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Glossaries for Missionaries

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The oldest known, written document in what has become present-day German is Der Abrogans. It was written in the latter part of the 8th century in one of the monasteries in central or southern Germany (probably Fulda). It is an alphabetical, late Latin glossary of synonyms and received its name from its first entry: abrogans 'demütig, humble.' It is only one of many glossaries prepared by monks who were christianizing the Germanic tribes. With few exceptions, the literary documents of the Old High German period originated in the scriptoria of the monasteries. Since much of their activity consisted of recasting Latin into German, the scribes were constantly searching for suitable German words or expressions to use in translating Latin. The more common practice was simply to jot down the German equivalent some place on the page containing the Latin text, usually over the word or in the margin to one side. This resulted in more than four thousand pages of interlinear, marginal and other glosses stemming from the Old High German period when the Latin church was teaching the Germanic tribes the basic tenants of Christianity and at the same time the rudiments of writing (See John T. Waterman, A History of the German Language, University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1966,73-75).

If we look in the section on theology in Peter Kühn's systematic description of German dictionaries (Deutsche Wörterbücher, Niemeyer: Tübingen, 1978, 266 pp.), we find 45 entries of monolingual dictionaries. They range from the Wörterbuch der Religion of 1848 to Melzer's Der christliche Wortschatz der deutschen Sprache of 1951. There were no multilingual entries. This of course does not mean that they never existed, but it does mean that they never appeared as significant collections in print. It does serve to point out the fact that very little has been done in the way of glossaries for missionaries since the introduction of Christianity into the German-speaking areas by the Catholic missionaries of the 8th century. What has been done consists of multivolume bible dictionaries and lexica intended for theological seminaries and not for proselyting missionaries.

Paul Tillich's lectures on theological German at Union Theological Seminary and at Princeton, Yale and Drew universities in the fifties did spark an interest in Walter M. Mosse, who in 1955 published A Theological German Vocabulary (Macmillan: New York, 1955, 148 pp.). It contains some 3,000 German theological key words (der Erlöser, die Dreieinigkeit, die Mischehe, der Mormone) illustrated in quotations from the Luther Bible and the Revised Standard Version. It too was intended more for students of theology than for missionaries.

The next work to which I will refer is described in a note in Dialog 1, No. 2 (1966):133. The section on recently received publications has the following:

Marcellus S. Snow, Comp. An English-German L.D.S. Dictionary. Privately printed by the compiler. 1966.

Written by a returned missionary, this volume attempts to
bridge the gap between common terms found in the regular
English-German dictionary and the needs of Mormon
missionaries in German speaking lands and converts wishing
to comprehend L.D.S. literature. Already in use at the
Language Training Mission at Brigham Young Univeristy,
this successful work will hopefully be followed by similar
efforts in other languages. There will be more
understanding on Sunday when the German Saints gather at
die Priesterschaftsversammlung with Brother Snow's
dictionary in hand.

In the first presentation of this paper, I noted that I had not
been able to locate a copy of the work or even verify that it actually
was printed and in use at the Language Training Mission. I noted
further that it was never reviewed in a subsequent issue of Dialog as
promised in a footnote to the first notice, even though it was mentioned
in the introduction to the very interesting article by the same author
("Translating Mormon Thought," Dialog, Nr. 2 (1967):49-62).
Parenthetically, I invited anyone who might know more about it to get in
touch with me. This appeal prompted Eric Olson, who remembered having
seen it, to leave a note--on my desk. It contained the call number
(Americana M203 Sn 61e) to a copy in the special collections in the
Brigham Young University library.

This small volume (approximately 4" x 5") contains ca. 4,000 words
of the following kinds: 1) exclusively L. D. S. terms (Pearl of Great
Price), 2) words with special L. D. S. meanings (endowment, garment), 3)
general religious words (baptism, faith), 4) scriptural names, places,
events and objects (ark of the covenant, John the Baptist, 5) words
from other religions (Jehova's Witness, and 6) a great many words with
no immediate relationship to religion (study, happiness, visit).
In its own right, it is a tribute to individual initiative and in
my opinion is well conceived as to format and size and it does contain a
great deal of information of use to the missionary. I believe there are
many words beyond the grasp of the average missionary (intercede,
irrationality, monasticism, transsubstantiation, etc.) and that the
spectrum of items included is too broad. References to the Luther
translation are to the edition of 1912. This results in some archaic
terms. For instance, for jubilee the 1912 edition has 'Halljahr'
whereas the 1964 edition has 'Erlaßjahr.' The Einheitsübersetzung has
Jubeljahr. I believe its more serious drawback it that it is not
frequency based, a notion to which I will return later.

Those of you who know German noted that the distinction in the
description between das Priestertum 'Amt, Würde, Stand des Priesters,
priestly office, authority' and die Priesterschaft 'Gesamtheit von
Priestern, priesthood, clergy' has been lost. The notice referred to
the Priesterschafts- versammlung whereas we are now informed in the
glossary prepared by the translation department (see below), that we are
to use Priestertums- and not Priesterschafts- in this compound. The
entry in Snow's dictionary also has this distinction.

Many other missionaries and translators must have had their word
lists but they never made it into print or were otherwise lost. Further

search among the archives of the Church and the materials used by missionaries and translators may reveal other glossaries prepared by missionaries as they were proselyting or translating into German.

I have been able to find three fairly recent word lists published by the Church. The first, entitled Word List 1971, is a 58 page booklet (Copy no. 0068), presumably published by the Church Translation Department in Frankfurt. It contains some 1400 English words and phrases with their German equivalents. More than 90% of them are organizational terms ranging from 'average attendance' (durchschnittliche Anwesenheit) and 'balance on hand' (Saldovortrag) to 'brainstorming' (Ideensturm) and 'sego lily' (Mormonentulpe). The few theological words (between 5 and 10%) include equivalents for 'celestial marriage' (die ewige Ehe), 'the Only Begotten' (der Einziggezeugte), 'gentiles (non-Mormon)' (Andersgläubige, Nichtmormonen, Nichtisraeliten, Nichtjuden, andere Völker), and 'natural man' (naturhafter Mensch): nicht: natürlicher Mensch). (To my knowledge, this last gloss has not found its way into any of the translations of the L.D.S. scriptures). The basically organisational nature of this list makes it only of limited use for missionaries.

The second is the LDS International Glossary Guidelines for Intercultural Writers, Adapters, Translators and Communicators published by the Church (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1973, revised 1974, 162 pp., PX TR 0178 GE). From its format, it is evident, that the basic list was first prepared and printed in English. The foreign language equivalents were then added and the new bilingual list was printed. According to the introduction, it contains (1315 entries of) "basic organisational terms, church history terms, and terms having a shade of meaning somewhat different in church usage."

The third word list, simply labeled German Word List, looks to be computer generated. It contains approximately 2300 words. Based on a preliminary examination of the similarities and differences, this third list sees to be a collation of the two lists described above with the exception that there are no English definitions for some of the more difficult words.

With the exception of the Old High German glosses, the only one of the glossaries described so far that offers much that is useful to young Mormon missionaries currently entering the Missionary Training Center is the work by Snow. The reason that it was not reprinted may be related to the shortcomings listed above or perhaps to the fact that it did not have an institutional sponsor. In any event, it is regrettable that it did not make its way into the hands of more missionaries.

Let me now turn to an innovative development which does have an institutional sponsor. It is the paperback, pocket Navajo Dictionary for Missionaries (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications, 1979, 116 pp.). It contains about 2,000 English words with their equivalents in Navajo. The introduction notes that most of them are found in Young and Morgan's The Navaho Language. It also has an extra mile section of approximately 250 words most of which are not found in Young and Morgan. Since it deals with a language and culture very different from our own, we might expect it to have many items not in similar glossaries for

other languages. It contains large numbers of words for animals (antelope, badger, mouse, mosquito, grasshopper and giraffe) and for parts and activities associated with the human body (eyebrow, eyelash, eyelid, heartburn, urinate, vomit). I also counted some 35 Navajo equivalents for place names of the Southwest. Missing were such gospel terms as •'resurrection, atoning sacrifice, bishop, quorum, restoration, ordain, celestial, etc.). It might very well be that such a glossary should include the items noted above. However, since it was prepared for use by missionaries, it might also have included the gospel words as well, even though they are in the text and discussions used by the missionaries.

Let me recapitulate: 1) missionaries who speak one language and wish to proselyte in another need glossaries from the target language into the source language and from the source language into the target language, 2) theological dictionaries and lexica and other similar works do not meet the needs of proselyting missionaries, 3) glossaries prepared by the Church translation department are mostly organisational and likewise provide little that is useful for missionaries, 4) an English-German glossary for missionaries was completed but lacked in institutional sponsor, 5) an English-Navajo glossary has been completed and is in use but it includes many extraneous terms and lacks many basic gospel words.

Language teachers interested in reducing the learner's task at the beginning level have generated word frequency lists. In an attempt to arrive at a minimal consensus, I have combined the various frequency lists of German into what I call the German core vocabulary. It contains the words that are listed in all four or three of the four frequency counts examined by H. M. Sommer in his dissertation (A Comparison of the Vocabularies of Hörspiele, Short Stories, Newspapers and Spoken German, University of Georgia, 1972). It includes his own study of Hörspiele, the studies of Preller and Zimmermann on the short story, Swenson's study of newspaper German and Pfeffer's study of spoken German. To these were added all the words that are in all six frequency lists collated by Wolf Dieter Ortmann in his Hochfrequente deutsche Wortformen III (Goethe Institut: München, 1979). In addition to the Pfeffer's study included by Sommer, Ortmann's study includes the vocabulary counts of Michea, Öhler, Wängler, Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache and Kaeding. To this base derived from the various frequency counts were added the words that were in the vocabularies of nine of the twelve recent popular beginning German texts examined by Marjorie Tussing and Jon Zimmermann, "Vocabulary in First-year German Texts," UP Nr. 2 (1977):65-73. The result is a core vocabulary of 790 words. It is presently in machine-readable form awaiting final arrangments for its publication as an inexpensive, paperback dictionary for students of beginning German.

A second project which I believe is more directly applicable to missionary needs is that done by James Nielson. He prepared a word frequency list of missionary German. He used the eight missionary discussions, the general church book (Grundsätze des Evangeliums, Frankfurt, 1978 PB IC 0245 GE) and a brochure by Enzio Busche (Licht breitet sich aus). The corpus consisted of about 70,000 running words and 3887 different words.

I want to turn next to a comparison of the core vocabulary with the gospel words in Nielson's study. Let me preface the comparison by referring to Sommer's conclusion after examining the various frequency counts.

> The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that each
> list constitutes a rather distinct vocabulary. Knowledge
> of one will have limited value for others. On the
> average, over 30% of the words on one list were not on any
> of the others. (Sommer, p. 61)

When we examine the gospel vocabulary of German we should expect to find that about one-third of the words are not on the other list. Now to the results of the comparison. There were 412 of the first 789 words in the Nielson list that were not in the core vocabulary. That amounts to 52%, or about 20% greater than the differences noted by Sommer. I am sure the small number of items compared affected the statistics somewhat but we can be assured that the difference is on the order of magnitude of at least one-third. Surely, the vast difference between typical spoken language and gospel language is of a magnitude as to require us to provide specific language aids to help bridge the gap and overcome the deficiencies in standard commercial dictionaries.

In order to get an idea of how useful a standard pocket dictionary might be to the missionary, I looked up the most frequent gospel words in Nielson's study in Collins Gem German-English, English-German Dictionary (London, 1978). It is a small, pocket dictionary containing "over 46,000 references" and is the one most recommended and most used by the missionaries. Twelve were not listed: das Priestertum, die Schrift, der Sabbat, auferstehen, das Sühnopfer, ordinieren, vorirdisch, die Vision, celestial, das Millenium, die Schriftstelle, das Erdenleben. For sixteen additional items, the standard Mormon definition was not listed. For die Buße it lists 'atonement, penance, and fine' but not 'repentance.' For das Abendmahl it lists 'Holy Communion.' For die Gemeinde it has 'district, community, congregation, parish' but not 'ward.' For seven nouns the meaning had to be derived from the verb: die Verheißung from verheißen and der Erlöser from erlösen. Overall, we can say that in about 25% of the cases the pocket dictionary is not helpful when used in looking up gospel terms. This certainly is not critical; after all, missionaries have been getting along in spite of such inadequacies for years.

I also looked up the English equivalent of the same gospel words in the English-German section of the same dictionary. The results were similar. 'Covenant, celestial' and 'terrestrial' were missing. There were eight definitions for 'call' but not the religious word used in German (berufen). For our 'ward' there was the hospital meaning 'Station' and the legal meaning 'Mündel' but not the standard Mormon German word Gemeinde. Likewise Sakrament was listed for 'sacrament' but the standard word Abendmahl was missing. Weihen and verfügen were listed for 'ordain' but not ordinieren. Reue is listed for 'repentance' but not Buße, and Priesteramt is listed for 'priesthood' but not Priestertum. Again we must conclude that in about 25% of the cases, the standard commercial dictionary is not adequate.

Let me turn now to some suggestions for meeting these deficiencies. We can, I believe, make a profile of the lexical needs of the missionary and take steps to meet them, at least better than they have been in the past. I believe such a profile would include the following: 1) the most frequent words of the spoken language (i.e.,the core vocabulary consisting of somewhere between 800 and 1200 words depending mostly on how large the glossary will be or when we expect the missionary to begin using a standard dictionary), 2) the most frequent gospel words (somewhere between 300 and 500 words), 3) the words essential for use in the Missionary Training Center (somewhere between 200 and 300 words). The result would be between 1300 and 2000 words in the target language and the same number in the source language. It would ideally be an inexpensive, paperback or plastic, pocket size dictionary, which the missionary would have with him all the time and literally use up. It would serve to bridge the gap between his needs and the standard dictionaries. It would contain all the necessary information about the forms of nouns and verbs, much of which standard pocket dictionaries do not include, and, in addition, it should have a typical sentence or phrase to show how the word is used. Almost no pocket dictionary has sample sentences or phrases, the Navajo glossary described being a notable exception. With the aid of computer technology, we are in a position to produce such glossaries and I believe they would provide considerable help to the beginning missionary.

We can expand the usefulness of this idea to all the languages in which the Church is training proselyting missionaries and it would not have to require the amount of time and energy invested in the preparation of the (German) gospel frequency list by Nielson. If we were to derive a single corpus of gospel language for English, we would not have to enter 70,000 words into the computer for each proselyting language. At present, there are some materials already available to begin such a project. They consist mostly of scriptures and concordances to scriptures, but they also contain magazine articles, conference talks and manuals. I believe our projected profile should include the new missionary discussions and a general treatment of gospel principles such as the one used by Nielson. Likewise, the essential words for use in the Missionary Training Center would be the same for all languages. For the third component (the core vocabulary) a different course may have to be taken if frequency counts are not already available in a given language.

I have tried to show that theological dictionaries, glossaries of organizational terms and commercial pocket dictionaries do not meet the lexical needs of L. D. S. proselyting missionaries and that their lexical needs consist of 1) a core vocabulary of the most frequent words in the language, 2) a gospel vocabulary of the most frequent religious words, and 3) an "MTC" vocabulary of terms unique to the Missionary Training Center. I have further tried to show that the core vocabulary can be derived from available frequency counts and that the gospel vocabulary and the "MTC" vocabulary can be derived once for all languages. I believe the time has come for us to use our expertise and our technology to provide useful and inexpensive glossaries for missionaries.