thinking of many church leaders. This has happened to the degree that the emancipation of the Caribbean Creole speaker has been stalled and cut short, and use of the Creole languages as vehicles of "theologizing" has been frowned upon.

Before entering into the details of this study we need to define what the Caribbean is. The dominant colonial languages in the Caribbean are English and French, with Dutch playing an important role in Suriname and on the Leeward Islands. The situation with the Spanish Caribbean is very particular in that, as nation states with a predominantly Latin American population, the islands of Cuba and Santo Domingo (and likewise Puerto Rico, though this commonwealth of the U.S. can be said to look both northward and southward) have seen themselves as part of the wider Latin American reality. Yet certain important aspects of "the Caribbean identity" can be found

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[4] The translation of the New Testament into Sranan Tongo by Ludwig Schuman was one of the first in a transatlantic Creole. The revised version (1829) was vehemently attacked by this anonymous writer in *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. Greenfield's (1830) defense is entitled, *A defence of the Surinam Negro-English Version of the New Testament . . . In reply to the Animadversion of an anonymous Writer in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. See Eersel 1991 for a discussion.

in Santo Domingo, Cuba, and the coastal regions of Central America where colonies of West Indians have carved out a living and where, for example, the Garífuna, the Afro-indigenous population with its thriving culture and language, possess more Caribbean elements than the mainstream Hispanic population. Theologian Lewin Williams defines the Caribbean "as the territories within and in close proximity to the Caribbean Sea which are characterized by their experience of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and are struggling for self-actualization" (1994, 3). Of course, one may add that "self-actualization" does not necessarily have to be the same as Williams's grand ideological liberation program. But we will return to this later. We should add to this description the historical role of a plantation-based economy and society. Geopolitically, the Caribbean consists of islands and mainland territories which are sovereign states, dependencies, and overseas departments. Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Guyana, and Barbados are examples of independent Caribbean states, while Puerto Rico, Aruba, Curaçao, and the Dutch part of St. Martin[5] are examples of dependencies with autonomous status. Martinique, French Guyana, and Guadeloupe, on the other hand, are good examples of "départements d'outre mer" (DOM), French overseas departments.

The role of the KJV in Caribbean language development is a telltale sign of the importance of this monumental translation. Many positive and laudable comments could be made about the widespread influence of the KJV on creative language development in the anglophone Caribbean on different levels. However, when we consider the Spanish-speaking Caribbean or the French-speaking Caribbean and/or the Papiamentu-speaking Caribbean, this influence can only be measured indirectly since these language communities did not use this English translation, with the exception of course of immigrant communities from the anglophone Caribbean.

2. A Caribbean theological framework and the KJV

One of the greatest Caribbean theologians, Lewin L. Williams, sets out to develop a Marxist-based theology, sharply criticizing the missionary movement as an ideologically dominated force that only stripped the Caribbean wo/man of her/his true identity. Williams gives a thorough analysis of the theological origin and defense of slavery. One can question the unashamedly Marxist underpinnings of his liberation theology framework, which at

[5] As from October 10, 2010, the islands of Saba, St. Eustatia, and Bonaire have become special municipalities of the Netherlands.

times is very much defined in terms of near total identification of the spiritual with the material. But what interests us here is how Williams, despite all his acumen, fails to question the role of the very language of theology or of the KJV's dominance, which clearly is part of the "domination paradigm." The need for a mother-tongue theology was indeed not on the radar of most Caribbean scholars. Williams seems to have fallen into the trap of totally identifying Caribbean subregions with their colonial languages. He talks about English Caribbean without acknowledging the different Creoles as the heart languages of the peoples. (Of course, in many Creole language constituencies there is a smaller group, usually the well educated, who are more or less bilingual, and a larger group that might be either monolingual or functionally monolingual in the Creole.) This blindness to the sociolinguistic reality of the region he so loved shows the way translations like the KJV in the anglophone Caribbean, Reina Valera in the Spanish-speaking region, and Louis Segond in the francophone region, have caused even Caribbean theologians to bypass or to ignore the broader language reality. Such oversights can only be understood within the context of the KJV's dominance. For a very long time it has been considered to be a pseudo-original and therefore the standard of what a Bible translation should be, in a restrictive sense. This is not to assert that Williams was anything less than a sophisticated theologian, but rather to acknowledge that he was a child of his upbringing when it came to his inability to recognize the importance of the Creole as the most natural vehicle for the true development of the emancipation of the Caribbean church.[6]

Furthermore, even the use of the KJV in the British Empire as the vehicle for the justification of slavery has to be faced and it does reflect the mindset of people who were, in the true sense of the word, children of their time. Far be it from us to attack the KJV as a translation, which can be considered a literary masterpiece of Elizabethan English. Our focus in this study is on the dual nature of the KJV as the carrier of God's word of liberation on one hand, and, on the other hand, as the dominating presence preventing the true manifestation of Caribbean identity. The issue is not one of denying the positive influence of the KJV in anglophone Caribbean in the spreading of the gospel or even its influence in the educational system. Rather it is a matter of looking at Bible translation into mother tongues as one of the key emancipatory processes of any people, as it had been for the English-speaking people when the KJV was first translated. It

[6] In agreement with other Caribbean writers, we prefer the term "emancipation" instead of "liberation" since from the time of the emancipation of the slaves, this term connotes more than just liberation theology's hermeneutic of economic well-being.

is because of this that we need to talk about domination, limitation, and even counter-emancipatory force.[7] The story of the KJV in the Caribbean is the story of how an excellent translation, which the original translators themselves considered to be provisional, one which focused on the common person and on communication within the sociocultural framework of its time (Burke 2009, xiv–xv), became so influential that it standardized what would be considered "Holy Writ," in terms of a language ideal, a base text, and the perception of Scripture as needing to be in a special "foreignizing" church language. The KJV, as a literary text and the text of the anglophone church, has influenced especially the Caribbean oral tradition and use of language. At the same time, it has also served as an "idealized translation product" that has functioned as a dominating text which points away from, rather than toward, emancipation. After the emancipation of the slave many a Caribbean island or community still awaits liberation from mental slavery, a term coined by Marcus Garvey and sung by Bob Marley, so that in this instance the use of the vernacular Creole and the Caribbean identity is embraced and not shunned or rejected by the very Creole speakers themselves!

3. The KJV's influence on non-anglophone Bible translation

The perception of the KJV as the "sacred text" of Christianity in the Caribbean region has become so widespread that on the island of Curaçao, colonized for centuries by the Dutch and still an autonomous entity within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Papiamentu-speaking evangelical community uses the term "KJV" as shorthand for any "quality and reliable translation." Well-educated people have expressed the thought that the Papiamentu Bible translation was done with the KJV as its basis. There are two Bible translations, a dynamic-equivalent translation (an interconfessional translation sponsored by the Bible Society, called Beibel Papiamentu Koriente, or BPK) and a more formal-equivalent translation done by the evangelical alliance, called Beibel Santu (Holy Bible, or BS). The BPK was the first completed Bible in this Creole language and included an edition with the deuterocanonical books in 1996. A year afterwards, the BS came out and immediately the agency that published it proclaimed it as the "Papiamentu KJV"! This is an interesting fact, because Papiamentu is not even an English-based Creole, but it shows that the KJV is held in such high

[7] Kortright Davis eloquently states that, more than anything else, the greatest need in the Caribbean is the *emancipation of the dis-envalued self* (1983–1984, 24).

esteem that promoting the BS as a translation in the tradition of the KJV would get the attention the publishers thought it deserved. Since it was a more formal-equivalent translation, though in no way a literary translation into Papiamentu, the church constituencies bought into this misnomer and until this day patrons of the local Bible Society bookstore will ask for the "Papiamentu KJV." In fact the translation was based on the American Standard Version and places the Majority Text variants between brackets, while the BPK places them in footnotes.

The fact that the KJV has had such an influence on non-anglophone as well as anglophone regions of the Caribbean is fertile ground for historical-sociological investigation, but that lies beyond the scope of this short introduction. One thing is evident: there is a clear lack of knowledge of the KJV's development and history in many circles, and the promotion of this translation as still the only "Authorized Version" by many televangelists has not helped. Even when Bible readers have come to terms with the idea that Bible translation is necessary, they still adopt a "King James Only"[8] position in their preference for a translation paradigm. It does not matter if there is no direct relationship between the translation form of the KJV and the vernacular translation they wish to promote, so long as it can be defined however vaguely as being in the "KJV camp." Thus, given the proliferation of dynamic-equivalent translations, simply to follow a more formal-equivalent translation style would lead to a comparison with the KJV. That the KJV was also a literary monument in the English language is often ignored. It would be too easy to dismiss this type of projection as a simple case of misinformation, but the very existence of the "KJV Only" movement is in itself a testimony to the fact that a considerable number of Bible users and readers have a theory of inspiration which is based more on a particular historical translation, both in terms of its style and form, than on the "original language texts" or manuscripts. But this is not so strange, if we take into account that the Vulgate is still considered to be an official text for the Roman Catholic Church, and in the Eastern Orthodox Churches the LXX and the Majority Text are seen as the official, inspired texts of the Old and New Testaments, respectively. The transference of the burden of inspiration

[8] "King James Only" ideology is defined as seeing the KJV as the only legitimate "inspired" English translation; in this case, this belief spills over in the popular consciousness of a certain demographic of the Christian community which perceives the KJV as the only legitimate text tradition and even translation style to be translated into another vernacular. There is an "idealization of the text" which is based on a combination of both historical as well as mythical elements, interpreted within a rigid worldview and a very mechanistic and modernistic theory of inspiration. For the different aspects of what constitutes a "sacred text" see Detweiler 1985.

onto a text that has been used in a community of faith for so long is understandable and a much-evidenced sociological dynamic among communities of faith in all times and places. This is inherent to the very development of the tradition and is part of the dynamic of sacred text development.

It would have been surprising for the translators of the KJV to discover that, four centuries after they reflected upon their own translation as an enterprise for its own time and culture, the product of their efforts had become a pseudo-original, even for non-English-speaking people. As mentioned already, often the true context of the KJV is not really taken into account. People do not understand the details of early seventeenth-century Jacobean English, and many outdated constructions and words are simply confusing to the modern reader. However, the layperson is keenly aware that the KJV has texts (variants) which modern translations "omit" or place in footnotes. One of the greatest tragedies in Bible translation history has been the omission of the KJV translators' introductory essay, "The Translators to the Reader," which prefaces the original King James Bible. Readers fail to realize that the history of KJV adaptations/revisions, from the very beginning and over the years, makes clear that the pioneers themselves did not see their work as a definitive end-product for all time in English, and certainly not in other languages. The fact that the original translators freely used other existing English translations of their time should be a telltale sign.[9] In other words, the very translation process that the KJV translators followed validates the hard work done by the many translation teams throughout the world who follow major English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch, and Russian translations as models, in addition to working from the best available original language texts. These translation teams often receive the aid of original language experts in an attempt to produce a translation which faithfully communicates the Bible's message to their people. Furthermore, the KJV was based on teamwork and this is the case with most responsible modern translations.

4. The KJV and the anglophone region

In Guyana three large translation projects have been completed or undertaken during the past ten years among the indigenous groups ("Amerindian"

[9] The King James Version is heavily based on the translation of William Tyndale and, as such, was a translation that was not exclusively based on the original language texts, but also based upon the best available versions of its time. This information should help the modern church to respect the way modern translators in many a minority language do their work. They work from different translations aided by exegetes who check the original languages for specific issues.

in Guyanese parlance): the Akawaio, the Patamuna, and the Wapishana. As a translation consultant for the former two projects, I was amazed time and time again to see how the translators in checking their work referred to the KJV as a text of great importance to their constituencies in the different churches. Of course, because of the influence of the KJV in the wider Guyanese church landscape, it was also to be expected that for these translations it was important to signal the place of text-critical variants reflecting the KJV text. In this case the translators chose to place the variants within brackets in the main text, where possible, with an introductory note saying that there is a debate about them. In other projects the variants are reflected in footnotes. This process of making the text more "church friendly" was often helped along by the use of modern English translations like the New International Version and Contemporary English Version. The complication resulting when the KJV sometimes differs from the Majority Text does not matter to these modern users—the KJV text is perceived to be canonical and inspired—not so the eclectic or any other compiled scholarly text, even when such are based on better manuscripts.

From personal correspondence with Bertram Gayle, the coordinator of the Jamaican Creole (Jamiekan) translation project,[10] we can conclude that the KJV does play an important role in the translation policy for that project, albeit perhaps not as consistently in practice. The KJV text is deemed to be important enough for the constituency that the resulting translation needed to reflect it. This translation, being an audio-focused translation from the start, was not envisaged as having an extensive note apparatus; however, it has appeared both in written and in audio form. We should add that it is particularly with this translation project that we have seen the most vehement attacks based on the idealization of the KJV, the latter functioning for the critics as the final arbiter of the vernacular translations. A Creole translation, it is said, would "vulgarize" the Word of God, which in this case is not the Greek or Hebrew text but an "idealized version" of the KJV text.[11] In another English Creole project in Belize (Belizean Kriol), we see that the influence of the KJV remains on the level of text also. It is interesting that at least in the Caribbean, given the general theological sophistication of the

[10] The NT, *Di Jamiekan Nyuu Testiment*, was launched in December 2012.

[11] In *The Sunday Gleaner*, a Jamaican newspaper, a vitriolic attack against Bible translation in the local Creole was expressed in a letter to the editor. The sender wondered if people were out to "vulgarize everything" and thought the *patwa* translation "signal[s] our lost hope of getting good English spoken by the majority of Jamaicans." The letter ended with complete auto-rejection: "What are these jackasses going to do next? 'Translate' Shakespeare and Milton into patois?" (Cargill 1996, 9A). See also the rejoinder by Gosnell Yorke (2008), a translation expert and biblical scholar.

translators or the project coordinators, there has been no attempt to consciously follow the exegetical choices of the KJV. However, when more than one alternative translation is possible, some teams will choose to place the exegetical option that reflects the KJV in the text and the other valid one in a note, showing a form of deference to the traditional text.

5. The KJV and the rise of linguistic and theological emancipation

Caribbean theology, if it wants to be true to its origin and purpose, must be based upon a recognition of the Caribbean Creoles as the legitimate heirs of the KJV tradition, not just modern English translations. This situation is true throughout the Caribbean, in the case of Jamaican Creole (Jamiekan), the French Creoles, and Papiamentu in the Dutch Caribbean. The last is, together with Haitian, probably one of the most well-accepted Creoles within its own society. Still, in all these situations one sees that there is need to take vernacular theology more into account. While we see the rise of a dynamic Christianity in a land like Suriname, where Dutch continues to function alongside the Creole as a first tongue and lingua franca, we still await theology done and nurtured in that country's other lingua franca, Sranan Tongo, as mentioned already, not a Dutch-based Creole as some would expect, but due to the country's intricate colonial history, an English-based Creole. The myth that Creole languages are only good for poetry and/or informal conversation and narrative persists in certain circles. The restriction of Caribbean Creoles to folkloric literature rather than "serious academic writings"—and even "official" sermons—has to be broken. It is time to move to the next development of emancipation. It is time for a "harmonistic" model where the Creoles are truly respected as languages of theological communication and as languages whose texts are seen as the offspring of translations like the KJV and not as their usurpers.

Delano Palmer, a Jamaican theologian, has joined the growing number of regional theologians who call for a respectful use of the Creole (in his case Jamiekan) in the formation and development of a Caribbean theology. In his very well-researched and creative book on *The Messianic "I" and Rastafari in New Testament Dialogue* (2010), he explicitly defends the use of the vernacular as an integral part of Caribbean identity and academic discourse. It is not that he or any of us who advocate Creole use are trying to dispense with the international languages of academic and non-academic communication like English, French, or Spanish, but the call to invite the Creole vernacular to the table of theological reflection is truly an important *sine qua non* for the indigenization of the region's theology.

The fact is, Caribbean Scripture use is as complex as the region itself. The rise of popular groups with charismatic and Pentecostal impetus has not yet been analyzed in a systematic manner. On one hand, these groups promote use of the vernacular through music and preaching. On the other hand, their rise, in some instances, represents a recolonization by churches of the North with their vast financial resources and the promotion of a KJV-only ideology in some circles. The fact that throughout the Caribbean the KJV is still seen as the epitome of Bible translation is in one way a great tribute to those translators who gave heed to the royal call at Hampton Court. Yet honesty demands that one reflect on how translations like the KJV or Louis Segond in French have also contributed significantly to impairing the ongoing emancipation process in the region, in both the anglophone as well as francophone Caribbean. Philippe Chanson's comments about francophone Antilles and the relationship between the newer church movements and "Creolité," the particular cultural and political indigenization movement in the French Caribbean, can be applied to nearly the whole region:

> The problem remains that since the churches of the French West Indies lack openness as well as intellectually well-educated and objective theologians and Creole mouthpieces, they still have a very long way to go before they are prepared to listen to the proclaimers of Créolité. Without falling into an indictment against the Creole churches it has to be admitted that behind the beautiful appearance of well-visited and jubilant church services these churches often are still structured in accordance with the type and spirit of their ancient colonial buildings. Their actors (and principally their leaders) are prisoners of the throes of power, of the rupture between membership and competition, and of dogmatic confinements; they are legalistic, moralistic, rigorist, eager to gain proselytes and disturbing as sectarians, this being said even without taking into account the strict constraints they make on the base of a radical separation of the church from "the world," of an attitude diabolising everything originating from "this world," and of the classical pretension of holding the Truth. (Chanson 2005, 303)

However, knowing these movements from the inside, I am very much convinced that a wider emancipatory consensus is possible when the playing field moves to translation and the use of the vernacular for theologizing. It is possible because true theology in the Caribbean is actually not done by the theologians with their outside influences, whether these be a Marxist-based liberation theology or a traditional Eurocentric perspective, but is done first of all in the elaboration and reflection from orality to written text, based on a sense of spirituality and oral text tradition that amalgamates all of the important cultural influences that make the Caribbean "one people, out of many people."

One should not give up hope, but rather persist in continual dialogue; indeed, the Caribbean language and faith community should avoid at all cost the cementing of ideological or ecclesial walls of divisions, as expressed in polarities like conservative and liberal, modern and postmodern, left-wing and right-wing. As the church community is confronted with the historical processes surrounding the KJV, it should be possible to empower language initiatives across the region; these Creole languages have become in most places the lingua franca of different racial and ethnic communities. After all, Caribbean Bible translation has been going on for a while and is now at the stage where the results of translations throughout the Caribbean will need to enter the life of the church. As mentioned already, the impact of the KJV on Caribbean translation has been twofold; in keeping with the times and the way Christianity was introduced to the region, it has, on the one hand, promoted Christianity, while on the other hand, it has served as a mental roadblock that hinders indigenization and translation. As such, the translation, itself similarly steeped in the power relations plaguing the England of James I, becomes imprisoned to a colonial and dehumanizing mindset that cuts off the life-giving message it paradoxically endeavors to carry.

6. The KJV translation enterprise as an emancipatory text

Though the KJV text itself has acquired through time the density and opacity that many communities of faith, ironically, expect of their sacred literature, the translators' preface, "The Translators to the Reader," is a testimony to the very important emancipatory processes which we are seeing at work in Creole and indigenous language translation. The affirmation of the need for a translation in the vernacular and the need to communicate clearly is very pronounced in the introduction to the KJV. Language serves not only for communication but also for identity[12] and the same forces that were at work to hinder the dissemination of English translations in the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries are likewise active today. The KJV's note to the reader is very emphatic in its affirmation of all languages and establishing, at least

[12] Harriet Hill correctly states, "Languages serve two purposes: communication and identification. Surprisingly, the latter is often the stronger. The colonizers designed language policies intended to develop national identities in the states they had created. Among the languages of potentially rival ethnic groups, European languages were neutral and allowed people to communicate with each other and the colonial power. At the same time, they created a sense of national identity" (Hill 2006, 84).

for European languages, that translations in all of these languages have a legitimate right to be used as Word of God.[13]

So it is certainly not the intention to speak only about the negative influence of the KJV. The anglophone Caribbean has seen this translation, made in another land, during another time, as its own translation, and it is precisely because of its euphonious and poetic qualities that it has become, as it has for the African American church, the text that has nurtured the Caribbean propensity for rhythm and beauty of language. Even a group like the Rastafarians shows this ambivalent relationship to the KJV. On the one hand, they see it as their text, and it would not be far from the truth to postulate that, in the national religious setting of Jamaica, its formulations and style must have influenced the lyrics of the greatest apostle of this single indigenous Judeo-Messianic movement (Palmer 2010, 3), Bob Marley, who transposed the influence of the KJV and other influences to a vibrant use of the national Creole in his compositions. On the other hand, it is the same group that has taken Jamaican Creole to another more sectarian level, where through the use of what is called "Dread talk" they resist the dominant position of the colonizers through the language of the latter. Jamaican Creole in that case, with this specific Rastafarian dialect, can be seen as a way to form an emancipatory theology.

> The Rastafarians are inventing a language, using existing elements to be sure, but creating a means of communication that would faithfully reflect the specifics of their experience and perception of self, life and the world . . . [it is a] relexification of African forms into the language of the [slave] masters.[14]

This is true of all Creole languages, as Harold Greenfield, far ahead of his time, said in defense of Sranan Tongo:

> The human mind is the same in every clime; and accordingly we find nearly the same process adopted in the formation of language in every country. The Negroes have been proved to be in no degree inferior to other nations in solidity of judgment, or fertility of imagination; and therefore it may fairly be presumed that they are capable of forming a language of the materials with which they are furnished qualified for expressing with accuracy and precision the ideas presented to their mind.[15]

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[13] "It is clear from their Introduction that [the KJV translators] understood their own work to be integrally part of a long chain in the history of those called in various ages, and within many language communities the world over, to translate the Holy Scriptures for the people of their own time so that they were enabled to read or hear with understanding and comprehension" (Burke 2009, xiv).

[14] Rex Nettleford in the Introduction to Owens 1976, ix. Cited in Palmer 2010, 25.

[15] Cited in Eersel 1991.

It is time to aim not only at the production of texts that are embellished with paratextual information from the cultural context of the Caribbean peoples, but to allow the Creole genius to fully and truly transform church thinking and praxis. As Gosnell Yorke, a well-known defender of an Afrocentric hermeneutic of Scripture, commented,[16] when talking about the *Original African Heritage Study Bible*,

> It is appropriate that we close with a call and a challenge, and that is: as commendable as the efforts behind the *Original African Heritage Study Bible* were—basically some very useful Afro-Christian embellishments of the KJV by way of study notes and full-length articles—what we need, I think, is a pan-African, Diasporic (including Britain) and multidisciplinary committee of reputable biblical scholars, linguists, poets and others, women and men, all of whom have some credibility in one confessing Afro-Anglo-Christian community or another. Such a broad-based and diverse committee should then be challenged to produce a more Africa-conscious and, therefore, liberative, new translation of the Bible in English for the psycho-cultural consumption by those for whom such a translation would be intended. (2004, 161)

Furthermore, we need to take into account the profoundly oral nature of Caribbean culture.[17] Theology in the Caribbean is very much part of the Creole oral language tradition and it is at the well of orality that the life-giving water of meaning and Scripture can and should be drawn. Lynette Mullings has argued convincingly that room should be given to the Jamaican Creole in theological studies among the immigrant groups in England (2009, 81). She has shown the importance of the use of the vernacular in black theological studies, given the fact that all theology is culturally determined to a certain degree. R. S. Sugirtharajah defines the "vernacular" as the language of the ordinary people rather than the elite (1999, 94). This is not necessarily true in all parts of the world and in fact, here is where a translation perspective from the historical reality of the Caribbean basin might add a significant nuance. It is a linguistic fact that the different Creoles were formed through the clash of

[16] Although there are overlaps, our approach is not only Afrocentric but more Caribbean centric, in the sense that Creole language identity integrates all the different ethnic groups that constitute the region. Of course, the most dominant group would be the Afro-Caribbean in terms of numbers, but also in terms of the impact of slavery and everything related to it.

[17] "It must be borne in mind that real theologizing among Caribbean people is done orally, narratively, and informally. This author has argued elsewhere that the real theological workshops in the Caribbean are the homes, the fields, and the street corners rather than the seminaries or the churches. The people engage in spontaneous theological reflection and decision making but much of this gives place to fresh experiences and episodes. Consequently, while written theology struggles, oral theology flourishes" (Davis 1983–1984, 12).

the white slave masters (in many cases) and the slaves. However, the language in different situations became not just the language of the downtrodden, but also of the elite. There is a letter from a Dutch slave master complaining that his children on Curaçao did not speak proper Dutch anymore, but only the "slave tongue"! And it is a fact that there are two groups of Atlantic-based Creoles, one where the Creole truly became and remains the language of the marginalized majority and another group where the actual users transcend race and social class, such as Papiamentu. This distinction is important for Caribbean Bible translation into Creoles and other languages, because the Creole very often has become the lingua franca and serves to express the cultural unity of the nation. One must be careful not to generalize across Caribbean Creoles to such a degree that the different scenarios in terms of origin and sociolinguistic complexity are ignored. If one looks at the Caribbean as a whole, its theology as expressed through its oral vernaculars and the written or audio translations into Creole is not just Afrocentric, although that would be indisputably one main focus. From Jamaica to the San Andres Islands, from Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire to Belize, from Guyana and Suriname to French Guyana, from St. Lucia to Guadeloupe and Martinique, Creoles are not just the expression of one group. Even when they originated at first within one racial or ethnic group, these Creoles have become the language of anybody who is truly the son or daughter of that soil.

Ultimately the impact that the KJV has had on translation in the Caribbean can only continue to contribute to the people's emancipation to the degree that information about the very process of translation becomes available to the laity and the wider church. If the KJV translators' original introduction, and maybe even their marginal notes, were reproduced in modern editions, this would help readers and Scripture users to see that it is counterproductive and even an offense to the first translators of the KJV to use the KJV to hinder further indigenization. The following aspects of the translation process as described in the "The Translators to the Reader" can only help in the promotion of vernacular translation. Even a cursory study of the preface of the KJV and the history of the transmission of its text reveals a number of important features that can support the cause of modern Bible translation in minority languages.[18]

- Translation into the vernacular solidifies the identity of the people.
- Translation into the vernacular does not necessarily inhibit the use of other languages.
- The KJV translators saw themselves as part of an ongoing translation process. On the one hand they defended the necessity of using and

[18] See the excellent summation by Barclay M. Newman and Charles Houser (2009).

improving existing translations, and on the other hand they argued for ongoing revision.
- The KJV translators met with criticism at first, but were vindicated in time.
- The KJV was established not only through the force and beauty of its language, but through conscious political and ecclesiastical decisions over the centuries.
- The KJV attempted to produce a text in good natural English, not necessarily in literary English.
- The KJV was a formal-equivalent translation but resorted to dynamic-equivalency when necessary.
- Because of the importance of the oral medium in their day, the translators focused on audibility, that is, the aural aspects of their text.
- The main aim of the translators was really to produce a scholarly accurate translation.
- The KJV made important contributions toward a rapidly solidifying English language.

8. Conclusion: Creole Bible translation and the indigenization of theology

Bible translation in the Caribbean is moving with increasing speed. While different islands and places are working or have worked on the New Testament, as in the case of Jamaica, San Andres, and Belize, others, as with Haitian Creole and Papiamentu, already have a complete Bible in the vernacular, and are working on full-fledged study Bibles for their communities. Still other Creoles, like Sranan Tongo, are moving towards completing their Old Testaments after having had a New Testament for some years. The discussion among the churches about the use of Creole is growing, not only as the language for preaching, but also as the language for sacred Scripture. In French Guyana and the French Antilles the same process of rejection and acceptance is being played out as in Jamaica. The need for a "Kwéyòl" translation, besides the existing gamut of French translations, is growing slowly but surely. However, there are still people who, being misinformed as to the relationship between their Creole and their country's "official language," and being unaware of how linguistic studies have vindicated Creole languages, are vehemently and irrationally opposed to this idea. Time and time again, and throughout the region, one sees this "knee-jerk" reaction: Any cry for attention and appreciation of the local Creole is perceived as a cry to throw out English, French, or Dutch. Actually it has helped to advance the debate about language emancipation, when mother-tongue advocates, in general, moved beyond the 1960s revolutionary blinkered axioms, where

the destruction of the past foundations was seen as the necessary prerequisite for the building of a new world. The call for a greater use of Creole in church and for Bible translation is a more harmonistic call nowadays. In other words, there is room for both the Creole and the European language: for Papiamentu and Dutch, for Jamaican and English, for Guyanais Kwéyòl and French, for St. Lucian Kwéyòl and English.

Having recently celebrated the 400th anniversary of the KJV, recognizing it as the tremendous achievement of human endeavor and literary genius it is, we should not forget the words of the translators who knew that translation was all about allowing God to speak in the language of the peoples. They knew how to use older translations and commentaries; they inserted a sizable number of marginal notes suggesting alternate readings, showing that no translation is truly complete. But most of all for the Caribbean churches and communities, even the non-anglophone communities, in the case of the French with Louis Segond and the Spanish Caribbean with Reina Valera, the KJV should be seen as a great monument to indigenization, to the promotion of theology in the vernacular[19] and to the further incarnation of the Word of God so as to humanize and not to de-humanize, to emancipate and not to restrict. As Andrew Walls reminds us so poignantly, "Christian faith must go on being translated, must continuously enter into vernacular culture and interact with it, or it withers and fades" (2002, 29).

One could ask how to go about indigenization of theology through the use of the vernacular in a region with such diverse sociolinguistic realities. The unity of the Caribbean lies to a great degree in its historical ties and its experience, as expressed by its Creole languages. Theology should start in the vernacular and then move to the languages of wider communication. When we look at the use of the KJV in the Caribbean, we see that it has nurtured the hearts of men and women, especially in the anglophone region, and has affected their speech and thoughts for decades. Caribbean theologians have used different methods and platforms to forge unity and develop a theology that is owned by the region.[20] It is time we also reflect on how to

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[19] See Bill Bivin's call to a vernacular theology among Latin American Indigenous churches (2010).

[20] See Davis 1983–1984, 13–14: "In 1981, a book entitled, *Towards a Caribbean Theology*, dedicated to the memory of Hamid, was published in Trinidad. . . . The book ends with a quotation from a group seminar, in which it is suggested that Caribbean theology should focus on a sharing of the good things that each territory possesses, and that the phrase 'Liberation Theology' should be withheld from the struggle for liberation, since 'there is a danger that the revolutionary connotation of the name "Liberation" bring about a rejection of the Christian ideals contained in it . . .' It was however suggested that the Caribbean theologian should be a revolutionary, calling for a change of attitude, 'metanoia,' so that courageous and wise action can be undertaken."

promote emancipation through strategic language use. Each territory can contribute to the great Caribbean painting that is more than just sun, sea, and sand and the smiling faces of the tourist folders. It is a region with its own pain and suffering, its own hopes and dreams, and its own unique "coming together" of different ethnic groups, forming one new entity, with all the internal tensions and challenges that such a "rebirth" brings. The gospel message, as such, becomes a humanizing message that leads the believer to a Christocentric theology which in the case of the Caribbean is equivalent to what theologians of the region have called "the Caribbean Person." The concept of the Caribbean person goes "beyond the socio-economic and political aspects of liberation theology." It is the "full recognition that the point of transcendence of the futility of the human condition is God in Christ" (Williams 1994, 150).

We conclude with the words of Kortright Davis who correctly addressed the need of the Caribbean basin as a need for a deeper humanizing (my words) theology that would contribute in the broadest terms to emancipation of the peoples, through their churches. To the challenges that this ongoing emancipation process faces, he firmly responds:

> But emancipation is still possible, and the major initiative in the region must therefore be the theological one—that radically new and critical reflection on life will engage not only the mind, but every aspect of our collective selves in the thrust towards emancipating experiences. The theological initiative must be emancipation in thought, language, and praxis. The author is therefore suggesting engagement in the process of emancipatory theology and not the theology of emancipation. The former creates instant light and heat for power, while the latter induces light but can never radiate heat for praxis. The one is experiential and energizing, the other cerebral and entertaining. The Caribbean show is over, the work is long overdue. (1983–1984, 24)

To this we may add, the best tribute the Caribbean region can give to the monumental and historic translation that came to be called the King James Version is to continue the process of indigenization and emancipation which that translation encouraged in the English language of its time and for its peoples. The use of the vernacular will create new theological categories and allow for further developments, on the basis of, in dialogue with, and yes, in contradiction to the ongoing theological work done by theologians of the West as well as Latin American theologians. To use Creole in churches, in the liturgy, and to employ Caribbean Creoles as sacred text, is to "Let in the light" Caribbean style—Calypso and Reggae style—cheerfully maybe, culturally different maybe, but not less scholarly or, more importantly, not

less existentially, and for sure, with no less spiritual impact than the celebrated Authorized Version.

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