

Moritz Busch's *Die Mormonen* and the Conversion of Karl G. Maeser

A. LeGrand Richards

Karl G. Maeser's contributions to the education of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints had a profound impact on the history of Mormonism, an impact that has reverberated to today. The narrative surrounding Maeser's conversion has been told and retold for over a century now in the enculturation of students into Brigham Young University's heritage. This essay seeks to better understand and contextualize the events surrounding Maeser's conversion and, more specifically, to discuss the text that was most influential in his conversion—the less-than-friendly *Die Mormonen* by Moritz Busch (1821–99).¹

Background

Karl Gottfried Maeser was born January 16, 1828, to Johann Gottfried and Hanna Christiana Zocher Maeser in Meissen, Germany, where Johann was a master painter in the famous Meissen porcelain factory. Johann and Hanna had high hopes for their son Karl, so they sent him to the prestigious Kreuzschule Gymnasium in Dresden, where he was one of the 5 percent of Germans who made the transition from formal schooling to the gymnasium.² The Kreuzschule was founded around 1300, and by Maeser's time had developed one of the highest reputations. Karl wanted to become a teacher, and although he was an excellent student and may have attended a university, he chose instead to enroll at the less prestigious but far more progressive Friedrichstadt Schullehrerseminar (teacher preparation college).

In Maeser's day, German schools were considered by many to be the best in the world, and with good reason. Horace Mann, the founder

of the American public school system, for example, spent six months touring European schools in 1843, the year that Karl was enrolled at the Kreuzschule. Mann returned praising the Prussian and Saxon schools as the best he had observed.³ The teachers were “as dignified, intelligent, benevolent-looking a company of men as could be collected from the same amount of population in any country.”⁴ He was moved by their love, dedication, lack of corporal punishment, and ability to captivate their students’ attention without harshness, coercion, or dependence on textbooks. He returned convinced that the reason for their success was the schools that Germany had instituted for the preparation of teachers. He also

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My interest in Karl G. Maeser has been both personal and professional. As I was investigating the history of grading in education, I sought to understand BYU’s place in this history. After reading faculty minutes and investigating original documents, I felt great affinity for Maeser and his dedication to teaching. I then began a serious study of his philosophy and training, which convinced me that modern LDS educators could learn much from this master teacher.



Before coming to BYU, I had taught and researched for two years at the University of Würzburg in Germany and knew that I might bring an important perspective to this study.

A few years ago, Maeser Elementary School in Provo was sold by the school district; it has now been remodeled into senior housing. Before it was sold, I was given the opportunity to remove some of the chalkboards from the school. Karl G. Maeser had written four sayings on these boards and had signed and dated them several months before he died. Three of these original chalkboards were still in the school, and I was able to procure them for Brigham Young University.

Finally, as a great-great grandson of Franklin D. Richards, who baptized Maeser in Dresden, Germany, I feel a familial tie to the man he baptized and continued to call “my dear son Karl.”

prophesied that such progressive views of education and “that quiet, noiseless development of the mind” fostered in Prussia would inevitably mean “that the time is not far distant when the people will assert their right to a participation in their own government.”⁵

He was right; in 1848, the year Karl graduated from his teacher preparation program, numerous pockets of political unrest in Europe boiled over into revolution. Karl was serving in his apprenticeship out of the city when Dresden exploded in revolt. The revolution, however, was crushed, and King Wilhelm IV blamed the schools. Oppressive regulations were imposed so that when Karl returned to teach school in Dresden he found that he had been prepared to teach in a system that no longer existed. As a teacher prepared in Pestalozzian freedom, democratic thinking, and a belief in self-directed learning, Maeser must have found these regulations particularly disturbing.

Die Mormonen and Maeser’s Introduction to Mormonism

Maeser accepted the appointment as assistant director of the Budich Institute in 1852, a private school on the outskirts of Dresden. While in this position, he met and pursued the director’s daughter Anna Mieth. They married on June 11, 1854, and in the next year their first child, Reinhard, was born. These were politically oppressive times in Saxony; preaching any other religion than the state religion, Lutheranism, was illegal. And Maeser’s training had left him unsatisfied and distressed. Of these times he later wrote, “Skepticism had undermined the religious impressions of my childhood days, and . . . infidelity, now known by its modern name as agnosticism, was exercising its disintegrating influence upon me.”⁶

In 1853 Maeser met Edward Schoenfeld at the school where they were teaching, and Schoenfeld married Maeser’s sister-in-law, Ottilie. This marriage strengthened the friendship between Schoenfeld and Maeser that would continue throughout their lives. Although life seemed happy enough to them, Maeser and Schoenfeld both struggled with existential and religious questions. Schoenfeld later wrote,

In those days we were what you might call young, fairly well educated boys, like thousands of others anywhere. We knew nothing of the gospel; but one fact was clear to us, that what the world called “religion” was not the truth; and as there was nothing better to our knowledge, we both were what thousands of others are under like conditions, skeptics, and we thought that science, and especially natural philosophy, was the only thing that might in some way fill the longing of the soul.⁷

Young Karl called himself an agnostic, but as an Oberlehrer (assistant master teacher), he was legally required to teach six hours of religion per

week. Douglas Tobler argues that it was because of this assignment to teach a religion course “that Maeser confronted directly the spiritual crisis which had been building in him.”⁸ It was in this atmosphere of skepticism that Maeser would be introduced to Mormonism. He later wrote,

In that dark period of my life, when I was searching for a foothold among the political, social, philosophical, and religious opinions of the world, my attention was called to a pamphlet on the “Mormons,” written by a man named Busch. The author wrote in a spirit of opposition to that strange people, but his very illogical deductions and sarcastic invectives aroused my curiosity, and an irresistible desire to know more about the subject of the author’s animadversion caused me to make persistent inquiries concerning it.⁹

A later, secondhand account relates the following:

I was a teacher at a Volk school in Neustadt-Dresden and belonged to an association in whose circle regular lectures on popular academic topics were sponsored. My turn came, and attracted through my readings in the book by Moritz Busch, I chose the theme “Mormon doctrine.” But I wanted to obtain a more independent view of my own, a more grounded understanding of the matter, so I wrote a friend who lived in Copenhagen, because I knew that missionaries in the Mormon Church were maintained, particularly in Scandinavian countries. Some time passed without my obtaining an answer.¹⁰

The work that Maeser was referring to is *Die Mormonen: Ihr Prophet, ihr Staat, ihr Glaube* (*The Mormons: Their Prophet, their State, their Faith*). Perhaps few researchers have examined *Die Mormonen* closely because Maeser sometimes referred to it as a pamphlet, not a book, in the telling of his conversion. No record of a pamphlet by Busch exists, but because the 158-page book was small and had a soft cover, it might have been thought of as a pamphlet.¹¹

Moritz Busch

Not much older than Maeser, Moritz Busch was also from Saxony, born February 13, 1821, in Dresden to a military petty officer and the daughter of a teacher at a school for the poor.¹² Upon graduating from the gymnasium, he selected a prestigious track at the University of Leipzig, receiving a doctorate in theology and philosophy. He participated in the revolt of 1849 in Dresden.¹³ In 1851, Busch joined the thousands who emigrated to the United States and there began a career as a journalist. Suppressed Germans craved knowledge about the new world, and it was obvious that Busch never intended to stay in America. He kept copious notes and careful descriptions of his travels for two years, then returned

and published *Wanderungen zwischen Hudson und Mississippi 1851 und 1852* (*Travels between the Hudson and the Mississippi 1851 and 1852*).¹⁴ As a part of his travels, he visited the nearly vacated remains of Nauvoo and began to ask what had happened. In chapter 10 of the book, Busch examines the history and development of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, though he does little to develop the doctrine. He does, however, expose his sarcastic style by characterizing Mormonism as “the most monstrous anomaly of our age.” Showing a strange ambivalence, he called it a product of Yankeeism with all of its dark sides and some of the virtues of a paternal nature: “The observer can determine whether he has a right to laugh or the duty to cry and whether he could be considered truly lucky to be born in the century of light or whether this light, believed to be so universally distributed, isn’t much rather always limited by the fates to a few privileged.”¹⁵

Busch adopted the Solomon Spalding thesis for the origin of the Book of Mormon but sympathized with Mormons for the abusive treatment they received in Missouri. About his book of travels in America, the *New York Times* later wrote that it “occasioned much remark on account of its caustic criticisms of Americans and American institutions.”¹⁶ Busch later wrote other critical travelogues about Palestine, Egypt, and Greece. Then he accepted a post at the *Grenzboten*, an influential German periodical, where he became its editor. He became best known for his biography and publications about Otto von Bismarck, first chancellor of the German Empire, with whom he traveled for many years as a press secretary.

Die Mormonen

In his 1855 book about Mormonism, Busch argued that Mormons were a ridiculously superstitious people, duped by a charismatic leader, but at the same time remarkably hard-working and energetic. He introduced the book with a severe critique of how corrupt religion had become in the United States and how vulnerable the American psyche was to religious frenzy:

We have perfect chaos before us, in which the subject ferments in the wildest manner; science has not seen a similar period in church history or such a decay of Christianity. The stupidest reliance on the letter of the law mixes itself with the most lunatic excess of fantasy. The most conspicuous delusion finds thousands upon thousands of men, who otherwise enjoy the sharpest sense in worldly things, now have eyes that consider black to be white, ears that listen to lies as revelation from above, and knees that bow before charlatans as the ambassadors of God.

The queer becomes miraculous, and caricatures are transformed into heroes. . . . Nothing is so full of contradiction, nothing departs so far from manners and customs, that there isn't a circle of believers who will gather themselves, if an eloquent mouth presents it, a crafty understanding justifies it from the Bible, and an organized talent gives it a form of a church. Indeed, it is the baroque and bizarre that seems to exercise the greatest power to attract, if only it is regularly exchanged with an even stranger falsehood.¹⁷

He then turned to the development of Mormonism:

Mormonism is unique in its type. It could be sown only in the soil of the new world, thrive only under the American sun, and if a miracle consists of some thoroughly outrageous phenomenon that contradicts the normal course of events, then, for the time being, we stand here before one of the greatest miracles of our century. . . . The history of the Mormons or the Latter-day Saints, as they call themselves, is the history of a hollow nut planted in the humus of the transatlantic world, which at first glance seems to have miraculously grown into a giant tree and produced fruits that are not entirely all rotten.¹⁸

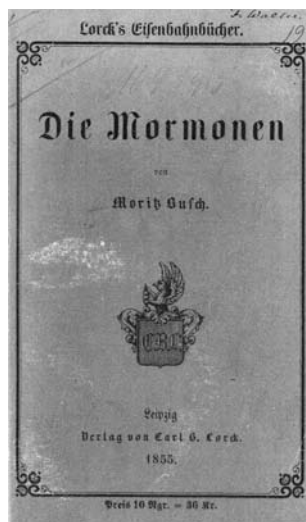
In an unusual combination of sarcastic derision with journalistic respect for detail, Busch describes the history, doctrine, and accomplishments of this muddled mishmash of gullible people. He described Joseph Smith as a naïve but ambitious and charismatic leader who found a remarkably fresh way to persuade people to follow him in spite of the obvious perversions he introduced. "While some may compare him in character to Mohammed and others with Cromwell, in very many expressions of his character we are reminded of Barnum, the 'Napoleon of irresponsibility,' and though he was undeniably an exceptional man, we might even describe him as the personified genius of Yankeeism."

Joseph was capable of taking advantage of the unique conditions in America that

made it possible for a sect consisting only of the founder's family and two friends, in the course of twenty years, in spite of cruel persecution and in spite of numerous occasions to expose the lies at its core, to become a well-ordered church whose hundred thousand members are strewn across the whole earth: for our century and particularly for America these strange conditions are as shameful as they are comforting. They show that in our time the light of culture still does not shine as far as we generally assume and that particularly the United States and England have less cause to carry the title of enlightened nations that they so eagerly adopt. They also show, however, that there, where free institutions reign and where the noble characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon race penetrate the whole, is a side where fraud can take on a form that deserves at least recognition and perhaps even admiration.¹⁹

Busch then described Joseph Smith's history and summarized the Book of Mormon. He reviewed the persecutions the Saints had suffered, their diligence in establishing the beautiful city of Nauvoo, the Martyrdom, their exodus across the Great Plains, their participation in the Mormon Battalion, and their settlement in the Salt Lake Valley. With astounding detail, he described the State of Deseret from "Box Elder Creek on the North" to the settlements of Parowan, Manti, and Tooele, to the settlement in San Diego with the Pony Express stations in between. He even described a tidy little town at the base of the "Timpanoga Mountain." He explained the climate and topography, the industry and politics, and predicted how the nation would deal with the Mormon theocracy.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 introduced Maeser to the basic doctrines of the Church. Busch described standard works of scripture, the Church's major publications, the Articles of Faith, and Mormon views on the Creation, the Fall, the nature of man, the spirit world, and the Resurrection. He explained the distinction between the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, described the basic ordinances, and explained the importance to Mormons of temples and baptism for the dead. Relying heavily on the theological treatises of Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde, Busch spoke of premortal life and the War in Heaven, the gathering of the house of Israel, and the concept of eternal marriage. He translated section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants and expounded on the doctrine and practice of plural marriage—all in the context that "the following communications are a harvest of flowers from this garden of caprice and nonsense."²⁰



Moritz Busch, *Die Mormonen: Ihr Prophet, ihr Staat und ihr Glaube* (1855). Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

Maeser's Reaction to *Die Mormonen*

As imbalanced and prejudicial as Busch's review of Mormon doctrine may have been, the Lindeman account of Maeser's conversion suggests that it was sufficient to answer some of Maeser's deepest questions before he made formal contact with Church representatives.

I often thought about Mormon doctrine, because I had to admit that many of the doubts, contradictions, and uncertainties that had remained

in me from my previous religious instruction regarding important points were solved for me in Mormon doctrine in the simplest and most appealing manner. But to convert me took something of an extraordinary experience.²¹

Busch reviewed the missionary work of the Church with the same kind of ambivalence:

Undeterred and undaunted by harsh rejection, by ridicule and scorn, they wander from town to town, discussing in individual houses, conversing with people in the streets, now and then working as a craftsman in the workshop, and in this way they bring to people that which is on their minds. Most of them are quite uneducated, nevertheless nearly all possess great practice in sophisticated questions and conclusions and no small knowledge of the Bible. Whoever admits the slightest truth from them will inevitably be caught in their nets and can be freed only through a forceful breach.²²

He warned that they “attempt to plunder hearts” by claiming ancient Christian gifts like “healing by the laying on of hands, prophecy, casting out devils, and speaking in tongues.” Of course “no man of means belongs to their adherents,” and they “protect themselves from speaking to people of superior education,” but the superstitious and the poor seeking a way to the New World are seduced by the thousands. They offer a “Perpetual Welfare Fund” to entice the poor to their “New Jerusalem.”²³ Scoffing at the stupidity of the people in England, Busch described how effective the missionaries had been at attracting “the lowest strata of society” with promises of land and adventure. In Sweden “Apostle Forsden” had had some success in 1851 until “the authorities arrested him and issued him a reprimand.” Of course, he then used this experience as a “cheap martyrdom” to affirm his dedication to the work.

Possessed by unbelievable industry, these street preachers literally follow the words “cry loudly and spare not” and by the dozens baptize all who manifest their willingness “to bow their knee to this name.” Many return home with fatigued lungs and broken health from such exertion, but then they are compensated with the glory of special devoutness and the honor that comes to them when the brethren refer to them, “Look, this is the holy man who has won so many souls through tireless preaching in the streets of London.”²⁴

While success had been great in England and in the islands of the Pacific, Switzerland, France, and Italy had not been very receptive. In Germany

the Mormon emissaries have been heard. But their hopes were very soon thwarted by the intervention of the police. In 1851 Taylor came to Hamburg in order to establish a magazine that carried the name of

“Zions Panier” [Zion’s Ensign], but after the fourth issue appeared, it died because of a lack of interest. Following him in 1852 came another *Sending* from the Salt Lake, Daniel Cairn, only to be ejected from the city in his first attempt to appear publicly. No better results were reached by the Mormons who appeared in Southern or Western Germany, and the Indian Bible, that in the meantime has been translated, can barely recover its costs.²⁵

The most ironic part of Busch’s book for Karl Maeser was the description of Mormon educational ambitions. “The leaders of the community are contemplating wonderful plans for the future to beautify their city.”²⁶ This uneducated people believed they could establish a university. The state set aside \$5,000 annually for a university, and land was dedicated with “springs for watering the groves, flowerbeds, and botanical gardens and by filling the pools.” Lots had been set apart for beautiful buildings on the bench east of the city, where they planned to place the instruments they had already gathered for a planetarium and in the name of a university education to provide training in such ridiculous topics as engineering, mining, and even farming.²⁷

As one classically trained in the finest German university tradition, Busch condemned the practical orientation of this new “university” and its ambitious desire to

“completely revolutionize the kingdom of the sciences and condemn the greatest scholars, particularly in mathematics and in the physical sciences, of error. From them, the geologist and the chemist will receive the deepest and strangest knowledge of the wonders of the deep, the botanist and zoologist will receive from them teachings in the principles of life in animals and plants.” For after they have sought first the kingdom of God, they expect the fulfillment of the promise, that all other knowledge shall come naturally to them; indeed, they add very sensibly that the Lord helps those who help themselves and that through strict diligence the spirit will become capable of receiving wisdom from on high.²⁸

This strange, ambitious people planned to revolutionize astronomy by overthrowing Newtonian theories of gravity through their “Book of Abraham” and replacing them with the “intelligence of matter” or an “outpouring and presence of the Holy Ghost in atomic mass.”²⁹ They planned to teach the old Saxon and Celtic classics alongside the Greek and Roman—who knows, they “could be as authentic as the Book of Mormon.”

Without mentioning the source, Busch translated a statement made by W. W. Phelps, “apostle” and regent of the university, at the celebration on July 24, 1851, in which he besought the board,

the Lord’s anointed, the elders of Israel, and the whole church, with one consent, to pray the Lord, our heavenly Father, to send down some of

the regents from the great University of Perfection, as he did to Noah, Moses, and others, to unfold unto his servants the principles of wisdom, philosophy and science, . . . [to send down] the angels, from the grand library of Zion above, with a copy of the history of eternal lives; the records of worlds; the genealogy of the Gods; the philosophy of truth; the names of our spirits from the Lamb's Book of life, and the songs of the sanctified.³⁰

Mockingly, Busch teased that someday they may have those heavenly messengers and manuscripts, but for now they are content to gather as many human books as possible. He reported about Dr. Bernhisel's efforts to establish a library and Brigham Young's proclamation to secure

a copy of every valuable treatise on education—every book, map, chart, or diagram that may contain interesting, useful, and attractive matter, to gain the attention of children, and cause them to love to learn to read; and, also every historical, mathematical, philosophical, geographical, geological, astronomical scientific, practical, and all other variety of useful and interesting writings, maps, &c., . . . for the benefit of the rising generation.³¹

Busch misinterpreted the term "Parent School" as it was used to refer to the University of Deseret and assumed it intended to educate the heads of families. Brigham Young did not see himself as too good to attend such a school. Even though the leaders had no clear understanding of what education would do to their own power, Busch praised their "particular respect for education" but warned sarcastically: "If they wanted to develop a ruling priestcraft that holds its subjects in darkness and ignorance, they should pursue entirely different politics."

They admitted readily that the wisest among them were at best "amateurishly self-educated" and had no clear concept of a true education. They thought they could "drag the sciences into the country as one might call upon the services of a competent potter, metal worker, or clock maker."³²

Busch seemed to believe that true education would be the greatest enemy to Mormonism. The leaders were naïve and uneducated and, therefore, did not realize they were playing with fire by seeking an institution of higher learning. "Out of confidence in their previous success, they seem to have no idea that they will be educating an enemy that sooner or later will overthrow their entire house of cards."³³

In spite of the extraordinary detail in his description, Busch relied exclusively on the writings of others, from whom he borrowed liberally without acknowledging the source. He seemed to delight in the fine detail of anecdotal descriptions without testing the breadth or accuracy of his stories.

In summary, then, Moritz Busch introduced Karl G. Maeser to the basic doctrines of the Church Maeser would dedicate his life to serving, the stories and origin of the Book of Mormon of which he would one day testify, the history and persecutions of the people he would join, the challenges he would face traveling across the American frontier, a remarkably detailed description of his future home—including a “tidy town” in which he would be called to serve. He also learned of the potential difficulties representatives of the Church would face in missionary activities in Germany. Busch introduced Maeser to personalities who would become his dearest friends and central to his future—Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Franklin D. Richards.³⁴ He learned of the prophecies Church leaders had given regarding their vision of a great university to be established in the Rocky Mountains—all from a writer who sought to mock and deride the Church and its people.

This ambivalent mix of mocking sarcasm and journalistic respect for facts while describing these pioneers intensely “aroused” Karl’s curiosity with “an irresistible desire” to know more about them.³⁵ In Heber J. Grant’s words: “When Brother Maeser read this article—that the ‘Mormon’ people were industrious, that they were frugal, that they took care of their poor, better than any other people, that they were honest and temperate, and yet that they were wicked and vile and corrupt—‘why,’ he said, ‘the man who wrote this article is a liar.’”³⁶

In Talmage’s account, the writer, while intending

to be calumnious and derogatory, told also of the wonderful growth and development of these strange people in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains, of the growing commonwealth they had planted in the desert, of their achievements in agriculture and the industrial arts. With the analytical vision of a trained reasoner, and, moreover, with the open and unbiased mind of an honest man, a lover of the truth, Karl G. Maeser saw the inconsistency of these contradictory assertions. “I knew” he has said to me many times, that no people could develop and thrive as the facts showed the Latter-day Saints “to have done, and at the same time be of degraded nature and base ideals.”³⁷

Maeser’s Conversion

His interest ignited, Maeser sought a way to contact an official representative of these strange people that he might hear the other side of the story and know for himself. With no Mormons to contact in the country, he “accidentally found” that they had a mission in Denmark and obtained the address of John Van Cott, president of the Scandinavian Mission.

Van Cott told him to write Daniel Tyler in Switzerland, who was assigned to teach German investigators and “would give me all information I should desire on the subject of ‘Mormonism.’”³⁸

Maeser’s first letter to Tyler on July 4 must have seemed unbelievable, and it was returned without answer. Tyler thought it was a ploy by the German police, an understandable response by a protective mission president whose missionaries had been persecuted and banished. After all, there were no members in that part of Germany, and it was illegal to preach there. Undaunted by what appeared to be an insult, Maeser forwarded his original letter with a new letter to Van Cott asking for an explanation. On July 29 Van Cott wrote in his journal, “Received 2 letters from Dresden, making enquiries concerning the way and manner by which they could be adopted into the kingdom of God.”³⁹ No wonder Tyler found it hard to believe. Van Cott quickly wrote to Tyler assuring him that he believed Maeser was sincere and wrote to Maeser requesting him to give Tyler another chance.

On August 5, 1855, Tyler wrote, “I read a letter from Elder John Van Cott from Copenhagen with Mr. Maeser’s letter returned stating that he had been in correspondence with him and directed him to me as the proper person for him to correspond with.”⁴⁰ On August 13 Tyler recorded, “I wrote Mr. Maeser in answer to his first (of July 4th).”⁴¹ Two days later he received another request from Maeser, “On the 15th I received a second letter from [him] ordering books etc. which I sent him on the 17th.”⁴² Thus, Maeser’s first contact with Church materials, at the earliest, came in the latter part of August 1855. In writing of this time, Edward Schoenfeld later said, “Bro. Tyler did send us a few pamphlets (miserably translated) by somebody who did not belong to the Church, no doubt.”⁴³

Mabel Maeser Tanner, Maeser’s granddaughter, suggested: “The poor translation of the tract was a source of much laughter and merriment among the young students, but as Karl caught the message hidden in the faulty words, he became intensely interested.”⁴⁴

According to Tyler, Maeser

believed them all and said during an approaching vacation he would come to Geneva, a distance of about six hundred miles, and be baptized.

Thinking this might be an opening to establish the gospel in the heart of Germany, where it had not been preached for about eighteen hundred years, I wrote and told the professor that if there was free toleration of religion perhaps I might send an Elder to preach the gospel to others as well as to instruct him further in its principles. He wrote, in answer, that no religion, except the Lutheran, was allowed to be taught, and that was the national religion.⁴⁵

At this point, Maeser's letters could not be answered quickly enough. Tyler's journal records, "On the 18th I answered his letter bearing [the] date of August 12th."⁴⁶ On August 25, we read,

I received a letter from Mr. Maeser in Dresden in answer to one I wrote him on the 14th stating his anxiety with his brother in law and family also his own family to enter the church by baptism, etc. He said an elder must not come as a missionary but he could be known as a teacher in his family. Same date I wrote President Richards requesting him to send Elder Budge who was still under my presidency he having been sent to England until his services should be needed in this land.⁴⁷

Knowing the potential dangers a missionary to Germany might face, Elder Franklin D. Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who presided over the European Mission, sought a safe means of sending Elder Budge. He later recalled:

While I was meditating the Spirit said to me: Select a brother from the English mission who would like to finish his education in Germany and send him there, if peradventure Professor Maeser should take him in as a private boarder, and thus he could teach the German while the Elder could teach the English and the gospel. I found Elder Budge, and I called him to this duty.⁴⁸

On September 5, Tyler wrote, "Received a letter from President Richards informing me that Elder Budge was instructed to make ready for Dresden and await instructions from me."⁴⁹ On September 7, he "posted two letters one to President Richards with a note to Elder Budge to get ready and leave for Dresden soon as consistent and one to Mr. Maeser in Dresden informing him that Elder Budge would leave Eng. for Dresden in a few days."⁵⁰

Requesting William Budge to travel to Germany during these troubled times was not a simple transfer to a new area. It was a dangerous request and both the brethren knew it.⁵¹ It was strictly illegal to preach in Saxony, and Elder Budge might be arrested for any attempt. He had spent nearly seven months in Switzerland under Daniel Tyler,⁵² but after numerous arrests, beatings, and banishments he was reassigned April 20 to the British Isles. William took a steamer on September 20 and reached Hamburg after facing a severe storm on the North Sea. He arrived in Dresden on September 28.⁵³

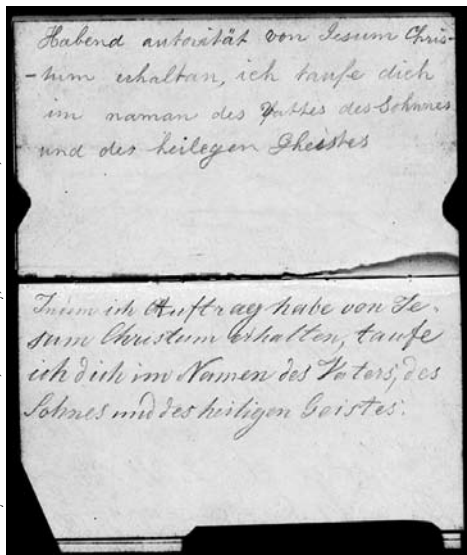
While it is apparent that William Budge played an important role in Maeser's conversion, it is also apparent that Maeser was prepared well in advance of Budge's arrival. Budge's contribution lay primarily in who he was and not merely what he tried to teach. Of Budge, Maeser wrote: "It was providential that such a man was the first 'Mormon' I ever beheld, for, although

scarcely able to make himself understood in German, he, by his winning and yet dignified personality, created an impression upon me and my family which was the keynote to an indispensable influence that hallowed the principles he advocated.”⁵⁴

Using a Bible with German in one column and English in the other and making rapid progress in his ability to speak, William Budge engaged in a very intense and condensed few days of teaching. President Richards reported that he received “a communication . . . at Liverpool stating that Brother Maeser and some friends, if I would come to Germany, were about ready to be baptized.”⁵⁵ Richards arrived on October 11, and the baptism was held on October 14 in the Elbe River, a couple of miles outside the city. In order to avoid the attention of the civil authorities, Karl G. Maeser, Edward Schoenfeld, and Edward Martin, the first converts from Saxony, Germany, were baptized under the cloak of night by Franklin D. Richards and William Budge. Five days later, five new members joined them, including Karl’s wife, Anna, and Schoenfeld’s wife, Otilie.

In spiritual affirmation that his decision to be baptized was proper, Karl described that he was given the gift of tongues on the return walk home:

We walked home together, President Richards and Elder Budge at the right and the left of me, while the other three men walked some distance behind us, so as to attract no notice. . . . Our conversation was on the subject of the authority of the Priesthood, Elder Budge acting as interpreter. Suddenly I stopped Elder Budge from interpreting President



Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Pages from Franklin D. Richards pocket planner of October 1855 showing an attempt to translate the baptismal prayer into German. From the grammar and spelling, it is obvious that the writer (perhaps Elder William Budge) was not highly experienced in German. The adjacent page shows a corrected version of the translation (and the “G” looks identical to the “G” in Karl G. Maeser’s signature). It appears someone attempted a translation and then Karl wrote the baptismal prayer for his own baptism in proper German. It should be noted that both are slightly different from the German baptismal prayer used today.

Richards' remarks, as I understood them, and replied to him in German, when again the interpretation was not needed as President Richards understood me also.⁵⁶

This experience is a part of every account of Maeser's conversion. President Richards freely admitted, "Brother Maeser did not know English and I did not know German, but I could speak with him and he with me."⁵⁷

In Edward Schoenfeld's words, "Did I not hear him and Elder Franklin D. Richards converse together in the dark night . . . ? What they said I do not know, but I knew they had a good conversation together, and when we waited, to let them come up, the gift was gone."⁵⁸

Maeser's Response to Busch

It did not take long for Schoenfeld and Maeser to realize that the decision to become Mormon meant the decision to leave their beloved homeland. Schoenfeld described that they "gave up" their situations in Dresden voluntarily. Lindeman records that Maeser said it was "against all attempts of my friends to restrain me."⁵⁹ This could only mean that they voluntarily remained members of the LDS Church and, therefore, willingly suffered the consequences. After the 1854 regulation, school inspectors, mostly clergy and not educators, were employed to guarantee orthodox belief among teachers. Franklin D. Richards remembered another side of Maeser's "voluntary" decision. Officers took him in for questioning. "He submitted to three or four investigations and they did not want him to stay among them; they sent him out to the line of Saxony, where another escort conveyed him down to Hamburg and thus he came over to England to see if he could find me."⁶⁰ On the back of Maeser's birth certificate is written: *Ausgehändigt nach Liverpool* (handed over to Liverpool) and stamped by the Dresden police on July 2, 1856.

Called to serve missions twice on their journey to Zion, the Maesers did not arrive in Salt Lake City until September 1, 1860. Then, barely settled in this desert city, Karl was called once more to serve, this time to return to Germany and Switzerland for three more years, 1867–70. This allowed one more twist of irony. As requested by Brigham Young, Maeser published the first edition of the German *Der Stern* (*The Star*) on January 1, 1869. This gave him an opportunity to respond directly to Moritz Busch and those like him. As a theme for that edition he selected a Latin phrase, *Audiatur et altera pars* (Listen to the other side).

We have written this sentence of ancient Roman law on the frontispiece of our monthly magazine as a motto, . . . to call attention to a fact that has played a particularly prevalent role in the judging of our people, their

origin, their history, their faith and their efforts: the rejection of our doctrine, the derision of our elders, and the persecution of our people by the current generation without examination or investigation of the one-sided testimony of our enemies. . . . Supported by our already-mentioned motto, we turn to those who hold themselves to be honest and sincere people, as the true representatives of this nation, . . . so that we can appeal to their sense of justice and call for a correct and fair judgment.⁶¹

Challenging the contradictions and absurdities attributed to the Church through publications and lectures, Maeser asked where these writers got their information.

Did these scoffers discover the hollowness and absurdity of our doctrine and testimony through careful examination? . . . Did those journalists, clergymen, and officers, after testing our principles with arduous diligence and praiseworthy exertion for the good of mankind, and recognizing the foundation to be false, consider themselves called to condemn those who hold them? Have they meticulously weighed the evidence of our enemies against our own principles and actions and found the latter to be too lacking?

Reader! You know that it is not so, not even in one single case.⁶²

In the next edition, he continued with a similar theme. Not only do we believe that “the blood of the prophets are the seeds of the Church,” but as Brigham Young put it, “Do you want to know what we want? We want to conquer the world if you will let us; however, if you persecute us we will do it even faster!”⁶³

Moritz Busch was precisely the type of journalist, scholar, and politician Maeser was trying to challenge, but with all his commitment to journalistic detail, Busch refused to seek firsthand evidence from the believers. Interestingly, in 1869, the year Maeser published the first edition of *Der Stern*, Busch published a history of the Mormons updating and extending the work that introduced Brother Maeser to the Church in 1855. Once again Busch relied only on his previous work or strictly non-Mormon sources, (though he was slightly better at providing references than in his previous book). Without noting the hundreds of Germans who had joined the Church since his first book, the publication of *Der Darsteller* in Switzerland, or the presence of Maeser as president of the Swiss-German Mission, Busch repeated his summary of missionary activities in various countries almost word for word. Then toward the end of chapter 9 concluded, “The Mormon endeavors for German souls has nearly completely failed.” Only a poet, a city engineer, a barber, and a few other isolated individuals had found their way into Latter-day Saint congregations—including “a school teacher in Dresden, who suddenly had strong desires to go to Zion.”⁶⁴

Karl G. Maeser's Legacy

What Brigham Young did for the settlement of the West, Karl Maeser did for the education of the West. His influence was profound and pervasive, touching a myriad of educators for generations. He has rightly been called the spiritual architect of Brigham Young University and the entire Church Educational System. As the first Superintendent of Church Education he assisted in the founding of forty-three academies, from Canada on the north to Mexico on the south (several of which have become institutions of higher education), hundreds of religion classes, and the development of the seminary and institute system. But his greatest achievements were personal; he won the love and devotion of a large family



Karl G. Maeser Family in front of the family home, Provo, Utah, May 1898. *Back row, left to right:* Mabel Maeser Tanner, Otilie Maeser Phelps, Emil Maeser, George S. McAllister, Anna Maeser (the only daughter of the professor's second wife, Emilie Damke Maeser). *Middle row:* Sarah S. Maeser and daughter Camille, Lillian Maeser, Karl G. Maeser, Georgia Maeser, Nettie M. McAllister and Theresa, Emilie Damke Maeser (Karl's second wife, whom he married in 1875; Anna, his first wife, died in 1896). *First row:* Russ (son of Lillian by a previous marriage), Gilbert Maeser, Sherwin Maeser, Beatrice Maeser Mitchell, Therese Maeser Larsen. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

and thousands of grateful students. He was central in the preparation of teachers in the Church and public schools. Among his immediate students were teachers who would serve throughout the territory, future U.S. senators and congressmen, university presidents, judges (including George Sutherland, who never joined the Church but became a U.S. Supreme Court justice), future General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and even prophets, seers, and revelators.

As benefactors of Brother Maeser's legacy, it would be appropriate to express gratitude to John Van Cott, who encouraged him to continue in his investigation; to Daniel Tyler,⁶⁵ for responding to Karl's enquiries and sending him Church materials; to William Budge, who courageously entered dangerous territory and faced possible persecution to teach him; and to Franklin D. Richards,⁶⁶ who traveled from Liverpool to baptize him. Such expressions would be incomplete, however, if we did not also thank Moritz Busch, who, despite his best efforts to dissuade his readers from entertaining a serious thought about Mormonism, despite his sarcastic condemnation (or maybe because of it), provided sufficient information and doctrinal detail to ignite Karl G. Maeser's curiosity and serious investigation of the Church.

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1. Moritz Busch, *Die Mormonen: Ihr Prophet, ihr Staat und ihr Glaube* (Leipzig: Verlag von Carl B. Lorck, 1855). Busch later wrote other books about Mormonism, including *Geschichte der Mormonen: Nebst einer Darstellung ihres Glaubens und ihrer gegenwärtigen sozialen und politischen Verhältnisse* (Leipzig: Verlag von Ambrosius Abel, 1869); "Aus der Geschichte und dem Katechismus der Mormonen," *Daheim* 6, no. 35 (May 28, 1870): 553–72; "Die Mormonen-Bibel," *Die Gartenlaube* 37 (1877): 616–18; and "Brigham Young, der Mormonenprophet," *Daheim* 14, no. 52 (September 22, 1877): 855–56.

2. Douglas R. Skopp, "The Elementary School Teachers in 'Revolt': Reform Proposals for Germany's Volksschulen in 1848 and 1849," *History of Education Quarterly* 22 (Autumn 1982): 345.

3. More than one hundred pages of Horace Mann's *Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1844) describe his experience in Germany. His praise of the German schools was so strong that it brought a dramatic rejoinder from a group of principals in Boston.

4. Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, 127.

5. Mann, *Seventh Annual Report*, 159.

6. Karl G. Maeser, "How I Became a 'Mormon,'" *Improvement Era* 3 (November 1899): 23–24.

7. Edward Schoenfeld, *Liahona: The Elders' Journal* 9 (August 1, 1911): 81.

8. Douglas F. Tobler, “Karl G. Maeser’s German Background, 1828–1856: The Making of Zion’s Teacher,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 2 (1977): 170.

9. Maeser, “How I Became a ‘Mormon,’” 24.

10. M. Lindeman, “Ein sächsischer Schulmeister im Mormonenlande,” *Die Gartenlaube*, no. 48 (1873): 795. Lindeman is quoting Maeser from memory. (Throughout this paper I am responsible for the translation of the German documents and citations, including this reference and those of Moritz Busch.)

11. I am suggesting that Maeser’s investigation was far more condensed than most authors have believed and far less influenced by direct contact with the Church, its literature, or its missionaries. James Talmage said a newspaper article converted Maeser; Edward Schoenfeld told many versions of the story and referred to a “tract.” Theodore Schreiber, “Pioneer Educator in Utah: The Story of Karl Gottfried Maeser,” *American-German Review*, April 1942, 15, called it a “booklet.” Mabel Maeser Tanner, a granddaughter, argued it was a “Mormon tract.” Wilkinson suggests that he read a book by Busch but leaves it unclear when Maeser began his serious investigation of the Church. Ernest L. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 1:84–87. It is very likely that as a boy he had seen an article about the persecution of the Mormons and this name had remained in his memory, but it was Moritz Busch who ignited Maeser’s passion to know for himself and who first introduced Karl G. Maeser to the central doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Dr. Busch, however, did not intend to be a missionary for the Church—quite the contrary. Consequently, the irony of this book about the Mormons in foreshadowing Karl G. Maeser’s future is extraordinary.

12. *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 3 (Berlin: published by the historical commission of the Bavarian Academy of the Sciences, Duncker & Humboldt, 1957), 63–64.

13. One wonders whether Maeser ever met or knew Busch, but no evidence yet directly confirms it.

14. Moritz Busch, *Wanderungen zwischen Hudson und Mississippi 1851 und 1852*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: C. Arnold, 1854).

15. Busch, *Wanderungen*, 81. This book was partially translated (Moritz Busch, *Travels between the Hudson and the Mississippi 1851 and 1852*, translated and edited by Norman H. Binger [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971]), but the chapter referring to Mormonism was not included.

16. “Moritz Busch Is Dead,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1899, 6. Busch died November 16 in Leipzig.

17. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 1–2.

18. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 4–5.

19. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 5–6.

20. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 73.

21. Lindeman, “Ein sächsischer Schulmeister im Mormonenlande,” 795. He then continues with Maeser’s later attempts to make contact with the Church.

22. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 60.

23. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 60–61.

24. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 62.

25. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 63–64.

26. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 66.
27. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 66.
28. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 67.
29. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 67–68.
30. W. W. Phelps, “The Celebration of the Twenty-Fourth of July, *Deseret News*, July 26, 1851, 298.
31. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 1833–1964*, comp. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 1:331, December 23, 1847. Busch also translated this citation without including the reference.
32. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 70.
33. Busch, *Die Mormonen*, 69.
34. Busch referred to Franklin D. Richards as “Francis Richards.”
35. Maeser, “How I Became a ‘Mormon,’” 24.
36. Heber J. Grant, in *Official Report of the Eighty-First Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1911), 22.
37. James E. Talmage, “In Worthy Remembrance,” *Millennial Star* 88 (December 9, 1926): 772.
38. Maeser, “How I Became a ‘Mormon,’” 24.
39. John Van Cott, “Journal Transcript,” Special Collections MSS 1035, 112.
40. Daniel Tyler, “Daniel Tyler’s Journal Continued from *Diary*,” *The Journals of Daniel Tyler* (June 22, 1853, to November 17, 1855), photocopied holograph, 52, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).
41. Tyler, “Journal,” 52.
42. Tyler, “Journal,” 52.
43. Edward Schoenfeld to Andrew Jenson, January 11, 1914, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, a copy is found in “Ancestors of Anna Heneritta Therese Mieth,” Perry Special Collections, also cited in Alma P. Burton, “Karl Maeser, Mormon Educator” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1950), 11.
44. Mabel Maeser Tanner, “My Grandfather Karl G. Maeser,” 4–5, Perry Special Collections.
45. Daniel Tyler, “Incidents of Experience,” in *Faith-Promoting Series*, vol. 10 (Salt Lake City, Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 44.
46. Tyler, “Journal,” 52.
47. Tyler, “Journal,” 54–55.
48. “Dr. K. G. Maeser,” *Deseret Weekly News*, March 12, 1892, 377. Franklin D. Richards was one of the speakers at a banquet held in honor of Maeser when he left his position of principal at Brigham Young Academy to serve as general superintendent of the Church school system. The addresses at the banquet were reported in the *Deseret Weekly News*.
49. Tyler, “Journal,” 57.
50. Tyler, “Journal,” 52.
51. Budge’s journal recorded that in a period of three months he was arrested or forced to appear thirteen times. Jesse R. S. Budge, *The Life of William Budge* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1915), 57.

52. William Budge served from October 1854 to April 20, 1855, in Switzerland. Upon his arrival, he wrote: “How strange it seems when a person cannot make known their thoughts neither understand people when they talk. The very sound of German is harsh but I suppose I shall get accustomed to it after a time.” William Budge, “Diary,” October 6, 1854, Perry Special Collections. Budge had served as a missionary in the British Isles, then was assigned to the Swiss and Italian mission with Daniel Tyler. In seven months he was beaten, imprisoned, persecuted, and banished from numerous cities in Switzerland. Budge, “Diary,” October 4, 1854; November 23, 1854; December 17, 1854. He records in detail a mob that attacked the house he was in, the interrogation he endured and documented his unsuccessful attempts to obtain governmental support. Despite Schoenfeld’s claim that he couldn’t speak a word of German upon his arrival in Dresden, he had made some progress with the German language. Upon his reassignment to England, Tyler wrote, “I will here add that Elder Budge was ever humble and obedient to counsel and was much blessed with wisdom.” Tyler, “Journal,” 39. He then lamented that there were no German-speaking foreign elders left to carry the work forward and that the local missionaries lacked sufficient Church experience (none had been members for more than a year).

53. Budge, *Life of William Budge*, 64–65.

54. Maeser, “How I Became a ‘Mormon,’” 25.

55. “Dr. K. G. Maeser,” 377. It should also be noted that it was reported by one author that President Richards attended because he sent word that he was coming through the area on his way south, and it was decided to postpone the baptism until his arrival. Budge, *Life of William Budge*, 67. This report is likely not accurate, however, because Richards has just returned to Liverpool from France and Italy and would hardly have had time to change his clothes before he left again for Dresden.

56. Maeser, “How I Became a ‘Mormon,’” 25–26.

57. “Dr. K. G. Maeser,” 377.

58. Edward Schoenfeld, “A Character Sketch of Dr. Karl G. Maeser,” *Juvenile Instructor* 36 (March 15, 1901): 181.

59. Lindeman, “Ein sächsischer Schulmeister,” 795.

60. “Dr. K. G. Maeser,” 377.

61. Karl Maeser, “Audiatur et altera pars,” *Der Stern* 1 (January 1, 1869): 9.

62. Maeser, “Audiatur et altera pars,” 10.

63. Karl G. Maeser, “Unser Zeugnis,” *Der Stern* 1 (February 1869): 24.

64. Moritz Busch, *Geschichte der Mormonen: Nebst einer Darstellung ihres Glaubens und ihrer gegenwärtigen socialen und politischen Verhältnisse* (Leipzig: Abel, 1869), 326.

65. Maeser dedicated a poem to Elder Tyler upon his release from the Swiss-Italian Mission. “Lebewohl an Herrn Daniel Tyler, bei seinem Abgange von Genf” (Farewell to Mr. Daniel Tyler, on his departure from Geneva), *Der Darsteller der Heiligen der Letzten Tage* 1, no. 8 (1856): 128.

66. Franklin D. Richards’s impact on Maeser must have been great. Maeser also dedicated a poem to him. “Franklin Richards,” *Der Darsteller der Heiligen der Letzten Tage* 2, no. 4 (1856): 63–64. Maeser even named his next son after Franklin D. Richards.



Franklin S. Harris, 1925. Harris's legacy can be seen today as thousands of students are taught to excel in hundreds of disciplines all across campus. BYU would not be the strong educational institution it is if Franklin S. Harris had not believed in the possibilities of a small parochial school and worked to improve it. Courtesy University Archives, Brigham Young University.