The Church and Translation

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> For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power.
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> (D&C 90:11)

This verse is usually considered a missionary scripture, but it has an additional meaning for those of us who work in the Translation Division[1] of the Church. We feel that we are as important in fulfilling this scripture as are those who carry the books we translate. Though we are not ordained to our callings, we are charged to translate the scriptures and manuals of the Church for its members throughout the world. It sobers us to see the influence of translations on those who read them and to realize the difficulty of touching people's lives without them. The translation of scriptures and other materials plays an increasingly important role in an expanding Church.

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

The history of translation in the Church began more than two years before the Church was organized. Joseph Smith received the gold plates from Moroni in September 1827 and as early as December of that year had begun to translate some of the characters that were on them.[2]

Joseph was a seer. He had the Urim and Thummim, which, among other things, was an aid to translation—a dramatic and valuable aid. For a short while, translation seemed to be a function of only the prophet's calling. This proved untrue. A prophet is the first to receive revelation for the whole Church, but the fact that receiving

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[1]Translation is presently organized as a division of the Materials Management Department under the Presiding Bishopric.

[2]See Joseph Smith—History 2:62.

some revelation involves translation is really only incidental to a prophet's duties.

The work of translation soon fell to others. The first translation of the Book of Mormon from English was made in 1851 into Danish. Peter O. Hansen, a Dane, began translating the Book of Mormon while living in Nauvoo. In 1849, he was called on a mission to Denmark, where he finished his translation two years later and had it printed.[3] The German, French, Welsh, and Italian translations were published in 1852; the Hawaiian, in 1855.

Methods and places of translation did not change much for over a hundred years. Translation remained a mission-level responsibility. Local mission leaders would call a native member to translate the Book of Mormon. Often in the midst of the project the translator was asked to translate tracts and bits of other scriptures to meet immediate needs. The translator would be given a copy of the English scripture and the admonition "always work with the Spirit." This was sound advice, but it was also an apology for the fact that there was nothing more to give translators in the way of support. They were mostly on their own.

The first full-time translator for the Church was Eduardo Balderas. In 1939, Antoine R. Ivins wrote a letter to Brother Balderas in El Paso, Texas, asking him to come to Salt Lake City to translate Church materials into Spanish, saying "that the matter of translations had been discussed by the Missionary Committee and that they felt that the time had come to do translating work for the Spanish-speaking missions instead of each mission doing their own translating and taking up, in most instances, the time of their best missionaries."[4]

At the end of the Second World War, other translators came to Salt Lake City to translate into the various European languages. These translators functioned as a part of the Missionary Department from 1946 to 1960. When Alvin R. Dyer was called to preside over the European Mission of the Church in 1960, he took the responsibility for this translation back to Europe with him and set up an office there. The translators in Salt Lake City were disbanded, except for a small group that continued in Spanish.

Substantial organizational changes started in 1965 when the Translation Services Department was organized with its headquarters in Salt Lake City and offices in the language areas. The responsibility

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[3]Orson Brinke West, *Den Danske Missions Historie* [a history of the Danish Mission] (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), p. 30.

[4]Oral History Program, "Eduardo Balderas," LDS Church Historical Department, p. 38.

for translation previously held by the separate missions now came under one coordinating head. Under this central organization, the number of published translations increased sharply. The department published a monthly magazine in sixteen languages, giving uniform, timely, high-quality messages to the Saints in over thirty-seven countries. A system of scheduling and tracking translations was also started. This system soon became so efficient that the translations of Church programs abroad, once phased one or two years behind the English, are now published simultaneously with them.

The last decade has seen more changes in the way translations are done than were seen in the previous one hundred years; the next decade promises to bring even greater changes. Though we have solved many seemingly overwhelming problems, many yet remain as our challenges for the 1980s.

TRANSLATION, A STEWARDSHIP FOR MEANING

One of the biggest challenges the Translation Division continually faces is teaching Church members what translation is. The concept people have of translation is influenced by several popular notions about language. Many members of the Church view language as a necessary and temporary evil—something to be endured until perfect communication takes place entirely through pure Spirit or in a single "pure" language. This notion surfaces in the trite observation that if each translator were given a Urim and Thummim the word would go forth in purity, free from the taint of individual interpretation. A second, and probably more prevalent notion, is that the term *word-for-word* is synonymous with "faithful" in reference to exactness in translation, a "a word-for-word" translation being the only "good" translation.

The only people who do not seem to be at all certain about what a perfect translation is are those doing translations. The situation is similar to the different ways poor people and rich people view money. The poor have a definite advantage because they are certain money would solve all of their problems; the rich, however, know better. It is the same with translation. The Translation Division has no comforting delusion that there is such a thing as a perfect translation. All translations create error and distortion. All translations are interpretations—what the translator *thinks* the author said. Miguel de Cervantes was right when he commented over four hundred years ago: "Translating from one language to another is like looking at the back side of a Flemish Tapestry where, although the figures are

distinguishable, there are still so many ends and threads that the beauty and exactness of the work is obscured."[5]

Although a stewardship from God, language is a tool of some precision and works best in the hands of great writers who have made the effort to master it. However, error is inseparably tied to translation because of the medium—human language—which is imperfect in all its uses. Once we accept the limitations of language, we can see how important the role of the Spirit is in helping us understand the written word of God.

On the other extreme, there is a great temptation to think that if we translate the words, the Spirit will provide all the meaning. This also is not so. There is more to the stewardship of language than just words. In addition to the words and the Spirit, the meaning is conveyed by such things as intonation, rhetorical figures, syntax, imagery, rhythm, discourse patterns, logic, and pauses. All these are part of man's language. We doubt that God will provide all the meaning of a translation through the Spirit that man should have provided through his skilled use of language. The Spirit will compensate for the limitations of human language, but not usually for the translator's neglect. The Holy Ghost is not a substitute for effort. Saint Augustine said it thus: "Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not."[6] This concept applies to translation as much as to any other work in the Church.

To say that "word-for-word" translation is synonymous with "faithful" or "good" translation shows another weakness: a small part of every text consists of idioms, phrases where the meaning of the whole is greater than the sum of the individual words. In English, if you "skate on thin ice," you might end up "in hot water," but the whole thing may actually take place at room temperature. In such cases a "faithful" translation follows the meaning and not the words. So, too, there are "discourse idioms," situations where sentences and phrases group together to take on new meaning beyond that which they convey individually. President Kimball concluded a filmstrip with this strong reiteration: "Home life, home teaching, parental guidance, father in leadership—that's the panacea for all of the ailments, a cure for all of the diseases, a remedy for all of the problems."[7] In some cultures, people would react to a literal translation of this by saying, "Good film. Too bad, though, that the Prophet

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[5]Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, part II, chap. 62.

[6]Quoted by the Reverend Leslie D. Weatherhead, in *Reader's Digest* (March 1962), p. 94.

[7]*The Family and the Home* (filmstrip VVOF133A), Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975.

fumbled around trying to find the right words at the end." Repetitions and other such word groupings acquire extra meaning through conventions that change from language to language. Translating sentences in the same order as they are found in the source language does not always produce the response in a translation audience that the author intended. A translator cannot always be faithful to the form, that is to the words, phrases, and sentences, and at the same time be faithful to the author and the audience.

Though it is a paradox of translation that a translator must often distort words and order to preserve meaning, we should not think that preserving meaning is completely possible either. We can define meaning as information interpreted by a human mind. Ideally, the translator should concern himself not with what he thinks the information means, but with giving the reader straight information. But information cannot be separated from personal meaning. Words do not only contain information, they contain meaning; human language does not exist apart from human minds. The antiseptic definitions in a dictionary are only an incomplete skeleton of usage and are subject to human fleshing out. Oliver Wendell Holmes said:

> A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged; it is the skin of a living thought, and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used.[8]

IN THE TRANSLATOR'S SHOES

Now, hopefully, the reader feels less secure about what translation is than he did before he started this article. Translation is not neat. It is not entirely an art; neither is it exactly a science. It is an ordered set of well-defined principles—with a lot of exceptions. Applicability varies for all these principles, except one—effort. Good translation is always the result of effort. It is produced by people who have developed their language skills into a precision tool, and the only security there is against unnecessary distortion is to use such skilled people as translators.

A translator is not just a typist or a clerk who performs mechanical operations on a typewriter with a strange keyboard. The translator must be moved by the same spirit as the author and must be at least equally gifted in the use of his own language as the author was in his. He is also a writer. The translator continually makes value judgments, weighing the interests of the author, the interests of the

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[8]Oliver Wendell Holmes, cited in *Reader's Digest*, August 1969, p. 21.

audience, and the interests of the group or person requesting the translation. Suppose an author wrote the following paragraph on the early Christian Church (though not a real quote, this paragraph points up several problems that do surface in real materials):

> How converted were the Gentiles? They gave up wealth, associations, reputations, and even their lives. No one has ever tabulated how many corpses in the catacombs had asses in their mouths, but the number of those martyred was very great indeed.

Put yourself in the shoes of the translator; study that text until you are reasonably sure you understand the meaning. That is harder than it looks. Maybe you should concentrate on information instead. The separate words seem clear in themselves, so you decide to do a ''faithful'' translation, to go word-for-word and leave the meaning up to the reader. The result might be that the Chinese members will read about corpses with donkeys in their mouths, so, too, the Tongans and the Brazilians. The Chinese and Portuguese translators may further interpret the ambiguous English to mean one donkey per corpse; the Tongan translator, with the text already straining his sense of the ridiculous, may interpret it to mean that there are several donkeys in the mouth of each corpse. Things deteriorate quickly.

Let us go back and start over.

Before a translator can translate this or any sentence, paragraph, or work, he has to know what it means. When a translator cannot understand the meaning of a text, those reading his translation will not be able to understand it either. If he translates literally (word-for-word) when he does not know the meaning, he only perpetuates and amplifies his ignorance.

Now, what *does* the text mean? The word *asses* is the plural of *as*, a small Roman coin. It was the custom among those who believed in the Greco-Roman gods to place a small coin under the tongue of a dead person because on his journey to Hades the deceased would have to cross the river Styx and would therefore have to pay the toll that the ferryman, Charon, charged everyone to cross. Hence the coin. Being buried with a coin in one's mouth was a pagan custom incongruous in the catacombs, a place of Christian burial. Such a combination of facts might indicate that the families of some converts had second thoughts about what awaited them on the other side. The author then contrasts this attitude with that of a martyr.

So, now that we know the meaning, how do we translate it? We must first determine as best we can what kind of an audience the author was writing to. Here he seems to be talking to an exclusive

audience within a larger audience. It is not unusual for an author to scatter "caviar" to a select few within a larger audience he may be addressing and make the others reach. We could translate it as is and make the translation audience reach, too. Or, we could insert a footnote with the full explanation and thus broadcast the meaning to everybody. Would we serve the author's intentions with such a footnote? No, we would not. But what about the audience? If the author wants only the elite one percent in Samoa to know what he means, have we done well by translating the passage as is into Samoan, where we can safely say that absolutely no one will understand what he means? Again, no. We would be serving neither the author's nor the audience's interests.

So far, we have talked about putting all or none of the omitted meaning in; there are many other solutions. We could replace the detail with the intended thrust.

> No one ever tabulated how many early Christian converts secretly had doubts about their new religion, but . . .

We could also insert words or phrases that are more general so more people would understand.

> No one ever tabulated how many Christians buried in the catacombs had coins in their mouths, but . . .

or

> No one ever tabulated how many early Christians were buried in pagan fashion, with coins in their mouths, their families having had doubts about their new religion, but . . .

or

No one ever tabulated how many early Christians were buried in pagan fashion, with coins in their mouths, their families having had doubts about their new religion, but . . .

As all these are possible solutions, the translator needs to judge how far his audience can reach. With work, he can approximate the author's apparent intent of teasing his audience.

There is another possible version:

> There is no way to tell how many early Christians disavowed their religion under persecution, but we have a good measurement of how many were martyred, and that number is very great indeed.

Isn't it beautiful? It is clearer than the original. It is a more precise thought. There is one problem, however; it is a different thought, not a translation of the same thought. The author in no way links

persecution to the first half of the contrast he suggests. No matter how good this version is, a translator does not need to distort the text this far to make the idea understandable; if he does, then his lack of exactness neutralizes his usefulness as a translator. He has lost his respect for the author and is rewriting him, something that should not be done without permission. A good translation says with the least possible distortion what the author said so the audience will understand it. This example of the corpse in the catacombs is certainly not typical of all the materials we translate, but it does illustrate several problems at once.

What, then, is the best solution to the problems in the example? There isn't one best solution. There are many more variables involved than we have considered. Varied cultures, the originator's expectations, the immediate context—the translator will need to weigh all these things to arrive at his final judgment.

Part of the translator's job is to stay abreast of current usages in both his languages. He must be familiar with dozens of different jargons such as law, computers, public relations, genealogy, art, printing, building construction, finance, and social work. Demands are made on him to translate specialized words that native speakers of any language would be hard put to decipher. For example:

> Some wood polishes may affect oystering especially where surfaces are thirsty.[9]

> Jagged metal can get in an open zerk fitting, creating unnecessary wear on the motor.[10]

> Layering the information in a release lets the press have parts they can blurb or use for captioning.[11]

> The Christiansen collection is a valuable addition to Mormoniana.[12]

> Set security net prior to deplaning of principal, select routes with least foot traffic and post progress with walkie-talkie.[13]

A translator distinguishes himself by his versatility and his experience, and becoming an expert translator may take ten or more years. Clearly, a good translator is a valuable investment for the Church and is harder to replace than many other employees. But

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[9]Draft copy of *Manual for Meetinghouse Maintenance* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974).
[10]Ibid.
[11]Correspondence of LDS Church Public Communications Department.
[12]Correspondence of Relief Society.
[13]Correspondence of LDS Church Security Department.

many translators move on to better-paying positions inside and outside Church employment. We have a real need to replace experienced translators and, therefore, to accelerate novice translators to greater proficiency sooner.

We feel that training is an important key; much of what is instinctive in a seasoned translator can be isolated, classified, and taught to others, reducing the number of years it takes them to become highly proficient. Job applicants and all translators take a rigorous test to determine their strong and weak points with language. Supervisors recommend specific training for individuals and evaluate their work regularly through a standard worldwide rating system. Translators receive training in such basic skills as using library facilities, formatting letters, and building vocabulary, as well as in such advanced skills as translating similes and metaphors. Advanced training starts out with very basic examples and builds up to such brainbusters as:

a saucy little dirt road skipping off into the hills in search of adventure (Mrs. W. N. Hargraves)

fragrant foreclosia clambering all over the mortgage (Frank Sullivan)

Perhaps the most important thing to teach a translator is a belief that nothing is untranslatable, that most of what frustrates him will yield to time, experience, knowledge, and effort. Languages do not differ so much in what they can say, as in how they can say the same things.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE SYSTEM

Many people are not aware of the scope of Church translation. Currently we translate the full Church program into eighteen languages. In each language, there are normally 14,000 to 18,000 pages assigned each year for translation. In another fifty-nine languages, we translate selected materials, up to 1,000 pages a year in each one. In addition to scheduled materials, there are about 19,000 pages of correspondence translated each year. Altogether the Church Translation Division translates well over a third of a million pages each year. At any one time, there may be over 3,500 different projects in process, employing 260 full- and part-time translators. It takes eight full-time employees in a separate division just to process and track these projects through production. Each translation goes through eighteen production stages, ten of which are within the translation phase of production. The system is complicated.

To see how this all works, let us follow a project through the process. The assignment goes first to an adaptor. Adaptors are trained to detect possible translation problems before they reach the translator. Originators often send us manuals to translate without having considered their full impact upon other cultures. When a manual for meetinghouse custodians is to be translated into Tahitian, the adaptor deletes the section on how to remove snow from the church parking lot. With approval of the originators, the adaptor may rewrite a text on home storage for the Chinese, as such storage is considered hoarding by the Taiwan government and is illegal. The adaptor must be able to sense that a powerful statement like "stay home with your family one night a week" can have an opposite effect in Samoa from what was intended. Because in Samoa all seven nights are spent with the family, some readers might actually start looking for outside activities to do six nights a week. The adaptor would change the sense slightly to "stay home and have a family activity *at least* one night a week."

The adaptor is also looking for variations in Church procedures and programs. In a manual routinely assigned for translation into all languages where there are stakes, a chapter explaining how to manage a stake welfare farm may need to be deleted for an area where such projects do not exist. The adaptor usually works closely with the originators to solve such problems.

The adaptor also looks for passages that may be linguistically difficult for translators. This quote from a speech by Elder Bruce R. McConkie is typical: "The greatest blessings attending Church service flow to the individual and his family."[14] Even seasoned translators may mistake this to mean "attending church services will bring blessings to an individual and to his family," which is not what Elder McConkie meant. The adaptor frequently writes marginal notes explaining such subtleties to the translators.

An adaptor does all the research documentation on a text so that sixteen individual translators will not have to duplicate that effort. The result is greater speed and accuracy in all the translations. After it has been adapted, the text is photocopied, mailed to the language areas, and assigned to translators.

We have already considered some of the value judgments a translator must make, but he has many other things to worry about as well. Keeping things consistent is one worry. For each language

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[14]Bruce R. McConkie, "Only an Elder," address to Regional Representatives, given 3 October 1974, *Ensign*, June 1975, p. 67.

there is a word list containing all the current terminology of the Church. There are thousands of terms which have a set translation, and the translator must be familiar with all of them. New terms must also always be spotted, defined, and added to the list so all translators will use them consistently.

We are a church of quote-users. A typical manual may contain 150 quotations from thirty different sources, making up sixteen percent of the whole text. Many quotes are repeated from year to year in various manuals. Every quote used in any Church item translated and published in the last ten years has been entered in a master index. Suppose we encounter a quote from a talk by Wilford Woodruff given 19 October 1896, at the Weber Stake Conference. By looking in the index, the translator can find whether the whole quote has been previously translated. He has a reference to unit, chapter, and section, and he can go to the translation library, find the quote, and copy the standard translation of it for the manual he is translating. We thus ensure that all materials are consistent in their translation. Keeping such an index seems expensive and tedious, but the alternative would be ten times as expensive. We would be retranslating work done in previous years, work which amounts to eleven percent of our yearly volume. From this standpoint, then, the index is extremely economical.

Time is a problem. Translations take time, but sometimes we receive a manual that needed to have been translated by yesterday because someone forgot to plan for the time it would take to translate it. Regardless of our best efforts, a translation is just about as good as the planning of those who request it. A translation hot off the forge cools into something quite different and takes a lot of tempering. The Translation Department is usually disappointed with the quality of crash translations, and so are the originators. Such products of crisis management have been reduced to a minimum in the last few years.

A finished translation is read by two separate reviewers as a check on its accuracy and its readability. It is then retyped and proofread. The translation supervisor gives it his final check and then sends it to be typeset. That, briefly, is how the system works. Our translations are the product of close teamwork. There is no room in the system for loners, prima donnas, or people who are afraid to ask questions. The specialization developed in the late 1960s and becoming perfected today has improved the quality of Church translations more then any other single factor. Further progress in the 1980s will consist of refining the present system.

Scriptures are special, requiring precision and consistency beyond that normally provided for other materials. This can be illustrated by a problem we had a few years ago. In some curriculum materials which we were asked to translate, a lesson dealt entirely with the meaning of the word *type*, as in Alma 33:19, "Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live." The word *type* in this case means "an example or *model* that *bodes* of a person or event at a later time." The lesson passed briefly over the "model" aspect of *type* and then stressed the "of things to come" connotation. However, that connotation was not there in some of the translations; the "model" meaning was there in every one, but the rest of the meaning was not. The lesson almost failed because the translated scriptures did not support it.

The shortcomings of existing scripture translations are apparent—the quality varies with the gospel scholarship of those who did the translation. Overall, each translation is about as good as another, but a small percentage of individual passages go one way in one language, and a different way in another. Generally, those scripture translators who knew a little Hebrew or Greek had an easier time of it. Before 1975, because translators did not record their problems and document their decisions for other translators to learn from, whatever concerted study and reasoning they had employed to render a particular meaning was lost. It was clear from the translations that those translators with the best resources did the best jobs. About the only resources the translators were provided on occasion were concordances.

The 1970s brought great improvement in the lot of the scripture translators. Early in the decade, we began work on a special concordance of every major word in the four standard works. Each occurrence of a word was identified according to its meaning or sense and each word heading had the multiple senses listed below it. For example, the word *run* can have a number of different senses. You can *run* a race, *run* an engine, *run* a risk, *run* a business, *run* a temperature, *run* an experiment, and, in an election year, *run* for office. To translate all of these phrases into another language, we could not reasonably expect one word in that language to accommodate all the senses of the one English word, *run*. Yet, some people still assume that for consistency in the scriptures every occurrence of a major English word should be translated everywhere by the same word in

another language. This would produce distortion and misunderstanding, and would place an unnecessary task upon the Spirit to clear things up.

Just such a problem is apparent in the way translators have understood *receive* incorrectly in Doctrine and Covenants 76:74, where it refers to those relegated to the terrestrial kingdom as being those "who *received not* a testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but who afterwards *received* it."[15] In some versions it was translated "who didn't *hear* a testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but who afterwards *heard* it." If those who died without hearing the gospel are consigned to the terrestrial kingdom, why would we do temple work (celestial ordinances) for them?

The problem with the meaning of the word is clarified by this passage from Mark 15:23: "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not." *Receive not* in all its occurrences in the four scriptures meant "to refuse." The scripture in question presupposes that whoever *received not* a testimony of Jesus must have had a chance to hear it in the flesh and for that reason was relegated to the terrestrial kingdom. The infinitive *to receive* by itself has two senses, "to be offered" and "to accept," and therefore needs to be translated two different ways according to the meaning. But when *to receive* is followed by *not*, it should be translated only as "to refuse." A concordance listing separate senses is a valuable tool in correcting real inconsistency and avoiding overdone or artificial consistency.

In the last half of the decade, we began documenting decisions that affected the meaning of a translation. Any time a translator has a question about a scripture, he can fill out a form explaining his problem and send the form to us. At headquarters, we maintain a whole departmental section of the office with the responsibility of researching and answering scriptural problems. So often, in conferences or official statements, present and past prophets have already clarified the meanings of scriptures. We simply gather the information and put it in a form the translators can use. In addition, we use people with strong backgrounds in Hebrew, Greek, Ancient Egyptian, linguistics, Church history, and Bible studies to provide additional information. All materials we release to the translators have been approved by the Church Correlation Department for accuracy.

Suppose, for example, a translator has a question on Joseph F. Smith's Vision of the Redemption of the Dead and writes to us:

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[15]Italics added.

> The phrase in verse 44, "never again to be destroyed nor given to other people" seems to say that the gospel (the kingdom of God) will at some future time not be preached to other people. We've checked our Bible translation of Daniel 2:44 and it doesn't help; what does it mean?

Our researchers have already scanned all of President Joseph F. Smith's published talks and found seven other occurrences of this and similar wording. From these other contexts, the meaning President Smith intended seems clear. We write back and say:

> The idea that at some time in the future the gospel will be withheld from other people is not the correct interpretation of this scripture. It means "never again to be taken from the earth and have to be re-restored through other individuals."

Today the translator has a staff of researchers to help him. He has access to indexes, dictionaries, commentaries, consultants, and one more aid that will eventually be more useful than all the others—an exegesis, a detailed explanation of the meaning in a text. We anticipate a point at which individual correspondence on every scripture translation problem will become impractical, and with every new translation we see recurring a core of problems that all translators have had before and will always have. Peripheral to these are many more repeated problems that most, but not all, translators have struggled with, others that have bothered some translators, and lastly, a group of problems unique to each new translation.

There was a time when we were dealing mostly with languages closely related to English. Those were the easy days! The exotic languages we are working in now have grammars and vocabularies that require information which is sometimes missing. A translator into Cakchiquel, an Indian language of Guatemala, needs to know whether the brother of Jared was his younger or older brother. In Cakchiquel, there is no general term for brother, only two separate ones. Arabic marks all nouns as singular, dual, or plural and needs to have distinguished all plurals that refer to just two things. Samoan and Guarani (Paraguay) have two pronouns for *we*, one that includes the listener and one that excludes him; the translator must determine this reference for all the occurrences of *we* in the scriptures. Aymara (Bolivia) has a very rich vocabulary of verbs denoting manual actions. To translate the English verb "to carry," an Aymara speaker must choose from several different specific verbs. He can say "to carry in the hand," "to carry in the arms," "to carry over the shoulder," "to carry on the back," "to carry in tandem," but not just "to carry." If Nephi was carried away in the Spirit, in Aymara, that would be . . .

An exegesis, or scripture translation guide, would be a compilation of information on all recurring problems and would be published for use by all those translating the scriptures. Such a guide would eliminate a great deal of correspondence and duplicated effort. Writing for a response on each problem slows a translator and may discourage him from communicating on all but the most serious problems. Of course, an exegesis would never be able to solve all the problems, nor even to tell him all the meaning found in the scriptures, but it would tell him some important points that he must be aware of. Although the creation of an exegesis will not illuminate the mysteries, it will show very clearly what is not a mystery. From research, we know that many scriptural passages which are unclear are not that way because God created the lack of clarity intentionally. Rather, there are three main reasons for murky passages:

1. *Poor translations*. The "church of the firstborn" in Hebrews 12:23 has *firstborn* as a plural in the original Greek, referring to the favored status of the members. In the King James Bible, the English is ambiguous. The word *firstborn* in English can be either singular or plural. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the "church of the Firstborn" is used nine times with *Firstborn* being singular, a title of Christ. The translator may reason that the English D&C text is in error because someone misinterpreting the English Bible capitalized *firstborn*. Also, *firstborn* in Hebrews 12:23 was translated as plural in his language, so he translates it in the D&C as a plural, "improving" on the English. Most such changes to a text come from the best of intentions.

2. *Language change*. When Joseph Smith began his history "Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons," he was referring to "rumors," a primary meaning of the word *report* 150 years ago.[16] Likewise 1 Nephi 10:22 seems a little odd to us today: "And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things, and deny them not." Why should "speak" and "deny" be his only alternatives? Again, 150 years ago *deny* was a synonym for *withhold* and usage permitted deleting the indirect object: "deny them not [to you]."[17]

3. *Loss of meanings originally understood by both the author and his audience*. In 2 Nephi 27:28 we read: "Yet a very little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field; and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest." One published commentary says this

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[16]Joseph Smith—History 2:1. Noah Webster, "Report," definition no. 2, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New Haven, Conn.: Hezekiah Howe, 1828).

[17]Webster, *An American Dictionary*, "Deny," definitions nos. 2 and 3.

denotes a time when all will be fertile and productive.[18] However, *Lebanon* is a culturally loaded word used anciently as a synonym for *forest* because of the cedar forests of Lebanon. If we substitute the word *forest* for *Lebanon*, we have the same type of construction as we find in "the rough places made smooth and smooth places broken up" or "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." Such constructions connote change (often cataclysmic), juxtaposition, and contrast—a far cry from the pastoral interpretation in the commentary. Many such place names in our language are culturally loaded in this way: Mecca (centrality), Siberia (exile), and Timbuktu (remoteness). How would their meanings go over in translations three thousand years from now?

While directing research into the meaning of scriptures would probably be more appropriate for others with ecclesiastical authority, we seem to be involved by default. But the reason for our involvement with meaning is logical: practically no one has to look at a scriptural text in as much critical detail as does a translator. We are involved because we have the need. With the current research on scriptural aids, there is a real possibility of reaching a major goal: uniform scripture translations in all languages within the next two decades.

THE NEED FOR ORDERLY EXPANSION

As of January 1981, the Church is working in seventy-seven languages. The Book of Mormon has been published in forty-one languages of which thirty-seven editions are currently available. These thirty-seven translated editions have a potential audience of fifty-three percent of the world's population, and when the Book of Mormon is published in all seventy-seven languages, we will be able to reach sixty-three percent of the world's population. These statistics seem to be quite admirable; our goal—to see the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy that every man will hear the gospel "in his own tongue and in his own language"—seems only a few years away. But in reality it is more distant than we realize.

What we have done is the easy part. We started with English, which serves nine percent of the world's population itself. Mandarin, another language we have translated into, accounts for another twelve percent. But each subsequent language we begin working in takes a smaller bite out of the percentage than the one before. We will

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[18]See George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1955), 1: 400.

soon run out of "major" languages; most languages we add now will serve only a fraction of a percent of the remaining world population. Experts estimate the number of world languages at around 5,000,[19] of which 2,000 are written in some form. If we were able to translate into ten times the number of languages we currently do, choosing only those serving the most speakers, the 770 languages would still reach only ninety-three percent of the world's population. At the rate we dealt with the first forty-one languages, it would take us well over a thousand years to do that.

The problem becomes even greater when we look at the money costs involved in going beyond the language barrier. Printing a translation of the Book of Mormon costs many thousands of dollars and ties up many more thousands. To print and stock the Book of Mormon in five thousand languages at current costs would take over $150 million. Because warehousing costs alone would run into millions of dollars each year, we cannot afford to produce materials that do not have immediate use.

But working toward immediate use, we then face the problem of how fast we can produce a translation of the Book of Mormon when it is needed. It currently takes a minimum of five years to translate and publish a translation of scripture.

All these problems have demanded our attention in the last ten years. In 1979, we began an accelerated program adding up to fifteen new languages each year. If we stay with this program, by 1995 we will be able to translate into 220 languages, which will reach eighty-seven percent of the world's population.

In each of these new languages that we consider, the Church is just emerging as a social force, so we have called these "emerging" languages, as opposed to the "established" languages of areas where the Church generally has stakes operating. The materials assigned for translation in the emerging languages have been assigned priorities and are divided into two main phases. In phase I, we translate the missionary discussions and flipchart, the tract containing Joseph Smith's testimony, the Gospel Principles manual, three organizational guidebooks, simplified reports, and the Book of Mormon selections. Materials in phase II include developing area children's, women's and priesthood manuals, a selection of tracts, recommends and certificates, the full Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. After these two phases are completed, ecclesiastical leaders may request the translation of

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[19]In *Ethnologue* (Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., 1978), the number of languages is 5,103.

hardbound books, seminary and institute courses, a monthly magazine, and yearly manuals for all the auxiliary and priesthood functions.

The emerging language program takes advantage of two important facts: (1) Of the total publication cost of a scripture only one-third is paid out for the translation; the other two-thirds goes for the cost of printing. (2) Of the total time (five or more years) spent in publishing a volume of scripture, four-fifths is used in translation and only one-fifth in printing. The translation phase of production consumes little money but lots of time. Within a few years, when the phase I program outpaces the immediate proselyting needs of the Missionary Department, there will be fewer translations printed. Instead they will be stored on typeset masters, ready for printing when the Missionary Department requests them. In this way, we will save the cost of printing until it is justified, and missionaries in a new language area can have have the Book of Mormon to use in only a few months instead of five years.

Only a third of the Book of Mormon is published in the Selections. A full Book of Mormon is published later, when the language progresses to phase II and there is enough acceptance to warrant it.

The translators for emerging languages are mostly part-time employees. Only when a language has developed past phase II is an office with full-time translators set up. These translators exhibit as much sacrifice and dedication as did the translators of a hundred years ago. They have been moved upon by the Holy Ghost to give up, in full or in part, medical practices, teaching careers, and lucrative opportunities, to devote four or more years to becoming translators. They are housewives, lawyers, nurses, poets, professors, dentists, farmers, printers, students, engineers—most are members, but many are friends of the Church; one of our best translators is a Catholic priest. Some have been converted in the course of doing the work.

The involvement of nonmembers in the translation of LDS scriptures has been a reality from the outset. In 1850, Peter O. Hansen enlisted the aid of his former schoolteacher, a Miss Mathisen, to make a thorough review of his translation of the Danish Book of Mormon.[20] If we had waited in every case until we had qualified members, our translations would have been published decades after their current dates. This again points up the acute need for scripture guides to explain nuances and interpretations peculiar to the LDS Church.

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[20]West, *Den Danske Missions Historie*, p. 30.

Perhaps nothing could more dramatically convey the momentum of translation in the 1970s than to list the languages the Church has been involved in translating since 1851.

TABLE 1
Publication of Translated Editions of the Book of Mormon

Language	Place	Year	Notes
English	Palmyra, New York	1830	
English	New York, New York	1869	Deseret Alphabet Out of Print
English	Louisville, Kentucky	1939	Braille Edition
Danish	Copenhagen, Denmark	1851	
German	Hamburg, Germany	1852	
French	Paris, France	1852	
Italian	London, England	1852	Retranslated 1963
Welsh	Merthyr Tydfil, Wales	1852	Out of Print
Hawaiian	San Francisco, California	1855	Out of Print
Swedish	Copenhagen, Denmark	1878	
Spanish	Salt Lake City, Utah	1886	
Maori	Auckland, New Zealand	1889	
Dutch	Amsterdam, Holland	1890	
Samoan	Salt Lake City, Utah	1903	
Tahitian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1904	
Turkish	New York, New York	1906	Armenian Letters Out of Print
Japanese	Tokyo, Japan	1909	
Czech	Prague, Czechoslovakia	1933	Out of Print, Retranslation in Progress
Armenian	Los Angeles, California	1937	Out of Print
Portuguese	Sao Paulo, Brazil	1939	
Tongan	Salt Lake City, Utah	1946	
Norwegian	Oslo, Norway	1950	
Finnish	Helsinki, Finland	1954	
Rarotongan (Pacific)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1965	
Chinese	Hong Kong, China	1965	
Korean	Seoul, Korea	1967	
Afrikaans	Johannesburg, So. Africa	1972	
Thai	Bangkok, Thailand	1976	
Indonesian	Djakarta, Indonesia	1977	
Aymara (Bolivia)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1977	Selections
Cakchiquel (Guatemala)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1978	Selections
Croatian	Cakovek, Yugoslovia	1979	
Quechua (Peru)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Greek	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Hungarian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Kekchi (Guatemala)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Quiche (Guatemala)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1979	Selections
Bulgarian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Navajo	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections

Language	Place	Year	Notes
Quichua (Ecuador)	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Arabic	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Czech	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Vietnamese	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	Selections
Fijian	Salt Lake City, Utah	1980	
Hindi			In Preparation
Russian			In Preparation
Catalan			In Preparation
Polish			Selections in Preparation
Icelandic			In Preparation
Rumanian			Selections in Preparation
Hebrew			Selections in Preparation
Tamil (India)			Selections in Preparation
Sinhala (Sri Lanka)			Selections in Preparation
Guarani (Paraguay)			Selections in Preparation
Maya (Mexico)			Selections in Preparation
Persian			Selections in Preparation
Mam (Guatemala)			Selections in Preparation
Marshallese (Pacific)			Selections in Preparation
Cuna (Panama)			Selections in Preparation
Malagasy			Selections in Preparation
Niuean (Pacific)			Selections in Preparation
Bislama (Pacific)			Selections in Preparation
Tzotzil (Mexico)			Selections in Preparation
Efik (Nigeria)			Selections in Preparation
Kisii (Kenya)			Selections in Preparation
Xhosa (So. Africa)			Selections in Preparation
Sotho South (So. Africa)			Selections in Preparation
Shona (So. Africa)			Selections in Preparation

If this list seems impressive, remember: The Bible Societies throughout the world have published the full Bible in over 600 languages, and some portions, such as the Gospel of Mark, in an additional 1,000. We are still relative newcomers to the field of scripture translation.

THE HUMAN FACTOR

Each of the languages we work in has a story. Without telling at least one of them, our larger story of the whole of Church translation would not be complete. No one story is typical, but one does stand out, mainly because the language is not yet on our list. That language is Pangasinan; the translator is Maximo Z. Parayno, Sr.

Brother Parayno was a native of Pangasinan Province on the Island of Luzon in the Philippines. He joined the Church in 1968 at an age when most people are reluctant to change their traditions. Shortly after his baptism, he fell into a diabetic coma and his family felt he was going to die. Instead, he miraculously recovered. Feeling he was living an extension of his allotted life, he determined to do the most he could with it; he began translating the Book of Mormon into his own language. He was not well schooled and was certainly less qualified than many other members. He seemed to be following the same pattern as have many hundreds of foreign members whose naive eagerness quickly fades after a taste of the real and arduous work involved in translation, but he was different. Months turned into years and still he stayed with it.

In 1974, he and his wife were allowed to come to the United States to live with their daughter in San Francisco. His daughter, not a member of the Church, recalls frequently seeing him sitting in front of his typewriter translating. He was racing death. When she asked him why he had started such a difficult task, he told her that God had planted in him the overwhelming desire and, weak though he was, God supplied him with the strength to accomplish what He willed him to do.[21]

In October of 1976, Brother Parayno finished his translation. His health then deteriorated rapidly, and on 7 January 1977, he died. His whole family felt that somehow his life was prolonged by the one who gave it, prolonged for the purpose of doing the work he was ordained to do.[22]

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[21]Aurora Moyrong to the Presiding Bishopric, 22 April 1977, on file with Manuscript Translations of the Book of Mormon, Pangasinan, Church Archives.

[22]Ibid.

His daughter proofread the whole translation and mailed it to Church headquarters in May of 1977. In a letter to the Presiding Bishopric, she expressed her joy in completing the work of her father. He never saw his translation published, nor has anyone else. It is still a translation before its time. One day Philippinos may be reading the Book of Mormon in each of their regional languages. In one such translation, woven tightly with the fabric of that book, will be the thread of Brother Parayno's sacrifice.

We have not yet reached the point in the Translation Division where we are doing all that is humanly possible to make good translations. Probably we will never reach it, since new knowledge and technology keep making more things possible. Still, we do have one of the most advanced translation systems in the world, in scope, in philosophy, in efficiency, in technology, and in personnel.

The past history of Church translation clearly shows the inadequacy of uncoordinated individual effort. At present, machines are doing wonders for translation in cutting costs, saving time, and eliminating wasted effort; but human decisions will always be at the root of quality. The future success of our translation efforts ultimately rests in bringing to bear the expertise of many professional people in support of the translator to extend the degree of consistency, clarity of meaning, and doctrinal accuracy far beyond the capabilities of any one person.