"Taking a Different View of the Translation"

The Illumination of Alternate Meanings in the Translation of Bible Passages by Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart

Tod R Harris

The opening act of Goethe's epochal drama *Faust* is well known—the eponymous main character laments the effort he has spent seeking to uncover universal truth through science, philosophy, and even occult methods and their apparent failure. Less well known is a follow-up scene where Faust, declaring his "longing for revelation,"[1] turns to another source for the transcendent knowledge he seeks, which, he declares, "nowhere . . . brighter burns than in the New Testament."[2] He also makes it clear that simply reading the book will not provide him the satisfaction he seeks, but instead he will exercise that most mystical method of conjuring meaning—translation. "I will take the holy original and render it in my beloved German"[3] (presumably from the original Greek). He flips open his Bible and, whether by chance or design, lands at that most mystical of passages, John 1:1. Faust reads out the opening incantation: "In the beginning was the *Word*"—and halts, uneasy with the word "word"

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1. For this and all subsequent lines from *Faust* in this paragraph, I am quoting (and translating) from the German version published by Reclam: Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust: Der Tragödie erster Teil* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1971). This first quote is from page 37, line 1217, and reads in the original: "Wir sehnen uns nach Offenbarung."

2. Goethe, *Faust,* lines 1218–19: "Die nirgends . . . schöner brennt / Als in dem Neuen Testament."

3. Goethe, *Faust,* lines 1222–23: "Das heilige Original / In mein geliebtes Deutsch zu übertragen."

Tod R Harris

There has been controversy for a num-
ber of years in the German-speaking
Church about the proper German term
for "to repent." The common transla-
tion for many years was *Buße tun* (lit-
erally "do penance"), taken from the
Luther Bible, but this was changed in
the early 1980s to *umkehren* (literally
"to turn about") to match the word
used in a new ecumenical translation
of the Bible (the so-called *Einheits-
übersetzung*) that had appeared about
that same time. In the late 1990s, the Church began a revision of
the German translation of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and
Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, and in considering terminol-
ogy, questions about "repentance" arose again. In my role oversee-
ing scripture translation support, I began looking into the origins
and historical use of the word in German. Somewhere during that
research I came across a reference to Meister Eckhart as origina-
tor of much of the theological and philosophical vocabulary of
German, so naturally looked for materials by Eckhart to see if he
addressed "repentance." I quickly found that the literature both by
and about Eckhart is vast and varied and for me, fascinating, so
have spent much of the last fifteen years reading and researching
Meister Eckhart. Because of the initial reason I turned to Eckhart,
I have been particularly interested in his interpretation of and use
of the Bible and what can be learned from and applied to my own
scripture translation work. I presented some of my research along
those lines at the annual Society of Biblical Literature meeting in
San Diego, California, in November 2014, and have now formal-
ized that presentation as the accompanying article. I'm still work-
ing on "repentance."

as a translation choice for the Greek *logos.*[4] Seeking a more evocative possibility perhaps, he tries two more alternatives; first, "In the beginning was the *Mind,*"[5] and then "In the beginning was the *Power.*"[6] Still not satisfied, he ponders further and finally feels inspired to settle on "In the beginning was the *Act.*"[7] This passage from *Faust* provides much of the metaphorical structure of the rest of Goethe's great drama as he weaves between microcosm and macrocosm, developing the thematics of both chaos and creation.

A translator's aside here: Just as the word *logos* in the original Greek has multiple meanings of which Goethe takes advantage in the scene above, the words he chooses in German have, in turn, multiple meanings. Notable is the word in the second alternative above, *Sinn.* While typically translated *Mind* in this passage,[8] it can also mean "perception," "feeling," or "sense" in both the meaning of "perceiving by means of a sense organ" as well as "one of a set of meanings a word or phrase may bear." It is this second meaning I will emphasize in this paper.

This episode offers a vivid example of the way the different meanings of words can affect the understanding of the texts they compose, and it provides a glimpse into the difficulties faced by translators, particularly when working with such multivalent texts as scripture, represented in *Faust* by the Bible. By demonstrating how translators can exploit the interpretive possibilities afforded by that range of meanings, this episode also provides a useful pattern for looking at other creative and "revelatory" translations of the Bible. In the spirit of the scene set by Goethe, I would like to look briefly at the work of two such translators: Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart.

Though his work on the Book of Mormon is better known, particularly outside Latter-day Saint circles, Joseph Smith spent significant time and effort on another unique translation project—a revision of the King

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4. Goethe, *Faust,* line 1224: "'Im Anfang war das Wort!'" It should be noted that this is the standard translation of the Greek "*en archē ēn ho logos*" in all major German Bible translations.

5. Goethe, *Faust,* line 1229: "Im Anfang war der *Sinn.*"

6. Goethe, *Faust,* line 1233: "Im Anfang war die *Kraft*!"

7. Goethe, *Faust,* line 1237: "Im Anfang war die *Tat*!"

8. I checked two other English translations: Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust,* trans. Walter Kaufman (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1963), and Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust,* trans. Carl R. Mueller (Hanover, N.J.: Smith and Kraus, 2004). Both have *Mind* for the German *Sinn* (pages 153 and 49, respectively; the line number is the same as the German version I cite above).

James Version of the Bible. Historical evidence shows that Joseph began work on this revision in June 1830, while his translation of the Book of Mormon was being typeset, and finished the work in July 1833.[9] Faithful members of the Church consider this work to be part of Joseph's divine calling as a prophet and to have been done according to divine decree—texts of Joseph's revelations call him a translator (see D&C 21:1 and 107:92), refer to the work as a translation (see D&C 73:4 and 76:15), and declare his authority to translate (see D&C 45:61). Yet when he began the Bible revision in earnest in 1830, Joseph Smith did not have a knowledge of biblical languages, and he did not work from original Greek or Hebrew texts. His method has been described as "a revelatory experience using only an English text," one in which "it appears that he would read from the KJV and dictate revisions to a scribe."[10] While some may not consider this a translation in the truest sense, Joseph's alterations of more than three thousand Bible verses constitute a major component of his theological work as he sought both to restore what he felt were omissions in the Bible text as it has come down to us as well as to expand and amplify the understanding of that text. Although not the official Bible of the Church, Joseph Smith's revision work is regarded as authoritative and in 1978 was integrated into the LDS version of the KJV and officially labeled the "Joseph Smith Translation" (JST).[11]

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9. It has long been assumed in the Church that Joseph continued to make adjustments to the translation until his death in 1844, and authoritative sources continue to make this claim. For example, the entry on the Joseph Smith Translation in the Bible Dictionary of the 2013 LDS Edition of the KJV states that "Joseph continued to make modifications [in the translation] until his death in 1844" (Bible Dictionary, 673). Other scholarship disputes this and concludes that Joseph made no changes to his translation after the summer of 1833. For complete treatment of this issue, see Kent P. Jackson, "New Discoveries in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible," in *Religious Educator* 6, no. 3 (2005): 149–60. I am indebted to my colleague Joshua Sears for bringing this article and its contents to my attention.

10. Robert J. Matthews, "Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST)," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:765.

11. Extensive and authoritative studies of the JST, its history, compilation, and differences from and effect on the KJV text exist. Two of the most notable are Robert J. Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation": Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, a History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975); and Thomas A. Wayment, ed., *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005). See also

Far less formalized and systematic than his work on the KJV are the significant number of Bible translations that occur in other sources. These occur in Joseph's revelations, collected chiefly in the Doctrine and Covenants, as well as his sermons and other writings compiled in the documentary and manuscript history of the Church.[12] In many of these cases, Joseph departs consciously from the bounds of the text of the KJV and freely rearranges words, editorializes, squeezes new meaning from source languages, and adds his own exegetical commentary. He partly explains such strategies in a phrase in Doctrine and Covenants 128:8, where, after quoting a famous verse from Matthew 16, he introduces a radical reinterpretation of the verse by explaining that he is, "in other words, taking a different view of the translation." It is in these and other such "different views of the translation" that Joseph Smith's highly original, speculative, and creative interpretations of the Bible text is revealed.

There is a fascinating historical precedent for the Bible translations of Joseph Smith in the work of the fourteenth-century scholastic and Dominican preacher Meister Eckhart. The evidence shows that Eckhart produced his major works between 1302, when he earned his Master of Theology at Paris (and thus the title "Meister"), and 1314, before he went to Strasbourg to serve the Dominican convents there. These exegetical and expository works, including a series of sermons, were written in Latin, and a large number of these remain extant today. It is clear that when he introduces biblical citations in his Latin works he quotes the Vulgate and does so carefully and precisely, using "the letter of the

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Robert J. Matthews, "The JST: Retrospect and Prospect—a Panel," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Truths,* ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1985), 291–305.

12. For many years, the standard source for Joseph's sermons and other writings has been *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. However, as research continues on the Joseph Smith Papers Project (JSP), the Church's massive effort to gather and edit all available documents produced either by Joseph Smith himself or by others who served as his scribes, the reliability of the material in *Teachings* has been called into question because it draws heavily upon *History of the Church,* which was written largely by Joseph's clerks and secretaries and was modified and augmented editorially long after Joseph's death. Most entities involved with Church publishing now use either sources cited in JSP publications, if available, or Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991) for the later sermons that JSP has not yet published.

Vulgate or its liturgical equivalents."[13] But what Eckhart is best known for is the group of sermons he produced in his native language, Middle High German (MHG), sometime between 1310 and 1324.[14]

Though as many as two hundred such sermons are attributed to Eckhart, only eighty-six are accepted as authentic.[15] In all of these sermons but two, Eckhart recites at least one verse or part of a verse from the Bible, quoting the passages in MHG. Over against his careful use of the Vulgate in his Latin works, he was under no such constraints in his vernacular sermons and was "free to make his own versions."[16] Several factors argue for Eckhart producing his own translations. First, although there are rumors of and obtuse references to Middle High German translations of the Bible from the fourteenth century done by unknown scholars, no known translation exists. Next, there are a number of verses that Eckhart quotes a number of times in different sermons,

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13. Bernard McGinn, "Introduction," in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher,* trans. Frank Tobin and Elvira Borgstadt (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 8.

14. Noted Eckhart scholar Oliver Davies describes one factor in the significance of these sermons: "Prior to Clement IV's injunction to the Dominicans in 1267 to take over the pastoral care of religious women's communities, which directly led to the use of German for the purposes of preaching, all intellectual thought was written down in the Latin language. Whatever the achievements of the first generation of Dominicans may have been (these are lost to us today), we have in the sermons of Meister Eckhart, who belonged to the second generation, the first substantial body of sophisticated philosophical and theological discussion in a European vernacular language." Oliver Davies, "Introduction," in *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings* (London: Penguin, 1994), xxxvi.

15. The standard edition of Eckhart's authentic sermons is published by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft under the general editorship of Josef Quint. This is *Meister Eckhart. Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke: Die deutschen Werke,* 9 vols. (Stuttgart and Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1936–). Note that like the Joseph Smith Papers Project, this work is ongoing. Though this edition is enormous and difficult to obtain, the same text of the sermons is available in a much more accessible version: Niklaus Largier, ed., *Meister Eckhart: Predigte (Deutsche Werke I).* Texte und Übersetzungen von Josef Quint (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008), Band 24.

A concise explanation of the criteria for judging the authenticity of Eckhart's sermons is given by Bernard McGinn in "A Note on Eckhart's Works and the Present Selections," in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense,* trans. and ed. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press: 1981), 67.

16. McGinn, "Introduction," 8.

each time with significant variation.[17] Last, and perhaps most compelling, is the fact that in many of the vernacular sermons, Eckhart himself indicates that he is translating.

For example, he begins Sermon 2 with a quote of Luke 10:38 from the Vulgate and then states, "I have spoken some words, first in the Latin, that are written in the gospel and go like this in German."[18] He then follows this statement with a translation of the Latin passage into MHG. He subsequently weaves a number of Bible passages throughout the rest of the sermon, all in MHG. Many of his sermons follow this same pattern: he begins with a recitation in Latin from the Vulgate, states that the passage can be translated into German, gives a vernacular translation, and then proceeds with the rest of the sermon, peppering the body with three or four more Bible quotes that he seems to translate ad hoc.[19] It is these seemingly spontaneous translations that afford a glimpse of an overlooked aspect of Eckhart's work, as he employs unexpected word choices and surprising semantic structures to illuminate new facets of the texts he teaches.

Despite their remove in time and space, there are some striking parallels between the Bible translations of the American prophet and the German preacher. First, neither worked from original language source texts, yet both turn to creative and memorable translation strategies for revealing alternate meanings of scripture text. Next, the medium each used was similar. The best examples of these creative translations come from the body of sermons preached by both. The open, oral nature of

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17. Factors one and two are addressed by Nadia Bray. After listing a series of verses demonstrating factor two, Bray states, "From this compilation it is very clear that Eckhart relies on no authoritative and canonical Bible translation" (Aus dieser Zusammenstellung geht es ganz klar hervor, dass Eckhart über keine verbindliche und kanonische Bibelübersetzung verfügte). Nadia Bray, "Deutsche Bibelzitate in den Predigten Meister Eckharts," in *Meister Eckhart in Erfurt,* ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 412.

18. The original MHG reads, "Ich hân ein wörtelîn gesprochen des êrsten in dem latîne, daz stât geschriben in dem êwangeliô und sprichet alsô ze tiutsche." Citations in this essay from Eckhart's sermons all come from Largier's edition cited in footnote 15 above and will be noted using page and line numbers from that edition. Thus the citation for the passage quoted here from sermon 2 is Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 24, 4–6 (Largier, page 24, lines 4–6). All translations from MHG, in the text and in the tables, are my own.

19. See sermons 10, 12, 15, and 22, for example.

such a presentation allowed each to "play with the text," to editorialize and expound to an extent and in a way not possible in Joseph's more systematic work in the JST or in Eckhart's formal Latin treatises. Finally, there is the insight provided by statements from both Smith and Eckhart relative to their respective perspectives on the Bible text.

Joseph seemed to have viewed his translation work, appropriately, as one chiefly of restoration of lost truth: "From sundry revelations which have been received, it was apparent that many important points, touching the Salvation of man, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled."[20] Similarly, he said, "I believe the bible, as it ought to be, as it came from the pen of the original writers."[21]

Meister Eckhart, on the other hand, takes a completely different tack as outlined in one of his Latin commentaries, "The Book of the Parables of Genesis." In the prologue, Eckhart writes that his approach to scripture interpretation is to "bring to light the more hidden sense of some things contained in them in parabolical fashion 'under the shell of the letter.' I do this to arouse the more skilled readers to seek better and richer explanations . . . hidden beneath the form and surface of the literal sense."[22]

Despite the seeming difference in their stated philosophies, Smith's and Eckhart's translations are remarkably similar in the way each attempts to "correct error" and "seek better and richer explanations" by using powerful recombinations of scriptural image and language and by leveraging the availability of alternate senses in their efforts to fully manifest the Word. It is in the Bible translations in Joseph's revelations and sermons and the scripture citations in Eckhart's vernacular sermons that the most compelling instances of these translations occur. The purpose of this study is to compare a few examples of translations from each, noting similarities as well as differences; to highlight particularly some of the strategies each uses to illuminate alternate meaning in the Bible text; and to draw some conclusions about the significance

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20. Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, Volume A-1 [December 1805–30 August 1834], January 25–February 16, 1832, Joseph Smith Papers, http://josephsmith papers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805 -30-august-1834&p=189.

21. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 256, taken from Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards, October 15, 1843.

22. "The Book of the Parables of Genesis," in Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart,* 92.

of these efforts. Though a complete survey is of course far beyond the scope of this paper, it is possible to observe these strategies at work in a few notable examples.

"In the Beginning Was the Act"

The efforts of both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart to illuminate the Bible through translation place them in a chain of others engaged in similar work, who also, through the act of translation, sought to bring to light the meaning of the holy word hidden within an inaccessible language. In an echo of Eckhart's explanation above, the original KJV translators proclaimed that "translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place."[23] Though neither produced a complete or completely new translation of the Bible, both Smith and Eckhart generated a significant corpus of translated scripture. To provide context for the rest of the discussion, a general overview of where each takes translations from the Bible is instructive.

As noted above, Joseph's work consists of two major efforts: his revision of the KJV, now officially known in the Church as the "Joseph Smith Translation" or JST, and the substantial number of translations occurring throughout the Doctrine and Covenants and in his other sermons and writings. In the JST, he made "extensive corrections and additions to the books of Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, Isaiah, Matthew, Luke, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and Revelation." He also made many alterations in the writings of the Old Testament prophets and in Mark, John, Acts, and several of the epistles. "He made no changes in Ruth, Ezra, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Obadiah, Micah, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi, Philemon, 2 John, and 3 John. He made some corrections in all other books of the Bible and rejected the idea that the Song of Solomon was inspired scripture."[24]

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23. Preface to the 1611 KJV, "The Translators to the Reader." Though the preface is available in a number of difference sources, a convenient online one is "The Translators to the Reader: Preface to the King James Version," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (Fall 1996): 274, available at https://www.dbts.edu/journals/1996_2/kjvpref.pdf.

24. Matthews, "Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST)," 766.

A thorough inventory of Bible passages occurring in Joseph's revelations and other writings has not been undertaken. A future path of research must certainly be a compilation of such occurrences and a comparison against his work on the JST. As part of the research for this study, I have started such a compilation, beginning with instances of Bible translation in Joseph's sermons both because these have not been scrutinized in the same light as the JST and because these are a better analogue of Eckhart's translations. Though that compilation is far from complete, it has still yielded enough interesting samples for the comparison at hand.

The perspective gained through a survey of the extent to which Eckhart provides translations of Bible passages in his vernacular sermons is also enlightening. As part of my ongoing research into Eckhart as translator, I have scanned the eighty-six sermons in the standard edition taken as authentic and have extracted and totaled all occurrences of Bible quotations, the first time of which I am aware that a comprehensive catalog has been compiled. This count includes all the verses or verse fragments that Eckhart states specifically he is quoting, or that from context are clearly quotes. The count does not include exact repetitions of the same verse or verse fragment, or variant translations, in the same or in subsequent sermons. Based on these criteria, Eckhart quotes all or part of 414 verses from the Bible (when variant and repeated verses are counted, the total goes up to 899 verses), citing books from both Old and New Testaments, as well as the Apocrypha. He quotes most often from Psalms, the Song of Solomon, Exodus, and Isaiah in the Old Testament; from the Gospels of John, Luke, and Matthew, and from Romans and Revelation in the New; and from Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha. He never quotes from Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, or most of the historical books, and excludes most of the non-Pauline epistles. These 414 unique citations represent a substantial amount of work and taken together form a significant, albeit fragmentary, Bible translation that should take its place in the chain of historical German Bible translations. And again, though "the research lacks . . . a systematic study of those passages wherein Eckhart translates the Bible text into German,"[25] the catalog above includes sufficiently representative samples of Eckhart's translations for the current study.

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25. Bray, "Deutsche Bibelzitate in den Predigten Meister Eckharts," 409.

"In the Beginning Was the Power"

By his own account, reading Bible verses left an impression on Joseph's young mind, some more forceful than others, including the passage from James 1:5 that caused him to famously exult, "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine" (JS–H 1:12). It follows, then, that in his efforts to share his own scriptural insights with others, he would seek to imbue the texts he preached with some of this same power.

Eckhart is also renowned for the impact of his preaching, abundantly evident in his surviving sermons as indicated by Kenneth Northcott: "Although previous claims about Eckhart's role as the originator of MHG philosophical and theological vocabulary have been exaggerated, the power of Eckhart's daring formulations and the subtlety of his use of language make him one of the great—if difficult—masters of German prose style."[26]

Both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart suffuse their Bible translations with power in a number of memorable ways, including (1) quoting text in other languages, (2) employing striking imagery, and even (3) by invoking certain sounds. In a sermon preached on May 12, 1844, for example, Joseph states:

> I shall read the 24th. c of Matthew, and give it a litteral rendering and reading, and when it is rightly understood it will be edifying (he then read & translated it from the German) I thought the very oddity of its rendering would be edifying any how—"And it will preached be; the Gospel of the Kingdom, in the whole world, to a witness over all people, and then will the end come." I will now read it in German— (which he did, and many Germans who were present said he translated it correct).[27]

The literal rendering of the German into English does not afford any new or different doctrinal information; the whole purpose simply seems to be to afford "a different view of the translation." Perhaps he then read the original German to impart a flavor of authenticity for his non-German speaking listeners (as well as to have the ratification of the German speakers in the audience). For comparison purposes, the following

26. Kenneth Northcott, "Preface," in McGinn, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher,* 7.

27. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 366, Thomas Bullock Report.

table lists the quoted text as it appears in the KJV, the way Joseph quotes it, an older version of the Luther translation (which, though it is not certain which translation Joseph actually cites, matches his quoted text quite closely), and a recent version of the Luther translation:

KJV	Joseph Smith	1545 Luther	1984 Luther
And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matt 24:14)	And it will preached be; the Gospel of the Kingdom in the whole world, to a witness over all people, and then will the end come. (*WJS*, 366)	Und es wird geprediget werden das Evangelium vom Reich / in der ganzen Welt / Zu einem Zeugnis über alle Völcker / Und dann wird das Ende kommen.	Und es wird gepredigt werden dies Evangelium vom Reich in der ganzen Welt zum Zeugnis für alle Völker, und dann wird das Ende kommen.

As described earlier, Eckhart almost always starts his sermons with a passage from the Vulgate, which he then always translates, but interestingly, there are several instances where Eckhart also quotes the source text in the body of a sermon without any translation. For example, in sermon 22, he repeats the Latin of the opening phrase of John, *in principio* ("In the beginning"), four different times. It is as if he uses the phrase as an incantation, and by its repetition (with no translation) builds suspense in his audience until with the last pronouncement he is finally ready to provide the meaning he wants his listeners to remember: "'In principio.' This could mean in German a beginning of all Being."[28] It is interesting to note that in preserving certain citations in the original and then providing a translation, both Smith and Eckhart follow an established textual tradition in both the Old and New Testament of doing the same thing.[29]

In other instances, it is the arresting imagery that catches the attention of the listener or reader. Though the Song of Solomon is held by the Church to be the only book of the Bible that is "not inspired"[30] and is

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28. The original MHG reads "'In principio.' Daz sprichet als vil ze tiutsche als ein anegenge alles wesens." See Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 264, 14–15.

29. See, for example, evidences of Egyptian in Genesis 41:43 (where some modern Bible translations maintain an untranslated phrase for the passage in the KJV that reads "bow the knee") and Aramaic in Mark 5:41 and 15:34.

30. Bible Dictionary, "Song of Solomon," 730. For a more frank assessment ("The Song of Solomon is biblical trash . . ."), see Bruce R. McConkie, "The

one of the few to which Joseph made no alterations in the JST, he turned to it in his revelations for a memorable image to describe the emergent Church as being "clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 5:14), a phrase from Song of Solomon 6:10. He reuses the phrase two more times in subsequent sections as well, subtly altering word order perhaps to heighten rhythm and effect (I have added line breaks to make this clearer):

Song of Sol. 6:10	D&C 5:14	D&C 105:31	D&C 109:73
Who *is* she *that* looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, *and* terrible as *an army* with banners?	. . . in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness— clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.	But first let my army become very great, and let it be sanctified before me, that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible unto all nations . . .	That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners . . .

Eckhart's sermons are replete with a range of images taken from a number of sources, including patristic commentaries, the secular vocabulary of the High Middle German court poets, and of course the scriptures themselves. A notable example comes from sermon 2, where after the Latin citation of Luke 10:38, "as they went, . . . he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house," Eckhart offers this translation: "Our lord Jesus Christ went up to a little fort and was received [conceived] by a virgin who was a wife."[31] Again for comparison, the following table shows the original Vulgate, Eckhart's MHG translation, the 1545 Luther translation, and the ESV (English Standard Version, a conservative modern translation):

Bible, a Sealed Book," in *Teaching Seminary: Preservice Readings* (Church Educational System manual, 2004), 127. Over against these perspectives is Bernard McGinn's: "The mystical book par excellence was the Song of Songs—a surprising choice to those who feel some discomfort with the frankly erotic language of these love songs. Christian mystics, as well as Jewish mystics, found in the Song, properly read, the supreme expression of the love of God for his community and for each person within it." McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Modern Library, 2006), 4.

31. Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 24, 6–8.

Vulgate	Eckhart	1545 Luther	ESV
. . . et ipse intravit in quoddam castellum, et mulier quaedam Martha nomine excepit illum. (Luke 10:38)	. . . unser herre Jêsus Kristus der gienc ûf in ein bürgelîn und wart enpfangen von einer juncvrouwen, diu ein wîp was. (Sermon 2, ll. 6–8)	. . . ging er in einen Markt / da war ein Weib / mit Namen Martha / die nahm ihn auf in ihr Haus /	Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

Note that Eckhart adds Jesus's name, perhaps to make explicit the antecedent of the pronoun; indicates Jesus entered a *bürgelîn* (representative of the small fortified cities common for the era); chooses the word *enpfangen,* which in MHG carries the double meaning of "receive" as well as "conceive," for the Latin *excepit*; and adds the entire idea that the woman who "received" Jesus was a *juncvrouwen,* which in context carries the connotation "virgin." These words and associated images, though not immediately apparent in the source text, allow Eckhart in his translation to make the text immediate to his audience with a familiar civic setting, to leverage the ambiguity of a MHG word so that he can later make a point about his listeners both receiving and conceiving the Word in their soul (a favorite doctrinal topic of his), and to employ another of his common teaching tactics—contradiction (the virgin wife)—as a way to jolt his students out of standard ways of thinking. All these factors work together in a powerful way, for as Nadia Bray points out, "when Eckhart introduces innovations, even in simple translations of Bible quotes, . . . he always has a good reason."[32]

As a final and fascinating illustration of their powerful translational tools, consider an example of the way both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart engage their audiences with sound, perhaps to augment the aural/oral nature of the sermon as medium.

Section 95 of the Doctrine and Covenants contains the commandment to "call your solemn assembly, that your fastings and your mourning might come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, which is by interpretation, the creator of the first day" (v. 7). In this phrase there is an intersection of a term from Hebrew—Sabaoth (צְבָאוֹת, *tzevaovt,* first

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32. "Wenn Eckhart Neuheiten einführt, auch bei der schlichten Übersetzungen biblischer Zitate, so hat er immer, wie ich zu zeigen versucht habe, einen guten Grund." Bray, "Deutsche Bibelzitate in den Predigten Meister Eckharts," 426.

occurring in 1 Samuel 1:3 and typically translated as "hosts" in the KJV as part of the common epithet "Lord of hosts"), a phrase from the New Testament—"entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth" (James 5:4), as well as what could be taken for Joseph's exegesis of the Hebrew term ("which is by interpretation, the creator of the first day"). It seems here that Joseph plays off the similarity of the sound of the word "Sabaoth" to the word "sabbath" in order to give meaning to a word (that was perhaps not familiar to his audience) by relating it, through sound, to the meaning of the more common word "sabbath," understood in the 1830s as the first day of the week. In this way, he can maintain the sound of Hebrew while providing a new but now memorable doctrinal meaning. See the table below for comparison (and note where other instances of this phrase, though without the exegetical extra, also occur in the Doctrine and Covenants):

D&C 95:7	1 Sam 1:3	James 5:4	Parallel Verses
. . . I gave unto you a commandment that you should call your solemn assembly, that your fastings and your mourning might come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, which is by interpretation, the creator of the first day, the beginning and the end.	And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the lord of hosts . . .	...and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.	DC 87:7, 88:2, 98:2

Eckhart turns to this tactic as well where, like Joseph, he uses the same citation in several of his sermons and employs an aural element in its translation. He opens sermon 22 with a quote from the Annunciation in Luke 1:28 and then provides a translation:

"'*Ave, gratia plena.*'

"This word that I have spoken in Latin stands written in the holy gospel and says something in German like: 'Greetings to you, full of grace, the lord is with you!'"[33]

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33. "Diz wort, daz ich gesprochen hân in latîne, daz stât geschriben in dem heiligen êwangeliô und sprichet als vil ze tiutsche: 'gegrüezet sîst dû, vol gnâde, der herre ist mit dir!'" See Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 254, 2–5.

This is a very straightforward translation of the original, as can be seen in the table below.

Vulgate	Eckhart	1545 Luther	ESV
have gratia plena Dominus tecum benedicta tu in mulieribus (Luke 1:28)	gegrüezet sîst dû, vol gnâde, der herre ist mit dir! (Sermon 22, ll. 5)	Gegrüßet seist du, Holdselige!/ der HERR ist mit dir	"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"

In the body of the sermon, Meister Eckhart uses the citation from Luke to draw an analogy between Gabriel's pronouncement to Mary and the way God speaks to us. He returns to this theme and repeats the same passage again in sermon 38, but to a much different effect. He again quotes the opening greeting in Latin, *ave* (pronounced ah-vay), but in his MHG translation he gives the greeting as "Âne we . . ." (pronounced roughly "onna vay").[34] Literally translated, this is something like "no pain" or "without struggle" but could, colloquially, mean "Don't worry." It is not a normal greeting, and it does require a bit of a stretch to arrive at this translation, but this seems to be what Eckhart is up to. He has concocted a greeting in the MHG that both sounds similar to the Latin word and imbues the passage with an emotional impact by making Gabriel's words more calming and comforting.

"In the Beginning Was the Meaning"

A key feature of the sacred word is the existence of figurative meanings beyond the purely literal, a feature accepted by both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart across the arc of their varied experiences. After a particularly important visitation of heavenly messengers, Joseph reported, "Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of" (JS–H 1:74). Though the circumstances are different, Eckhart reports a similar realization: "There was a question yesterday in the school among important clerics. 'I am amazed,' I said, 'that the scriptures are so full that no one can decide the meaning of the least important word.'"[35] And just as

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34. "'Âvê,' daz ist 'âne wê.'" See Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 414, 18.

35. "Ein vrâge was gester in der schuole under grôzen pfaffen. 'Mich wundert' sprach ich, 'daz diu geschrift alsô vol ist, daz nieman daz allerminste wort ergründen enkan.'" Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten*, 258, 12–14.

each acknowledges this multivalence in similar manner, both Smith and Eckhart leverage comparable methods for extending the interpretive possibilities in their efforts to illuminate alternate meanings.

One of the most common methods used by both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart is the weaving together of disparate passages, in many cases not even related by context, in order either to build the expositional case their respective arguments are making or to multiply meanings by allowing these texts to play off each other.[36] We have already seen this method employed by Joseph Smith in the example from Doctrine and Covenants 95 noted above. Eckhart, too, often turns to such tactics as described by Bernard McGinn: "Eckhart shows little interest in the biblical story line. Rather, he dehistoricizes and decontextualizes the text into sentences, fragments, or even individual words that he then recombines with other biblical passages in a dense web of intertextuality through a system of cross-referencing that is one of the main characteristics of his hermeneutics."[37]

A prime example comes again from sermon 22. Continuing Eckhart's account of the interaction between Mary and Gabriel at the Annunciation, after he informs her that she will conceive a son, she asks, "How will this happen?" The angel then replies, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you from above / from the highest throne / and shall be in you / from the light of the eternal father."[38] I have added line breaks to show where passages from different scriptures are taken. The following table indicates

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36. This tactic has been noted in other Bible translations as well, for example in the Septuagint, and is called "anaphoric translation." A noted Septuagint specialist, Theo van der Louw, defines anaphoric translation as "a transformation whereby a TL [target language] element seems to be a rendering of an SL [source language] element elsewhere or is influenced by a related passage in the same book or from a different text." Mirjam Van der Vorm-Croughs, *The Old Greek of Isaiah: An Analysis of Its Pluses and Minuses,* vol. 61 of Society of Biblical Literature: Septuagint and Cognate Studies, ed. Wolfgang Kraus (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 299. I am grateful to my colleague Dan McClellan for making me aware of this idea and providing the citation.

37. Bernard McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart: The Man from Whom God Hid Nothing* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001), 27. For an expanded treatment of this idea with updated references to current scholarship on Eckhart as exegete, see also Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2014), 110–14.

38. "Der heilige geist sol von oben her nider komen / von dem obersten trône / und sol in dich komen / von dem leihte des êwigen vaters." Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 254, 6–8.

from where in other books each respective phrase comes. Notice, too, that although most of the lines match the source text quite closely, Eckhart has also varied the translation in some cases, as for example the line from James, where instead of the expected "Father of lights" he has "from the light of the eternal father." This seems to be a favorite image of his, and he repeats this passage from James in several other sermons.

Verse	Eckhart	Vulgate	ESV
Luke 1:35 Wisdom 18:15 Luke 1:35 James 1:17	Der heilige geist sol von oben her nider komen / von dem obersten trône / und sol in dich komen / von dem leihte des êwigen vaters. (Sermon 22, ll. 6–8)	Spiritus Sanctus superveniet in te / a regalibus sedibus durus / obumbrabit tibi ideoque / descendens a Patre luminum	The Holy Spirit will come upon you, / from the royal throne / and will overshadow you / from the Father of lights

In other instances, both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart enhance existing translations with their own editorial improvements. In a sermon he gave on February 2, 1843, Joseph refers to Romans 8:26 and then adds his own clarification: "The Spirit maketh. intercession &ᶜ better &c, 'The Spirit maketh intercession for us with striving which cannot be exp[r]essed.[']"[39] As can be seen in the table below, there is no lexical basis for translating the Greek *stenagmos* (groaning) as "striving," but this definition seems to fit Joseph's revelatory perspective better, and as a result, provides a different and interesting meaning of the verse.

KJV	Joseph Smith	ESV	Greek Lexicon
. . . but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (Romans 8:26)	The Spirit maketh intercession for us with striving which cannot be expressed. (JSP, Journal, February 2, 1843)	. . . but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.	στεναγμός (stenagmos) Part of Speech: Noun, Masculine Definition: a groaning, sighing.

39. Joseph Smith, Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843, entry for February 2, 1843, in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843,* vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers,* ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 254. This journal was kept by Willard Richards, a private secretary to Joseph Smith.

A strikingly parallel example exists in Eckhart's sermon 30: "I was sitting someplace yesterday and spoke a phrase which is in the pater noster and says 'Your will be done!' But it would be better thus: 'May [the] will become yours!'"[40] (note the similarity of the authoritative editorial insertion with the one Joseph makes above).[41] Here Eckhart adjusts the grammatical sense rather than the lexical by exchanging subject and object. This then allows him to clarify the application he wishes to make by introducing the exchange: "That my will becomes his will, that I become he. This is the meaning of the pater noster."[42] Again, parallel verses are given in the following table to allow comparison:

Vulgate	MHG	1545 Luther	ESV
veniat regnum tuum fiat voluntas tua (Matt 6:10)	dîn wille der werde (Sermon 30, l. 30)	Dein Wille geschehe	your will be done

Finally, perhaps the most interesting of the methods used by both preacher and prophet to amplify meaning, and most parallel to the example from Goethe, is what could be called "exegetical" translation, or the use of variations and expansions teased from the words of the source texts themselves. Another Eckhart scholar, Freimut Löser, succinctly defines this approach: "The translation of Bible passages is already exegesis."[43]

I made the point earlier about Joseph not having studied source languages when he began work on the JST in 1830, but historical

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40. "Ich saz gester an einer stat, dô sprach ich ein wörtelîn, daz stât in dem pater noster und sprichet:'dîn wille der werde!' Mêr: ez wære bezzer: 'werde wille dîn!'" Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 340, 29–31.

41. During my original research, it was charming to note that in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* page 278, Joseph's comment (or, more likely, an editor's) on his change to Romans 8:26 was given as "It would be better thus," a striking echo of Eckhart's sentiment.

42. "Daz mîn wille sîn wille werde, daz ich er werde: daz meinet daz pater noster." Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 340, 31–32.

43. "Übersetzen von Bibelstellen ist bereits Exegese." Freimut Löser, "Lateinische Bibel und volkssprachliche Predigt: Meister Eckhart als Übersetzer von Bibelstellen," in *Metamorphosen der Bibel: Beiträge zur Tagung "Wirkungsgeschichte der Bibel in Deutschsprachigen Mittelalter,"* ed. Michael Embach, Ralf Plate, Michael Trauth, and Andrea Rapp, *Vestigia Bibliae: Jarhbuch des Deutschen Bibel-Archivs Hamburg,* Band 24/25, Herausgegeben von Heimo Reinitzer (Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, 2002/2003), 227.

records show that he eventually remedied this situation with both formal instruction and private study.[44] In his later sermons particularly, then, he often cites source languages to justify lexical as well as semantic choices he makes in his translations and, yes, his exegesis. A notable example comes from the famous King Follett Discourse of 1844: "Learned Doctors tell us God created the heavens & earth out of nothing. They account it blasphemy to contradict the idea—they will call you a fool—you ask them why they say dont the bible say he created the world & they infer that it must be out of nothing. The word create came from the word Barau—dont mean so—it means to organize—same as man would use to build a ship—hence we infer that God had materials to organize from—chaos—chaotic matter—element had an existence from the time he had."[45] Here he cites a Hebrew word, *baurau* (בָּרָא),

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44. "Mr Joseph Smith Junʳ has attended a full course of Hebrew lessons under my tuition; & has been indefatigable in acquiring the principles of the sacred language of the Old Testament Scriptures in their original tongue. He has so far accomplished a knowledge of it, that he is able to translate to my entire satisfaction; & by prosecuting the study he will be able to become a proficient in Hebrew." Certificate from Joshua Seixas, March 30, 1836, available at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers,* http://josephsmithpapers .org/paperSummary/certificate-from-joshua-seixas-30-march-1836?p=1.

45. The text here is choppy and sometimes ungrammatical because it comes from a record of the speech taken in longhand by William Clayton, the most complete account we have of the King Follett Discourse. Joseph Smith, Discourse, April 7, 1844, as reported by William Clayton, available at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers,* http://josephsmithpapers.org/ paperSummary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-william-clayton&p=5, pp. 15–16. The Joseph Smith Papers website gives reports from three others who recorded this same portion of Joseph's sermon with significant variations, which is to be expected from records written in longhand. Willard Richards recorded in Joseph's journal: "Doctors say.—created the earth out of nothing. Barau.—create,—it means to organized [*sic*].—God had mat[er]ials to organize the world. Elements—nothing can destroy. no beginning no end." Joseph Smith, Discourse, April 7, 1844, as reported by Willard Richards, available at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers,* http://josephsmithpapers .org/paperSummary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-willard-richards &p=2, p. 68. Wilford Woodruff recorded in his own journal: "An other thing the Learned Dr says the Lord made the world out of nothing, you tell them that God made the world out of something, & they think you are a fool. But I am learned & know more than the whole world, the Holy Ghost does any how, & I will associate myself with it. Beaureau, to organize the world out of Chaotic matter, element they are principles that cannot be dissolved they may

from Genesis 1:1, and then provides a definition for the word that supports the context of his ideas. Joseph uses this same method frequently in this same sermon as well as in others. The table below gives the cited text from the KJV and two separate quotations from Joseph's sermons, showing two separate exegeses:

KJV	Joseph Smith
1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1)	In the translation; "without form and void" it should read "empty and desolate" The word "created" should be formed, or organized.[a] The word create came from the word Barau—don't mean so—it means to organize.[b]

a. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 5, 1841, William Clayton Report, available at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers,* http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/discourse-5-january-1841-as-reported-by-william-clayton&p=3.

b. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith,* 359, William Clayton Report.

In addition to Hebrew, Joseph also employs quotes from the original Greek, Latin, and as noted earlier, German, in support of his interpretations.[46]

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be reorganized." Joseph Smith, Discourse, April 7, 1844, in Wilford Woodruff, Diary, available at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers,* http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff&p=4, p. 136. Thomas Bullock reported: "The learned men who are preach[g.] Sal[n.] [salvation] say that God created the Heavens & the Earth out of nothing & the reason is that they are unlearned & I know more than all the world put tog[r.] & if the H. G. in me com: more than all the world I will associate with it—What does Bara mean it means to organize same as you wo[d.] organize a Ship.—God himself had materials to org the world out of chaos which is Element & in which dwells all the glory—that nothing can destroy they never can have an ending they exist eternally." Joseph Smith, Discourse, April 7, 1844, as reported by Thomas Bullock, available at Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers,* http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock&p=5, p. 18.

46. "I have preached Latin Hebrew Greek German & I have fulfilled all I am not so big a fool as many have taken me for—the Germans know that I read the German correct." Joseph Smith, Discourse, April 7, 1844, as reported by Thomas Bullock, p. 21.

Eckhart does not employ the range of languages Joseph does,[47] but he frequently cites Latin words and then links them with a novel exegesis. He combines this method with anaphoric translation as described above in an example from sermon 44. As is common, he begins with a Bible quote, this time from Luke 2, which combines parts of two different verses: "When these days were completed, they brought Jesus to the temple" (Luke 2:22) and "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:25).[48] As is also common, Eckhart then provides a translation, in this case very literal to the source text: "As the days were fulfilled, so Christ was taken to the temple. And behold, there was a man, named Simeon, in Jerusalem, who was just and God fearing; he was waiting for the comfort of the people of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him."[49]

Eckhart could pick any word for an engaging exegetical expansion but makes a surprising choice: the word "and," and provides this explanation: "'And behold': this little word 'and' means in Latin a unifying and a tying up and a locking in."[50] Here Eckhart does not provide amplification based on the actual meaning of the word but rather on its grammatical function as a conjunction. He uses the particular points of this definition, though, to build a compelling case as the sermon progresses for why a unification of our souls with God's is necessary.

"In the Beginning Was the Word"

These last examples of exegetical translation bring us to a final point of consideration. Much of Joseph's work on the JST and in his sermons and writings, and Eckhart's in his considerable collection of sermons, identifies both as translators. Ultimately, the goal of the translator is to assist in spreading the word of God, and this can be seen as a chief factor driving

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47. A prominent and as yet unanswered question in Eckhart scholarship is whether and to what extent he was engaged with biblical source texts. As far as I have been able to determine, Eckhart never turns to Hebrew or Greek in either his Latin expositions or his vernacular sermons.

48. "Postquam completi erant dies, puer Iesus portabatur in templum. Et ecce, homo erat in Ierusalem." Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten*, 468, 2–3.

49. "Dô die tage volbrâht wurden, dô wart Kristus getragen in den tempel. Und nemet war, dô was ein mensche, hiez Simeôn, in Jêrusalem, der was gereht und gotvorhtic; der beite des trôstes des volkes von Isrâêl, und der heilige geist was in im." Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 468, 4–8.

50. "'Und nemet war': diz wörtelîn 'et' bediutet in latîne eine einunge und ein zuobinden und ein însliezen." Largier, *Meister Eckhart: Predigten,* 468, 9–10.

both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart and underlying much of their use of alternative translations of Bible passages in their sermons and writings. Translation is in many ways the deepest form of scripture study, with both prophet and preacher demonstrating their mastery of this. As Eckhart himself attested, "We ought also to add that there is no doubt that anyone who wishes to search the scriptures in the way we have described will surely find that Christ is hidden in them. . . . No one can be thought to understand the scriptures who does not know how to find its hidden marrow—Christ, the Truth."[51]

Perhaps no verse better embodies the anagogic potential of the Bible text than John 1:1, the prototypical scripture that both reveals truth and represents the challenges of accurately transmitting that truth. Because we began with a sample of the way Goethe experimented with variant translations of that verse, it is fitting to close with examples of the similar efforts from both Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart.

Joseph produced translations of John's prologue at least twice—once in the JST and again in a later revelation:

KJV	JST	D&C 93:8
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1	In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God.	Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation.

Though both these translations were produced quite close together in time (the verse in the JST sometime in February 1832 and the verse in D&C 93 in May 1833), it is possible to see a maturity and depth in the second that must have developed through practice and a familiarity with the text that is generated only through the kind of careful consideration required by translation. Of particular interest is the way Joseph "plays" with the concepts of word, message, messenger, and Word.

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51. Meister Eckhart, "Prologue to the Book of the Parables of Genesis," in Colledge and McGinn, *Meister Eckhart,* 94.

Eckhart translates the passage (all or part) in at least five places (and in fact, John 1:1 is one of the most quoted verses across his sermons):

Sermon 6	Sermon 9	Sermon 39	Sermon 42	Sermon 61	1545 Luther
Daz wort was bî gote, und got was daz wort. (l. 22)	in dem anvange was daz wort, (l. 29)	daz wort was bî gote. (l. 15)	in dem anbeginne was daz wort, und daz wort daz was bî gote, und got was daz wort. (ll. 8–9)	daz wort ist in dem beginne, und daz wort ist bî gote, und got ist daz wort. (ll. 22–23)	Im Anfang war das Wort / Und das Wort war bei Gott / und Gott war das Wort.
The word was with God, and God was the word.	in the beginning was the word,	the word was with God.	in the beginning as the word, and the word was with God, and God was the word.	the word is in the beginning, and the word is with God, and God is the word	

Note first of all how consistent the translations are: the critical vocabulary, "wort," "bî," and "got" are all the same; word order is proper; and the critical relationships like prepositional phrases and verb tenses are preserved correctly for the most part. The two most critical differences are the alternation of vocabulary, notably the word for "beginning" in sermons 9, 42, and 61; and the change of tense from past to present in sermon 61. In the texts of the sermons themselves, Eckhart subsequently builds on these interpretive choices to make his various rhetorical and theological cases.

By using the Bible text in the language of those listeners and readers, Smith and Eckhart, as translators, performed one the most significant services that they could, by assisting these readers of the Bible to both conceive of and receive the Word.

"Longing for Revelation"

Though this has been a necessarily swift and cursory overview of the kinds of creative and original "translation" exercised by two original and creative students of scripture, the survey has still revealed some fascinating and useful insights into their efforts to illuminate alternate meanings for both their original and contemporary audiences. In

addition, this quick skim also opens alternate avenues for looking anew at the work of Joseph Smith and Meister Eckhart.

Most scholarly attention both inside and outside the Church has been trained on the JST, so bringing the same kind of scrutiny to Joseph Smith's alterations and expansions of Bible verses in his revelations, sermons, and other writings (particularly as work on the Joseph Smith Papers progresses) will provide a new and nearly untapped source of additional information and insight into his engagement with the Bible.

Though there is still considerable debate about whether to classify Eckhart as a philosopher, theologian, or mystic,[52] there is general agreement about his central ideas: oneness, detachment, the birth of the word in the soul, and the ground of the soul (explained by Eckhart as the hidden source from which all things proceed and to which they return).[53] By looking at the Bible verses he quotes in aggregate, particularly those scriptures he quotes most, some important additional themes come to light, including light and darkness and the love of God. Pursuing a truly systematic study of his Bible translations will not rewrite the prevailing thinking about Eckhart and his systematics but will provide an alternative lens through which to see Eckhart's message.

As inquiry along these lines continues, future vectors for research must also certainly include evaluation of Smith's and Eckhart's translations using the tools and ideas from a range of current Bible translation theories, including functionalism, text-linguistic approaches, and relevance theory. Because of the provenance of many of these translations in sermons, of particular value would be pointed analysis of what prominent Bible translation consultant Ernst Wendland refers to as "the oral-aural dimension of the biblical message."[54]

In conclusion, no matter the perspective taken or theory applied, whether the aim is Joseph Smith's "taking a different view of the translation" or Meister Eckhart's efforts to get "under the shell of the letter,"

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52. Bernard McGinn summarizes this well with the statement that begins his summary of the history of efforts to understand Eckhart: "Few, if any, mystics have been as challenging to modern readers and as resistant to agreed-upon interpretation." McGinn, *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart,* 1.

53. Eckhart himself provides an outline of these four themes in the opening paragraph of sermon 53.

54. Ernst Wendland, "A Literary Approach to Bible Translation," in *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference,* ed. Timothy Wilt (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 2003), 230.

it is impossible to deny at least a partial satisfaction of what Goethe described as the "longing for revelation" that Smith and Eckhart have provided as we have considered the ways both open the eyes of understanding of their readers through the act of translation, the power of the insight gained when reading texts rendered in such memorable ways, and the illumination of alternate meanings of even common words—all for the glory of the Word.

Tod R Harris has a bachelor's degree in German literature from Brigham Young University and a master's degree in humanities (philosophy emphasis) from California State University, Dominguez Hills. For the past twenty-eight years, Tod has worked as a project manager and exegete in the LDS Church's translation division and currently serves as senior linguist over scripture translation support. Tod and his wife, Lisa, have three children and live in Salt Lake City.