

The Challenge of Theological Translation: New German Versions of the Standard Works

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The 1980 publication of revised German language editions of the LDS Standard Works represents an important legacy for German-speaking Mormons. The story of how and why the new translations arose and how they differ from their predecessors is a fascinating one. Equally provocative is an examination of the problems of technique and philosophy that inevitably arise in theological translation. But even more important are the implications for Latter-day Saints today — issues that exceed the narrower questions arising from the translations themselves. A discussion of the origins, differences, and implications of these new editions is the purpose of this paper.

I first discuss the origin of the new Uniform Translation (*Einheitsübersetzung*) of the Bible into German and how it came to be the “official” LDS edition. The new German translations of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are next compared to their predecessors. This is based on a word-by-word scrutiny of 10 percent of the chapters. Finally, some questions raised by the project are briefly explored. Parenthetically, my opinion is that the new translations are more accurate, felicitous in style, and current in usage; yet they remain faithful to underlying theological terms and concepts. They also draw more heavily on modern German idiom and less on the phraseology and terminology of Luther’s German Bible, even though that work had as much influence on the evolution of theological thought and language among German protestants as has the King James Version in the English-speaking world.

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THE UNIFORM TRANSLATION AND THE GERMAN TRIPLE COMBINATION

The Uniform Translation (hereafter UT) of the Bible into German, a task undertaken by the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of Germany, was published in Stuttgart in 1980 by the Katholische Bibelanstalt. As a Catholic initiative, this effort had little to do with the Luther Bible and nothing at all to do with English, which was, of course, the source language for LDS translation of the Triple Combination into German. Yet, LDS translators were able to take explicit account of word choices and orthographic conventions used by the Bible translators. The result is a pleasing and unprecedented degree of uniformity and correspondence between the Uniform Translation, which has been adopted by the Church as its "official" German Bible, and the new German Triple Combination translation.

The Uniform Translation arose as the result of the Second Vatican Council. As time passed, individual excerpts were published, and ecumenical collaboration with the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church in Germany intensified, particularly in the translation of the Psalms and the New Testament. Recent biblical scholarship and contemporary German language are used in the Uniform Translation. In addition, this is the first time the Latin Bible translation, the Vulgate of St. Jerome, has not been taken into particular account in a German translation for Catholic readers. A prefatory statement in the Uniform Translation summarizes its intent:

The German Bishops' Conference is convinced that the present translation of the scriptures satisfies the decisions of the Second Vatican Council to the effect that Catholic and non-Catholic Christians, as well as those with no church affiliation, should be offered a linguistically intelligible and secure scholarly access to the message of the scriptures. The Uniform Translation is edited in elevated contemporary German. It is not lacking in poetic beauty, exactitude of expression, or dignity of biblical depiction. We bishops confidently hope that the new translation will also give new impetus to a language of prayer appropriate to the times and that it will be helpful in the endeavor of providing new attention to a deeper understanding of the word of God in the German language area.

In January 1981, the LDS Quorum of the Twelve communicated its approval of the Uniform Translation to the Presiding Bishopric:

The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve have approved the use of the new German "Uniform Translation." This means that this will be the German Bible for the following purposes:

1. Our authors and translators will use it for the development of instructional material and other publications in the German language;
2. In the revision and translation of glossaries into German;
3. In concordances, indexes, and footnotes . . . with respect to the new cross-references in the Triple Combination, when these are included in the German version.

You will certainly be glad to know that of all those previously translated, the new German Bible comes closest to the King James version and that it will be a wonderful help and blessing for our German-speaking Saints.¹

¹ 7 Jan. 1981, Quorum of the Twelve to the Presiding Bishopric. Excerpts of this letter were attached to a letter of 23 Jan. 1981, from Robert D. Hales, Executive Administrator

Shortly thereafter, Elder Robert D. Hales, executive administrator in Frankfurt, wrote Church leaders in the German-speaking area:

The Saints in the German-speaking area have been recently blessed by two decisions reached by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve with respect to the Standard Works: first, the approval of the new German translation of the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price; second, the approval of the Uniform Translation as the official Bible of the Church for the German-speaking area.

The translation of the Triple Combination took place according to guidelines published by the First Presidency regarding the translation of the Standard Works. . . .

Since the Uniform Translation is not published by the Church, please keep in mind the Sixth Article of Faith: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly. . . ."

In view of the above-mentioned decisions, all future doctrinal volumes and other publications of the Church in the German-speaking area will employ these new texts. We also request all priesthood leaders in that area to employ exclusively the new translation of the Triple Combination and the Uniform Translation of the Bible and to invite all members to do the same. Take the opportunity to talk about this matter in a priesthood or sacrament meeting and to enlighten the members about what is involved.²

Der Stern, the Church's official monthly publication for German-speaking members, used its "Church News" section to praise the Uniform Translation as a "text . . . which not only reads fluently but which one can really understand as well." Further, "the translators made every effort to translate the relevant original text they were dealing with, independently of their personal opinion."³

The new Triple Combination, the result of more than six years' work by translator Immo Luschin, former president of the Swiss Temple, is the first new German translation of these scriptures since the 1920s. It was completed recently enough to contain the two newest sections of the Doctrine and Covenants (137, 138), as well as the 1978 revelation on priesthood. In announcing the new translation in September 1980), *Der Stern*, again in its "Church News" section, reported that Brother Luschin had received this charge from the resident European General Authority (not named in the article) when he began his work: "Given all the difficulties confronting a translator of so unique a book of scripture, write so that simple people can read and understand the German text, and so that educated people can find joy in the clarity of speech." Brother Luschin himself observed, "I have neither the right nor the permission to change the style of the translator (Joseph Smith); to force ambiguous passages arbitrarily into unequivocal statements; to omit anything, for example

for Europe, to "all regional representatives, stake, mission, and district presidents, patriarchs, bishops, and branch presidents in the German-speaking area." German versions of this correspondence are used. The status of the King James version among English-speaking Latter-day Saints is discussed briefly in the conclusion of this article.

² Robert D. Hales to Church executives, 23 Jan. 1981.

³ "Zur Verwendung der 'Einheitsübersetzung' der Bibel," *Der Stern*, March 1981, p. 8.

on the grounds that one isn't allowed to use the same word twice in the same sentence in German; or to add anything."⁴

Brother Luschin reported that he translated the Triple Combination in the same order in which Joseph Smith had translated or received its contents: the Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants 1–24; the Book of Moses; Doctrine and Covenants 133, then 25–123; Joseph Smith's autobiographical sketch in the Pearl of Great Price; the book of Abraham and the Articles of Faith; and finally the balance of the Doctrine and Covenants. He followed this pattern so that "the linguistic development and maturation which Joseph Smith had undergone during the second half of his life could be recapitulated."⁵

According to the same article, drafts of the translation were presented to a nine-member committee which included a General Authority and stake and mission leaders, as well as a professional editor and a proofreader. The committee, according to Brother Luschin, "made valuable references and suggestions, contributed significantly to the completion of the work, and have earned our sincere thanks."

As a preface to the detailed comparison of the old and new Triple Combination translations which follows, an excerpt from "Guidelines for the Translation of the Standard Works" issued by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve in April 1980, will serve as a gauge against which this new translation may be judged.

Only translations which very precisely reproduce the words, phrases, and sentence constructions, as well as the expressions and style of the author of the original, can transmit impartially the sense of what the Lord revealed in the language of the original. . . .

It is a matter of opinion whether ordinary literature is translated in one way or in another. When the word of the Lord is involved, however, we stand on holy ground. Scripture is scripture; it is binding on us, and we do not have the authorization to water it down or to remove anything at all from its original meaning and purpose.

As far as it is possible, the translation of the Standard Works from English into any other language must be a literal translation. These guidelines can be departed from only if the new language does not have words or phrases with which what appears in the English text can be literally rendered . . . thus, there may be an occasional case in which one can speak of a conditionally literal translation.

The translation must contain the recurring expressions and also awkward sentence constructions. No attempt may be made to paraphrase in an explanatory way, to make alterations, or indeed to improve the literary ability and knowledge as expressed in the current English text versions.

The translation . . . may not interpret, explain, or attempt to defend the content of the Standard Works.⁶

⁴ "Neu Übersetzt: Das Buch Mormon, Lehre und Bündnisse, Die Köstliche Perle," *Der Stern*, Sept. 1980, pp. 1, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶ "Guidelines for Translation of the Standard Works," First Presidency and Council of the Twelve, 17 April 1980, an excerpt of which is attached to letter of 23 Jan. 1981, from Robert D. Hales. German version.

NEW AND OLD TRANSLATIONS OF THE TRIPLE COMBINATION

For purposes of this study, I undertook a word-for-word comparison of at least 10 percent of the Book of Mormon (1955), Doctrine and Covenants (1958), and Pearl of Great Price (1958), by gross page length. The sample was non-random in that where possible I concentrated on chapters and sections which were relatively richer in doctrinal content.⁷ It became progressively more difficult to detect anything new as the work came to an end, suggesting that my sample was large and representative enough to convey an authentic picture of the entire translation. This essay condenses and comments on the 267-page set of notes resulting from my study.

The following six sections present findings and examples from this comparison in various categories. For the balance of this article, the immediately previous translations will be referred to as OG (meaning the earlier German translation), with the current translations designated as NG (for new German), and the English text sources as E. Because of constraints of space, I have omitted a large number of examples and categories contained in an earlier draft, which I would be happy to furnish to interested readers.

IMPORTANT WORDS AND PHRASES

Some sixty or seventy words and phrases having key doctrinal or theological import are consistently translated differently in NG as opposed to OG. This section contains what I consider to be the ten most important of these changes in descending order of importance:

1. Repent. *Busse*, the OG term, means more properly "penance," and *Busse tun* is "to do penance." This usage is firmly enshrined in Luther's Bible translation⁸ and in earlier LDS German translations. *Umkehr*, the NG term, is very simply "turning around," and *umkehren* is the corresponding verb. This is a more positive and accurate representation of the process of repentance in LDS theology. *Der Stern* singles out this change for comment:

In contrast to Luther's time, one understands by *Busse* today above all an imposed burden, a kind of punishment. That, however, is in no way at all contained in the English word "repentance." . . . with *Umkehr* one will no longer think of the paying off of sins already committed as imposed by a clergyman . . . but of the necessary change of mind that corresponds to the second principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁹

2. Gentiles. OG uses *Nichtjuden* ("non-Jews"), while NG gives *Andern* ("others"). *Der Stern* justifies this quite curious new usage by claiming that

⁷ The following chapters were examined and compared in their entirety: 1 Ne. 1, 8, 14, 22; 2 Ne. 2, 9, 21, 30; Jac. 4; Words of Mormon; Mosiah 3, 13, 25; Alma 7, 11, 32, 34, 40, 41, 51, 63; Hela. 6, 14; 3 Ne. 9, 13, 18; 4 Ne.; Morm. 9; Eth. 8, 12; Moro. 8; D&C 13, 20, 29, 70, 76, 84, 88, 89, 93, 107, 121, 132; Moses 1; Abr. 1; Joseph Smith — H 1; and Articles of Faith. The 1981 English versions of these scriptures were not consulted, since the earlier versions were those used for the new German translations.

⁸ I used the 1961 printing based on the 1912 text authorized by the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of Germany.

⁹ "Neu übersetzt," p. 4, note.

"gentiles" refers to "all those who do not belong to the covenant people of the Lord."¹⁰ Luther used *Heiden* ("heathens, pagans") to render the Hebrew *goyim* or the Greek *ethne*, but *Der Stern* notes that this is too restrictive for current gospel usage. While providing a clever way out of these difficulties, using *Andern* for "gentiles" will, I fear, cause difficulties in practical terms. I am, however, unable to offer a satisfactory alternative, except for a contrived circumlocution such as *Nichtbundesvölker* ("non-covenant peoples").

3. Savior, salvation. Luther normally used *Heil* or *Seligkeit* for "salvation," and always used *Heiland* for "Savior." OG generally follows this usage. All NG renderings are based on the verb *erretten*, meaning "to save." This modern German term sounds much more secular but is ultimately accurate as well. I for one will particularly miss *Heiland*, a lovely bit of Lutheran German with a unique meaning and usage. It has been replaced in NG by *Erretter*, literally "saver."

4. Celestial, terrestrial, telestial. OG originally used the German words *himmlisch* ("heavenly"), *irdisch* ("earthly"), and, somewhat heroically, *unterirdisch* ("subterranean"). NG, as well as the later revisions of OG, replaced these terms with the English words. The NG also uses "endowment" in the German text to replace OG *Begabung*. The use of English words in a German translation might suggest to some that German is unable to express certain subtleties of LDS theology.

5. Deacon. NG *Diakon* replaces OG *Diener*, which also means "servant." Thus, this change is for the better. Note that NG *Knecht*, generally used for E "servant," replaces OG *Diener* in that context. It is a more old-fashioned term and refers in particular to a servant on a farm or in a rural area.

6. Righteous, righteousness. NG usage of *rechtschaffen* and *Rechtschaffenheit* is superior to OG *gerecht* and *Gerechtigkeit*, since the latter can also mean "just" and "justice."

7. Wicked, wickedness. NG *schlecht* and *Schlechtigkeit* mean simply "bad" and "badness." Although this secular-sounding usage does not convey the moral tone of OG *bös/Bosheit*, it allows "wicked/wickedness" to be differentiated from "evil," since the latter also translates as *bös/Bosheit*.

8. Charity. OG *Liebe* means simply "love," whereas NG *Nächstenliebe* means "love of one's neighbor." The latter allows a finer distinction and removes tautologies in the OG translation of such statements as "charity is the pure love of Christ" (Moro. 7:47, 8:17).

9. Free agency. NG *Entscheidungsfreiheit* ("freedom of decision") is definitely superior to OG *freie Wahl* ("free choice") or *freier Wille* ("free will").

10. Atonement. NG *Sühne* ("expiation") occasionally varies with *Sühnopfer* ("expiatory offering"). OG *Versöhnung* is weaker, basically meaning "reconciliation" in a more secular sense. At issue here is the central LDS concept of the atonement, which can be either an expiation or a reconciliation, the latter following Paul's theological writings on Christ's sacrifice.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

SHORT, SPECIFIC, OBVIOUS ERRORS

My selection from a much broader range of examples falls into two main categories. The greatest number of errors are omissions in OG or NG of words or phrases occurring in the English. My 10 percent sample disclosed forty-five such omissions in the OG Book of Mormon, nineteen in the OG Doctrine and Covenants, and none in the OG Pearl of Great Price. This would equal just less than one such error per page. NG, by contrast, has three omission errors in the Book of Mormon, three in the Doctrine and Covenants, and none in the Pearl of Great Price in my sample. The largest number of omissions in OG were of translations of short narrative and rhetorical words such as “in fine,” “behold,” “even,” and “therefore.” Many of these are awkward or archaic in English and were probably consciously eliminated in OG to give a more contemporary sounding translation.

More substantive and serious omissions in OG include “fiery indignation” (Alma 40:14); “in the land” (Alma 51:2); “the hearts of” (Alma 51:9); “in battle” (Alma 51:19); “they began to” (Hela. 6:17); “because of their wickedness” (3 Ne. 9:10); “did . . . work miracles” (4 Ne. 5); “promises” (4 Ne. 49); “loosed” (Morm. 9:13); “in the firmament” (D&C 76:71, 81); “with the voice” (D&C 84:98); “the voice of” (D&C 88:98); “ordinance” (D&C 88:140); and “in the Church” (introduction to D&C 93).

The complete list of omissions found in NG is as follows: “beloved” (Alma 34:28); “unto you” (3 Ne. 18:37); “with a firmness unshaken” (Morm. 9:28); “several” (D&C 20:61); “meekness” (D&C 107:30); and “To whom It May Concern” (D&C Official Declaration No. 1).

Questionable changes in words and phrases, comprising the second category of short errors, are for the most part obvious translation difficulties.

E “power over the flesh” (1 Ne. 22:23) becomes OG *zeitliche Macht* (“temporal power”). E “kingdom of heaven” (Alma 7:14) becomes *Reich Gottes* (“kingdom of God”) in OG, while the correct *Himmelreich* is used in OG Alma 7:9. Alma 11:45 “raised to an immortal body” becomes OG *wird . . . zur Unsterblichkeit aufstehen* (“will be raised to immortality”), omitting the physical aspect of the resurrection.

In Alma 40:14–23, “soul/souls” is used in the way that “spirit” is used in LDS theology generally. OG translates “souls” in these contexts with *Geister* (“spirits”), the text, in effect, correcting Alma’s discourse to Corianton instead of giving a literal translation. NG uses *Seelen* (“souls”) unwaveringly here despite the unorthodox usage.

I question both OG and NG’s use of “privileges” in Alma 51:6 with *Freiheiten* (“freedoms”) rather than *Vorrechte*, the usual term. Likewise, rendering E “authority” in Alma 51:8 as *Gewalt* (“power, violence”) seems unjustified, although both OG and NG do so. OG *Herz* (“heart”) for E “soul” in Alma 51:14 is clearly wrong. “Necessity” in the introduction to 3 Ne. 18 becomes OG *Wichtigkeit* (“importance”). Likewise, E “ordained” in 4 Ne. 14 seems clearly mistranslated in OG as *erwählt* (“chosen”). “Repent” in D&C 20:37 and 84:76 becomes OG *bereuen* (“to regret”). The reference to church “business” in D&C 20:62 is mistranslated in OG as

Geschäfte, which implies strictly financial dealings. NG is truer to the context here with *Angelegenheiten* ("matters, affairs"). "Fault" in D&C 20:80 seems better rendered NG *Fehltritt* ("false step") than OG *Sünde* ("sin").

In D&C 68:1 "synagogues" seems odd in English and is rendered as *Versammlungshäuser* ("assembly houses") in OG but is literally translated in NG. D&C 76:105 "vengeance" is poorly rendered by OG *Qualen* ("torments"), as is D&C 84:76 "evil works" with OG *Übertretungen* ("transgressions"). In D&C 88:43, "planets" becomes OG *Himmelskörper* ("heavenly bodies").

The Word of Wisdom promise (D&C 89:20) is to "run" (and not be weary) and to "walk" (and not faint). This pair of verbs is correctly given as *laufen* and *gehen* in NG, correcting OG *rennen* which implies a foot race, and *laufen*, a South German dialect usage. *Laufen/gehen*, incidentally, is also used in the UT rendition of the parallel passage in Isa. 40:31.

"Salvation" (D&C 93:53) does not mean *Wohl* ("welfare"), as rendered in OG. "Pure" (D&C 121:2) is not OG *heilig* ("holy"). D&C 134:4 has "control" (of conscience), which NG erroneously reproduces as *überwachen* ("to monitor, supervise"), perhaps by a false analogy with *kontrollieren*, which means the same thing. OG is correct here with *einschränken* ("to constrain, limit").

D&C 135:2 "providence" is not the same as OG *Verheissung* ("promise"). Joseph Smith's autobiographical reference to his "weakness" (Joseph Smith — H 1:29) becomes magnified to NG *Untugenden* ("vice, bad habits").

VARIATIONS IN TRANSLATION WITH NO CONTEXTUAL JUSTIFICATION

NG is more consistent than OG in using the same German word throughout for a given English word (assuming no variation in context). One probable cause of this inconsistency in OG was the convention of German diction that no word be used more than once in a single sentence. This rule was not observed in the NG translation, making for much greater consistency in important theological terms and concepts.

E "wickedness," for example, often fluctuates in OG between *Sünden* ("sins," see 1 Ne. 14:12 for this variant) and *Bosheit* ("evil"), where NG consistently uses the more secular *Schlechtigkeit* ("badness"). "Salvation" is *Heil* in OG 2 Ne. 2:3 but *Seligkeit* in the following verse. NG always uses *Errettung*, a blander and more secular term. Conversely, OG renders both "justice" (2 Ne. 2:12) and "righteousness" (2 Ne. 2:13) as *Gerechtigkeit* ("justice"), while NG more correctly uses *Gerechtigkeit* and *Rechtschaffenheit* ("righteousness"), respectively. E "presence" (of God) is rendered in OG (2 Ne. 9:6, 9) as *Angesicht* ("face") but as *Gegenwart* ("presence" more generally) in 9:8, while NG uses *Gegenwart* consistently.

In OG, Alma 7:25, "spotless" is translated once as *fleckenlos* and twice as *unbefleckt* but as *fleckenlos* throughout in NG. "Restored" (of the body) becomes NG *wiederhergestellt* ("restored" generally) in Alma 11:44 but *zusammengefügt* ("put together") in the preceding verse, while OG has

wiederhergestellt in both verses. In many places E “mercy” fluctuates between *Barmherzigkeit* (“mercy”) and *Gnade* (“grace”) (compare Alma 34:17, 18) in OG, whereas NG is correctly consistent with *Barmherzigkeit* throughout.

“Preach” in Hela. 6:5 is OG *reden* but *predigen* in the following verse, while NG has the more accurate *predigen* in both places. The verb “plot” appearing twice in Hela. 6:27 is rendered first as *verleiten* (“to lure, seduce”) and second as *verschwören* (“to conspire”) in OG, while NG has *verschwören* in both places.

“Multitude” becomes *Volk* (“people”) in OG 3 Ne. 18:2, *Menge* (“mass, multitude”) in OG verse 4, *versammelte Menge* (“assembled multitude”) in OG verse 8, and *Volksmenge* (“multitude of people”) in OG verse 17. NG uses *Menge* throughout. “Slay,” used three times in Eth. 8:6, evokes *schlagen*, *töten*, and *erschlagen* in OG but *töten* for all three in NG. “Condemnation” in Moro. 8:22, 24 becomes *Verdammnis* (“damnation”) in OG verse 22 but *Gericht* (“judgment”) in OG verse 24. NG has the more secular and modern sounding *Schuldigsprechung* (“conviction”) both places.

“Expound” becomes OG *auslegen* (“to interpret”) in D&C 20:42, 46, but OG *erklären* (“to explain”) in D&C 20:50, 59. NG gives the more inclusive *erläutern* (“to explain, interpret, comment on”) in all four instances. In D&C 43:2–7 the word “appoint” or “appointed” appears five times and is translated by five different words in OG (*berufen*, *verordnen*, *betrauen*, *bestimmen*, and *auserkiesen*). NG uses only one verb: *bestimmen* (“to determine”). “Glory,” appearing three times in D&C 76:70, is twice rendered as OG *Herrlichkeit*, the usual term, but once as *Klarheit* (“clarity, brightness, purity”), while NG is consistent with *Herrlichkeit*.

“Built” in D&C 84:4, 5, and 31 becomes OG *gebaut*, *errichtet*, and *erbaut*, respectively, while NG uses *erbaut* consistently. “Reprove” in D&C 84 becomes OG *zur Busse . . . rufen* (“to call to repentance”) in verse 87 but OG *tadeln* (“to blame, reprove, reprimand”) in verse 117, while NG has the more accurate *zurechtweisen* in both instances. In many places NG varies its translation of “ordinance” between *Verordnung*, which is the usual term and that employed generally in OG, and *heilige Handlung* (“holy action, deed, transaction”), a neologism (see D&C 88:139–40). “Officiate” is *amten* in OG D&C 107:9, 11, 33; *dienen* (“to serve”) in verse 10; and *wirken* (“to effect, bring about”) in verse 17. NG has the more narrow *amtieren* in each place.

“Presiding” in OG becomes *leitend* (“leading”) in D&C 107:21, *präsidierend* in D&C 107:22, and *vorstehend* in D&C 107:33. NG has *präsidierend* for each. OG *Engel* (“angel”) for “personage” in Joseph Smith—H 1:30 seems to be a rather serious mistranslation; OG *Gestalt* (“shape, form”) for the same word in verses 17 and 18 seems better. NG uses *Gestalt* in all these instances.

TRANSLATORS’ ATTEMPTS TO CLARIFY, GLOSS, OR REMOVE AMBIGUITIES IN THE ENGLISH TEXT

A scriptural translator faces very difficult choices. Often a meaning that can remain obscure or ambiguous in the original forces the translator to choose

between alternative meanings. As the following instances will bear out, NG is once again clearly superior to OG in handling the difficulties.

In 1 Ne. 22:4, the phrase "whither they are" is clearly bad English. OG translates "whither" by *wo* ("where"), which is correct German. But NG stays faithful to the original by using *wohin* ("whither"), which in this setting is bad German. NG, in addition to its greater consistency in rendering the individual words and phrases, also more faithfully reflects the underlying stylistic qualities of the original.

Throughout 2 Ne. 2, Lehi appears to be speaking to his son Jacob alone, but he addresses "my sons" in verse 14. OG reproduces this literally with *meine Söhne*, but NG, somewhat uncharacteristically, supplies *mein Sohn* ("my son"), telling us what the translator thought Lehi should have said (or perhaps what he thought Joseph Smith should have translated).

Critics of Joseph Smith often used to cite Alma 7:10, in which the birth of Christ is predicted "at Jerusalem," although "at," particularly in the English of the King James version, could mean "near" as well as "in." OG, unfortunately, renders "at" by *in* ("in") here, although it gives *zu* ("at, near") for "at" in Alma 11:4. NG uses *zu* in both places.

Alma 32:35 has the mixed metaphor "ye have tasted this light." OG transforms "tasted" with *wahrgenommen* ("perceived, observed"), while NG maintains the metaphor by using *gekostet* ("tasted").

Hagoth is described in Alma 63:5 as a "curious man." NG renders "curious" here as *wissbegierig*, implying a desire for knowledge. OG *kundig* ("skillful, versed, expert") is probably less wide of the mark, given many earlier references in the Book of Mormon to "curious workmanship" (of the Liahona, etc.). Later, the "curious" workmen in Hela. 6:11 are described in OG as *geschickt* ("adept, able, dextrous") and in NG as *kunstreich* ("artistic, ingenious").

The disciples of Jesus in 4 Ne. 1 had formed "a church of Christ." OG renders the indefinite article literally with *eine Kirche Christi*. NG, however, gives the definite article with *die Kirche Christi*, departing from the original, perhaps in a gratuitous effort to tell the reader that there is only one church of Christ. Actually, "church" is often used by Book of Mormon writers to mean a local congregation, and in many places "church" is rendered by both OG and NG as *Gemeinde* ("congregation, ward, branch") where this meaning is clear.

A very revealing passage is in Moro. 4:2, describing the practice of administering the sacrament: "And they did kneel down with the church. . . ." Likewise, D&C 20:76 instructs those administering to "kneel down with the church." Thus, it was apparently customary in both instances for the entire congregation to kneel with those administering the sacrament. OG, in a serious departure from English, has *in der Gemeinde* ("in the church") in Moro. 4:2, implying that then, as today, the congregation itself remained seated rather than kneeling. NG has *mit der Gemeinde* ("with the church") both places, which is surely as it should be. OG has *vor der Gemeinde* ("in front of the church") in D&C 20:76.

D&C 20:11 has "God does inspire men and call them to do his holy work." OG renders "men" by *Menschen*, which can mean individuals of either sex; but NG, with little contextual and even less theological justification, has *Männer*, which refers to males exclusively.

D&C 20:65 requires that "no person is to be ordained to any office in this church . . . without the vote of that church." OG renders "vote" as *Zustimmung* ("consent, agreement"), implying that a positive vote is necessary for ordination. NG, by contrast, translates "vote" as *Abstimmung* ("vote, show of hands"), implying that merely the act of voting is required for ordination, as opposed to a majority of the votes cast. The latter is perhaps more reflective of current Church practice.

D&C 29:36 has "the devil was before Adam . . .," where from the context it is unclear whether "before" has a spatial or a temporal reference. OG supplies *vor* for "before," which could be either spatial or temporal. NG chooses to render "before" with *eher als* ("earlier than"), which resolves the ambiguity with some contextual justification.

The clause "I come quickly" occurs in D&C 68:35 and in many other places as well. OG gives *bald* ("soon") for "quickly," implying unambiguously that Christ's coming will take place soon. NG gives *schnell* ("swiftly") for "quickly," which suggests that Christ's coming will be swift at whatever time it occurs, sooner or later.

In D&C 70:17, "inasmuch as they have not sinned" is ambiguous. OG supplies *insoweit sie nicht gesündigt haben* ("to the extent that they have not sinned"), implying the possibility of some sin having occurred. NG has *da sie ja nicht gesündigt haben* ("since, after all, they have not sinned"), with the opposite meaning.

D&C 84:16 refers to the "conspiracy" of Cain, although it takes more than one person to conspire. Thus, either "conspiracy" is incorrectly used there, or extrabiblical information is being introduced. OG reproduces "conspiracy" with *Verschwörung*, its literal equivalent, but NG uses *Anschlag* ("attack, assault"), allowing logically for the possibility that Cain acted by himself.

One of the most interesting ambiguities is in D&C 87, Joseph Smith's prophecy about the Civil War. Verse 4 has: "Slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war." It is the slaves or the masters who "shall be marshaled and disciplined for war"? OG implies clearly that it is the slaves, NG equally clearly that it is the masters.

D&C 101:81 refers to "the parable of the woman and the unjust judge" (Luke 18:1-8). For "woman" OG has *Weib*, a somewhat archaic and Lutheran form for "woman." NG has *Witwe* ("widow"), which supplies too much to the translation, even though the woman in the parable is indeed a widow. *Frau* would be preferable.

VARIOUS STYLISTIC DIFFERENCES

OG and NG consistently differ in at least three aspects of style. OG is more likely to employ older or archaic expressions and syntax, particularly

those used in Luther's Bible translation, while NG is more modern and secular in its choice of vocabulary and syntax; NG uses words of Latin and Greek origin much more frequently than OG, which shows a greater preference for native German vocabulary; and finally, NG has a greater tendency toward elevated or lofty expressions, while OG more often employs plain or ordinary speech. Examples of each follow.

Words and expressions no longer common in written or, particularly, in spoken German, many of them inherited from Luther, appear frequently in OG but are by and large replaced by more modern equivalents in NG. For "rejoice," OG uses *frohlocken* while NG has the more modern *sich freuen* (2 Ne. 9:52, 30:6) or *Freude haben* (D&C 121:5). The Lutheran *jüngster Tag* ("youngest day") for "last day" becomes the literal *letzter Tag* in NG (indistinguishable from "latter day"), while OG generally uses Luther's term. "Ascended into heaven" (3 Ne. 18:39) is given in OG by the very Lutheran *fuhr gen Himmel*, while NG has the modern *fuhr in den Himmel auf*. "Up-braided," a rather archaic term itself, is rendered by the older *getadelt* in OG but by the contemporary *gescholten* in NG (D&C 84:76).

Some structural differences also indicate trends in contemporary German that have intensified since OG appeared. For example, the final *-e* appearing optionally in the dative singular form of masculine and neuter nouns, particularly in written German, is almost always lacking in NG but is often present in OG (see W. of Morm. 13; Eth. 12:2; and D&C 76:11, 28). Also, Latin declensional forms of non-German names are common in OG, as in the Luther Bible, but are replaced by the more modern undeclined forms in NG to reflect current usage. *Jesus Christus* retains the Latin genitive *Jesu Christi* throughout OG and NG. This older usage continues in contemporary German and is used in the German name of the Church, among other places. The Latin dative and accusative forms, however, persist in OG but are not used in NG (see 2 Ne. 30:7; Jac. 4:4, 5, 11; W. of Morm. 2, 8; 3 Ne. 18:38; 4 Ne. 23; and Moro. 8:22). For some other biblical names, even the Latin genitive has disappeared in NG: OG *Pauli* and *Moses* become NG *des Paulus* and *des Mose* respectively.

Table 1 summarizes examples in which OG selected a word from the native German vocabulary, while NG rendered the same word from the English with one of Latin or Greek origin. These instances are particularly common in the Doctrine and Covenants, where archaisms in English are not as common as in the other three Standard Works. Counterexamples to Table 2 are OG *Kreatur* and NG *Geschöpf* for "creature" in Morm. 9:22, and OG *Kontinente* and NG *Erdteile* for "continents" in D&C 135:3.

Table 2 lists words and phrases in which NG employs style or language that could be termed elevated, or in some cases bordering on precious. While in most instances this makes for a more elegant and readable German translation, it causes NG to depart a good deal more than OG from the original flavor of Joseph Smith's translations and revelations, in which the language was often rough, quaint, and archaic even for his contemporaries, and of course more so for us today.

TABLE 1
WORDS OF LATIN AND GREEK ORIGIN IN NG

<i>Location</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>OG</i>	<i>NG</i>
2 Ne. 9:53; Alma 63:13; D&C 20:11, 70:8, 76:8	generation	Geschlecht	Generation
Jac. 4:6	prophecy	Weissagung	Prophezeiung
Jac. 4:13	prophecy	weissagen	prophezeien
Alma 51:9	soldiers	Krieger	Soldaten
D&C 20:7, 11	inspire	erleuchten	inspirieren
D&C 20:38, 39, 57, 58, 60	deacon	Diener	Diakon
D&C 20:40	emblems	Sinnbilder	Symbole
D&C 76:14, 28, 30, 49; 107:93; Articles of Faith 7	vision	Gesicht	Vision
D&C 76:39	triumph (noun)	Sieg	Triumph
D&C 76:70	firmament	Himmelszelt	Firmament
D&C 88:78	theory	Lehre	Theorie
D&C 88:80	mission	Sendung	Mission
D&C 121:8, 136:42	triumph (verb)	obsiegen	triumphieren
D&C 130:18, 19	intelligence	Weisheit	Intelligenz
D&C 131:7	matter	Stoff	Materie
D&C 136:12	organize	bilden	organisieren
Official Declaration No. 1	Commission	Ausschuss	Kommission

TABLE 2
ELEVATED OR LOFTY LANGUAGE IN NG

<i>Location</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>OG</i>	<i>NG</i>
Mosiah 25:12	displeased	unzufrieden	ungelhalten
Mosiah 25:20; D&C 29:7, 70:1, 2	hear	hören	vernehmen
Alma 7:1	to attempt	versuchen	sich unterfangen
Alma 32:32	to cast away	wegwerfen	fortwerfen
Hela. 14:23, 27	tempests	Stürme	Unwetter
4 Ne. 30	to rend in twain	sich spalten	zerbersten
Eth. 12:10	they of old	sie vor alten Zeiten	die Altvorderen
D&C 20:32	to fall from grace	von der Gnade fallen	die Gnade verwirken
D&C 20:38, 107:23, 25	duties	Pflichten	Obliegenheiten
D&C 88:93	together	miteinander	mitsammen
D&C 121: intro.	companions	Mitarbeiter	Gefährten
D&C 121:46	compulsory means	Zwang	Nötigung
D&C 132:20	subject (adj.)	untertan	dienstbar

TRANSLATION OF BIBLICAL MATERIAL

A number of segments of the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants contain material also included in the Bible. In the 2 Ne. 12–24 quotations of Isa. 2–14, Joseph Smith follows the King James translators almost word for word, albeit with some significant occasional omissions and additions. Likewise, OG follows the Luther translation closely for the same passages. NG, however, is quite independent of Luther's phraseology and is consistent with the style of NG elsewhere — more modern, more elegant, more apt to use words of non-Germanic origin.

Jesus' repetition of the Sermon on the Mount to the Nephites (3 Ne. 12–14/Matt. 5–7) differs in English only slightly from the New Testament version in the King James translation. Here, OG borrows slightly less than in the previous instance from Luther's translation, and NG is as usual quite independent of Luther.

Five passages from the Bible cited and interpreted by Joseph Smith in D&C 128 are reproduced in English virtually word for word from the King James version. In the first three (Rev. 20:12; Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 15:46–48), OG follows the Luther translation almost word for word. In the last two (1 Cor. 15:29; Mal. 4:5, 6), however, OG quotes directly from the 1931 Zurich Bible and provides an asterisked reference thereto. As usual, NG follows a more elevated and contemporary usage with no apparent dependence on the Luther translation.

Joseph Smith's "translation" of Matt. 23:29, 24 in the Pearl of Great Price, is, of course, an inspired revision of the King James text rather than a translation from the Greek original. The Prophet's many changes and additions to the King James version are important, but the unchanged portions follow the King James text very closely. Likewise, OG follows the Luther version of Matthew except in those places where English departs from the King James text. Once again, NG shows no particular dependence on Luther's translation.

SUMMARY

In each of the six categories of comparison just enumerated, NG emerges as clearly superior to its predecessor. This is by no means a criticism of the doughty and much-revised translation used since the 1920s by two generations of German-speaking members and missionaries. It was an adequate and useful translation, one which carried the message of the LDS scriptures to thousands of new converts and established members. Language does change, however, and the new translation is simply more attuned to current German usage. At the same time — and this doubtless reflects the immense amount of work and dedication lavished on it — NG reproduces the original English texts more faithfully and less obtrusively.

With a few exceptions (notably *Andern* for "gentiles" and *Erretter* for "Savior") I feel that the changes in translations of individual terms and phrases are for the better; and there is much more consistency in their usage.

Spellings of proper names in all four standard works now agree with each other, as well as with canons of orthography for ancient names generally.¹¹

There are far fewer obvious errors in NG than in OG. For omissions, for example, I found sixty-four in OG and six in NG in my 10 percent sample. Attempts to clarify, gloss, paraphrase, or remove ambiguities are rare in both translations but are relatively more abundant in OG. NG is much less likely to employ archaic expressions (many of them borrowed from Luther's vocabulary) than OG, and is more likely than OG to use words of Greek or Latin derivation and to use elevated or lofty words and expressions. In translating biblical material in the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, OG usually follows Luther's translation closely where English versions follow the King James text almost word for word; but NG translates the biblical material directly from the English text into contemporary German with no conscious dependence on other translations.

NG more successfully fulfills the requirements by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve that translations of LDS scripture from English be as literal as possible, preserving ambiguities and awkward expressions where possible. More time and effort have apparently gone into the compilation of working concordances and into the proofreading and editing of NG. The word-to-word and phrase-to-phrase correspondence in crucial doctrinal and theological contexts is much tighter. The entrenched German stylistic convention of not repeating the same word twice in a single sentence is sacrificed more consistently in the interest of preserving that correspondence.

NG also emerges as a smoother, more polished document. Like many translations, it improves stylistically on the original, but unlike others, it remains extraordinarily faithful to the original. Occasionally, material is added, deleted, or changed, but only when the German language does not permit otherwise.

Some time ago I wrote:

Translating a clumsy English phrase into (say) a clumsy Danish phrase which is equally clumsy in all senses of the word is an impossible task. One might justifiably contend that only the English translation of the Book of Mormon should be the repository of its stylistic curiosities, and that interested researchers should be referred to that edition for stylistic material. Most Mormons, however, would probably argue that a slick, highly readable foreign language edition of the Book of Mormon might fail to retain the internal linguistic persuasiveness of the original, much as a missionary very

¹¹ The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price employ biblical names to refer both to persons and places mentioned in the Bible and to persons and places given biblical proper names. Very fortunately, the NG translation made use of the *Verzeichnis der Biblischen Eigennamen (Index of Biblical Proper Names)* published in 1972, which was also the basis of UT spellings (*Der Stern*, March 1981, p. 3). The OG employs biblical spellings which had generally been used in Luther's Bible translation. Also, in rendering all nonbiblical proper names into pronounceable German spellings, the NG translators followed the so-called *Loccumer Richtlinien (Loccum Guidelines)*, which are "binding for the entire German language area and which reproduce the sounds of ancient languages in our pronunciation" (*Der Stern*, Sept. 1980, p. 3). As a result, several dozen proper names peculiar to the Book of Mormon have received new spellings in NG that facilitate the desired pronunciation according to German phonological rules and orthographic conventions.

adept in his foreign language often encounters only suspicion on the part of his contacts, while his linguistically more unsophisticated companion inspires confidence and sympathy.¹²

After reading the excellent product of years of devoted and inspired translating by Brother Luschin and his collaborators, I am more certain that faithfulness to the original does not require the sacrifice of stylistic clarity and beauty.

The appearance of both the Uniform Translation and the new triple combination in the same year is extremely fortunate. Both are similar in terms of stylistic and orthographic convention, as well as translating philosophy.

I would like, however, to pose two questions relating to the Uniform Translation. The first is quite specific. As a Bible translated primarily for German-speaking Catholics, it contains the books traditionally included in Catholic Bibles translated into any language. These include several apocryphal books as well as those in the current King James version and other Protestant Bibles. The UT apocryphal books are Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Jesus Sirach, and Baruch. I was unable to find any information for LDS readers about the presence of apocryphal literature in the new Church-sanctioned Bible translation. Inclusion of the apocrypha in a book of scripture intended for Latter-day Saints appears to fly in the face of Joseph Smith's revelation recorded in D&C 91, which states that the apocrypha were not of sufficient important to be included in his translation of the Bible.

A second question regards the authority, if any, of the voluminous commentary which accompanies the Uniform Translation. The explanatory text preceding Isaiah, for example, states categorically that three separate prophets produced the book.¹³ While this reflects the prevailing view of Old Testament students in recent years, many LDS authorities and some LDS scriptural scholars continue to maintain that Isaiah was the work of one writer, using Book of Mormon references to the "words of Isaiah" in partial support of that view. Other explanatory texts in the Uniform Translation, by contrast, tend to buttress LDS viewpoints. For example, a footnote to 1 Cor. 15:29 says: "Reference to the vicarious baptism on behalf of the unbaptized dead occasionally performed in Corinth."¹⁴ Nevertheless, no advice seems to have been given to Church members about these and other explanatory texts.

The efforts of old German scripture translators were, at least according to Joseph Smith, worthy of praise and emulation. In a sermon he gave the month before his death, the Prophet, who knew more than a smattering of the German language himself, declared:

The Germans are an exalted people. The old German translators are the most correct — most honest of any translators; and therefore I get testimony to bear me out in the revelations that I have preached for the last fourteen years. The old German,

¹² Marcellus S. Snow, "Translating Mormon Thought," *DIALOGUE* 2 (Summer 1967): 52–53.

¹³ UT, pp. 803–4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1281, note.

Latin, Greek, and Hebrew translations all say it is true: they cannot be impeached, and therefore I am in good company.¹⁵

In his day, then, Joseph Smith held that the German translations — including most prominently, one presumes, Martin Luther's — were the “most correct”; more correct, it might be inferred, than even the King James version, which the prophet used in citing and translating biblical materials in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, and which was the basis of the revisions comprising his own translation of the Bible.

What, then, is the status of the King James version in the Church today? It is, to be sure, an exalted one — as the “official” LDS English Bible. So influential is the King James version, in fact, that the UT was selected for use by German-speaking Mormons precisely because it came “closest to the King James version.”¹⁶ There is a prevalent view today that the translators of the King James Bible, despite the relative paucity of manuscripts and the backwardness of the scholarly tools at their disposal, were inspired to produce an English text which agrees more closely than any other with “the gospel” — in particular, with newer scripture to be revealed two hundred years later.

There is no little irony in the fact that the Uniform Translation has been adopted because of its similarity to the King James version, while the translation that it replaced as the “official” Church Bible in German — that of Martin Luther — seems to have been considered by Joseph Smith as the “most correct” translation available in his day.

More than a few Church members have wondered, upon hearing children and even adults stumble over the pronunciation and meaning of the Elizabethan English of the King James version — however poetic — whether it is time for a more modern English translation to enter into general Church usage if only as a supplement for teaching and study. We may rightly congratulate but perhaps also envy the German Saints, who now possess a Bible translation in contemporary idiom that takes advantage of the latest biblical scholarship.

I use contemporary English Bible translations routinely, alongside the King James version, with my family and in Church activities. The New English Bible and Lattimore's translation of the four Gospels and Revelation are my favorites. More than once I have read from them in family evenings, Church talks, and lessons with no apparent spiritual damage to my listeners. Is it time to consider a new version of the Bible for English-speaking Church members?

¹⁵ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, B. H. Roberts, ed., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1950), 6:364.

¹⁶ See note 1.