

## Book of Luke now in Patois

Reaction to the Patois version of the Book of Luke, which becomes available at book stores today, could be a referendum on the likely success of the project to translate the Bible into Jamaican Creole.

The historic launch of the third book of the Gospels, in Patois, took place yesterday evening at a linguistically colourful ceremony at the Portmore Gospel Assembly in Passagefort, St Catherine.

The launch was considered a preliminary victory for the Bible Society, which had ventured on the Jamaican Creole Translation Project since the 1980s.

The team from the Bible Society "talk up the t'ings dem" in Patois, as they sang and prayed up a storm in the Jamaican language.

The audio version of Luke 15, featuring 'The Lost Sheep' and the parable of the 'Prodigal Son', was as easy on the ear as it was humorous.

It is left to be seen whether the written version will be as easy on the eye.

Public-education drive

The Bible Society said that plans are in place to help the Jamaican public read the new Patois version.

Three of the four members of the translation team are linguistic graduates of the University of the West Indies.

A documentary described as a joint effort of the Creative Production and Training Centre and the Bible Society retraced in some detail the path undertaken by the latter to last night's launch.

The documentary highlighted the importance of the Bible being in the conversational language of the people.

The project began in 1993, when two Patois audio recordings were published, but it is the first time that an entire book of the Bible has been written in the local language.

The Bible Society said translating the Bible into indigenous Caribbean languages goes as far back as the 1700s, but it was not until 1980 that serious consideration was given to translating the Holy Book into Jamaican Creole.

But members also acknowledged that many Jamaicans have been resisting the idea of a Bible crafted in Patois, some believing that doing that would cheapen the Good Book or subject it to ridicule.

Patois is considered primarily an oral language. Written versions have received lukewarm reception because there is no authoritative lexicon which has been widely distributed and accepted.

The entire Patois Bible is expected to be completed in 2012 when Jamaica celebrates its 50th anniversary as an independent nation.

The Bible Society said it hopes to that the project will inspire Christians to be more "confident and mature" in their faith, as some are still challenged to worship in a way that is culturally relevant and authentic.