

DAVID AND LYNN FRANK WYCLIFFE BIBLE TRANSLATORS

SUMMER 2007

Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. John 4:35 (RSV)

...the fields...are ripe for harvest. John 4:35 (NIV)



TRANSLATION DILEMMA

I have a vivid memory of witnessing a white, short-term American missionary leading a group of black St. Lucians in singing, "Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There's power in the blood, power in the blood." I remember thinking how odd it was in that context. But this familiar chorus is based on Psalm 51:7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (KJV). White is the color



White as the inside
of a coconut

we associate with cleanness and purity. How would you translate "white as snow" in a language where snow is unfamiliar and there is no word for it? In St. Lucia some people suggested "white as the inside of a coconut," but what the St. Lucian translation team settled on for Psalm 51:7 was "Wash me and I will become white as cotton."

I have been in a discussion with translators from around the world on how this verse and this expression can be translated. Where snow was an unfamiliar concept, other considerations for the translation of this expression have been "whiter than teeth," "whiter than a full moon," "whiter than a cockatoo" or "really, really white." But some translators from Africa have pointed out that they cannot communicate cleanness by using the expression "white as (something)." What does "whiter than snow" mean in this verse anyway? You want to translate it in a way that communicates cleanness, and ultimately moral and ritual purity. A translator into Danish pointed out that the snow there gets dirty after a while, so he used "clean as newfallen snow." In Chinese opera, a face painted white is symbolic of treachery. The problem in parts of Africa is that white skin is associated with dirtiness. When dark skin picks up dust it becomes white and dull. Cleanliness is associated with shiny skin. So several translators in Africa have translated this expression as something like "Wash me until I am brightly shining."

GOOD NEWS ABOUT OUR WORK

We are now back to our regular full-time ministry, after a year on reduced assignment in order for us to spend more time focused on partnership development. Thank you for your prayers and your responses. We now have several new supporters, and several of you have increased your support as you were able. Thank you!

WHAT NOW?

At this stage in our lives, we and our administrators are agreed that the way we can best be of service is in teaching, consulting, and supporting others. This enables us to

stay close to the work on the field and also equip the next generation of translators. We left St. Lucia in 2000 with the Creole New Testament in print and in use, though we do continue to stay involved with the language and our friends back there. We were privileged to be part of the Gullah translation project after that, and our involvement with Gullah continues even though the Gullah New Testament is now in print. We are working with our Gullah mother-tongue translators to do trial translation of some Old Testament chapters and short books. We will also be consultants to the Gullah New Testament audio recording project that should begin after some delay in January, 2008.

Lynn stays quite busy these days ordering books and reorganizing the Language and Translation Department Library here at the JAARS Center. She has had two volunteers to help update the library according to the Dewey Decimal System. I am more involved than ever with teaching, consulting and publications. A new responsibility of mine is to serve as the editor for the online *Journal of Translation*. See <www.sil.org/siljot/>. I will be responsible for the December issue onward, and we will write more about that later. Also, I recently returned from a conference of the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics in Amsterdam where I presented a paper on "Sources of St. Lucian Creole Vocabulary." My presentation at the National Museum of Language in College Park, MD, this past March went well, and I made some good contacts there.

THANK YOU!

We could not do this work alone. It requires the collaboration with and intercession of many people. We work together with speakers of minority languages, our co-workers, and you who stand behind us in prayer and financial support. We thank you who pray for us, you who have been supporting our ministry financially, and you who have just recently started supporting us. We couldn't be doing this important work without you!

Praise God with us because:

- Our support level has increased and we now are back to our full-time ministry.
- The translator from Niger has completed the manuscript David was helping him with.
- The Gullah New Testament recording project is moving forward.
- David's presentations in College Park, MD, and Amsterdam went well.

Please pray for:

- David's new responsibility as editor of the *Journal of Translation*.
- David's continuing role as a linguistics consultant to translators.
- Lynn's project of reorganizing the Language and Translation Dept. library.
- The ongoing planning for the Gullah New Testament audio recording project.

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