

German Translation: “Oneness”

Mitch Sayers - 10 December 2025

It is a question that really sits at the crossroads of theology, translation science, and German linguistic nuance. The short answer: “Einzigkeit Gottes” is almost always the better technical translation for the Oneness of God in the sense used by Oneness Pentecostalism, while “Einigkeit Gottes” can be misleading even though it sounds close to the English word oneness.

Let’s break this down clearly.

1. Why “Oneness” in English is ambiguous

In English, oneness can mean:

1. Uniqueness / singularity (there is one God, not two)
2. Unity / harmony of multiple persons (oneness as agreement or concord)

Oneness Pentecostal theology uses meaning #1 — the exclusive, uncompounded, non-plural nature of God’s identity.

German, however, forces you to choose between these meanings. And the two proposed words fall into different categories.

2. “Einigkeit” – why it sounds right but is often wrong

Meaning of Einigkeit

- Einigkeit in German overwhelmingly means unity, concord, being of one mind.
- It is the word in: Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit...
- It implies multiple entities brought into harmony, not a single entity that is inherently one.

The theological problem

If you say:

➡ Einigkeit Gottes

A German reader may hear:

- “the unity within God”
- “divine harmony”
- a unity of multiple persons

This sounds very close to the Trinitarian notion of a united Godhead (drei Personen in Einigkeit).

So although Einigkeit looks like the English oneness, it usually misses the intended meaning.

3. “Einzigkeit” – why it’s a better fit

Meaning of Einzigkeit

- Derives from einzig = “unique,” “singular,” “one and only.”
- emphasizes absolute singularity, non-duplicated identity, exclusivity.

If you say:

die Einzigkeit Gottes

A German reader hears:

- “God’s unique, singular, exclusive identity.”
- “There is only one God, without internal plurality.”

This lands almost exactly on the theological meaning that Oneness Pentecostals express with the English term Oneness of God.

The theological alignment

Oneness theology asserts:

- God is one person, not three.
- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifestations/roles, not separate persons.
- God’s being is undivided and indivisible.

Einzigkeit communicates this far better than Einigkeit.

4. How German Theologians Use Einzigkeit and Einigkeit

German theological and academic literature provides a very clear semantic divide between *Einzigkeit* and *Einigkeit*, and this divide closely mirrors the distinction that Oneness Pentecostal theology requires. While the English term Oneness is ambiguous—able to denote either exclusive singularity or relational unity—German forces a choice. Examining how major theologians, biblical scholars, and philosophical writers use these terms shows that they carry distinct and non-overlapping theological implications.

4.1 *Einzigkeit* – Singular, Exclusive, Non-Plural Identity

The term *Einzigkeit* is consistently used in German theology to express numerical singularity, exclusivity, and the one-and-only identity of God. It conveys the idea that God is unique, indivisible, and without internal plurality. This aligns directly with Oneness theology.

Representative uses include:

1. Wolfhart Pannenberg – Systematische Theologie

Pannenberg speaks of „die Einzigkeit Gottes als des einen Schöpfers“, emphasizing the exclusive identity of God as Creator.

→ usage signals uncompounded singularity.

2. Gerhard Ebeling – Lutherstudien

Ebeling refers to „die Einzigkeit des göttlichen Wesens“, meaning God’s unmatched, singular essence.

3. Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (RGG)

In monotheism entries, scholars frequently write „Einzigkeit und Unvergleichbarkeit JHWHs“, highlighting Yahweh’s exclusive, non-plural identity.

4. Karl Jaspers – Philosophical Theology

Jaspers uses the expression „Einzigkeit der Transzendenz“ to denote metaphysical, undivided singularity.

5. Martin Hengel – Judaism and Hellenism

Hengel contrasts Israel’s faith with Greek religion by referring to „die Einzigkeit des Gottes Israels“—the one-and-only God of Israel.

Across all these contexts, Einzigkeit is the technical term signaling oneness as singular personhood or identity, not relational unity.

This is the precise meaning required by Apostolic/Oneness theology.

4.2 Einigkeit – Unity, Concord, Harmony Among Multiple Persons

By contrast, Einigkeit in German always denotes unity among distinct entities: harmony, concord, being “of one mind.” It never means intrinsic numerical singularity. This makes it unsuitable for translating Oneness in the doctrinal sense and places it semantically much closer to classic Trinitarian language.

Representative theological uses include:

1. German National Anthem (shaping common semantic range)

„Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit...“

Here, Einigkeit means social or political unity—multiple persons acting together.

2. Karl Rahner – Trinitarian Theology

Rahner speaks of „die Einigkeit der drei göttlichen Personen“, explicitly describing the relational unity of three divine persons, not their singular identity.

3. Orthodox and Catholic Ecumenical Texts

Phrases such as „Einigkeit im Glauben“ and „Einigkeit der göttlichen Personen“ appear, always referring to unity between persons or groups.

4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Ecclesiology

Bonhoeffer frequently employs „Einigkeit der Brüder“ to describe Christian communal harmony.

5. Commentaries on John 17

Scholars write of „die Einigkeit der Gläubigen“, reflecting unity among many disciples.

6. Theological Reference Works (TRE, LThK)

In discussions of church relations, the term appears as „Einigkeit zwischen Ost- und Westkirche“—unity between multiple bodies.

In every usage, Einigkeit implies plurality brought into harmony, which is identical to one of the foundational conceptual frameworks of Trinitarian theology.

It is therefore not appropriate for describing the Oneness of God in the Apostolic sense.

4.3 Theological Implications of These Usage Patterns

Because German theological vocabulary is so consistent, the choice between Einzigkeit and Einigkeit is not stylistic—it is doctrinal:

- Einzigkeit = absolute, indivisible, unshared identity
 - aligns with Oneness Pentecostal theology
 - excludes internal plurality of persons
 - emphasizes God's identity as one person who manifests Himself in various ways (Father, Son, Spirit)

- Einigkeit = unity among multiple persons
 - aligns with Trinitarian unity language
 - presupposes relational plurality
 - suggests harmony rather than numerical singularity

Thus, German theological usage strongly reinforces that “die Einzigkeit Gottes” is the correct term for the doctrinal Oneness of God. “Einigkeit Gottes” would introduce unintended Trinitarian implications and contradict the intended Apostolic meaning.

5. How does this speak to Oneness Pentecostal theology?

Oneness Pentecostalism teaches:

- God is one person
- Jesus is the full manifestation of that one God

- There is no internal plurality of persons

Thus, the German term must express:

- Singularity of personhood
- Uniqueness
- Non-multiplicity

Einzigkeit conveys exactly that.

Einigkeit conveys the opposite:

a unity between persons — the very framework that Oneness theology rejects.

6. So what should we use?

Best theological precision:

→ „Die Einzigkeit Gottes“

Best for describing the movement itself:

→ „Einzigkeits-Pfingstler“

(rare but clear)

or

→ „Oneness-Pfingstler“

or

„Oneness-Pentecostals“

(many German-speaking Apostolics simply keep the English term to avoid misunderstanding)

Avoid:

→ **Einigkeit Gottes**

unless you purposely want to echo Trinitarian unity language (which you likely do not).

7. A nuance: “Einheit Gottes”

Some Apostolic writers in German use:

„die Einheit Gottes“

This can work if the audience is already informed, because Einheit can mean ontological unity.

But it can also be heard as structural unity (again, similar to Trinity).

Thus:

- Einheit Gottes = acceptable but less precise
- Einzigkeit Gottes = precise and least ambiguous

8. Final Recommendation

If your goal is to communicate Oneness Pentecostal theology clearly in German:

Use “Einzigkeit Gottes.”

It best matches the English theological meaning and avoids confusion with Trinitarian unity language.

If your goal is branding or describing the movement:

Use “Oneness-Pfingstler” or “Oneness-Bewegung” — German readers already expect the English theological loanword here, just like “Holiness” or “Apostolic.”