
Teacher in Salt Lake, 1860–67

I have a school for my children for which I need a teacher.

—Brigham Young¹

On the evening of November 16, 1860, a meeting was held in Mrs. Pratt's school for the newly formed Salt Lake Teachers' Association.² Twenty-five teachers from different parts of the world presented various methods of teaching from their nations. Elder Wilford Woodruff, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, attended the meeting and was especially interested in a German schoolteacher's approach on "illustrative geography for small children."³ This teacher was introducing the teaching techniques of the Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and recommended that for children to understand geography, "everything should be illustrated to their minds by drawings or pictures of rivers, cities, mountains, continents &c."⁴ The teacher was Karl G. Maeser, and eighteen years later President Woodruff called this same German schoolteacher to become the first general superintendent of Church schools.

Arrival in Salt Lake

Karl's unique educational preparation gained a critical dimension upon his arrival in Salt Lake in 1860. He was a teacher trained in the best pedagogy the world had to offer, but now he had also received his own personal, spiritual witness that the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were true. He sacrificed almost everything for his new convictions: all the comforts he had earned, the support of most of his family, his beloved homeland, and his respect in the world. He experienced the challenges of attempting to share his newfound convictions with those who were seldom interested in listening. He was forced to learn a new language and to find employment far beneath his potential and training. He had observed intimately the dark forces that oppress freedoms and the tensions that breed revolution and civil war. Now he needed to learn to integrate his ideas, experiences, techniques, and professional training into the building of a community dedicated to the concept of Zion while facing the practical challenges of taming a desert wilderness.

The new immigrants to the valley demonstrated their faith and dedication by leaving their comforts and enduring a trek across the plains of America, but their arrival hardly meant an end to their struggles. In many ways, their difficulties and challenges merely became of another type. The Maesers learned in a direct way the meaning of a hymn written by Eliza R. Snow: "Think not, when you gather to Zion, your troubles and trials are through. . . . No, no; 'tis design'd as a furnace; all substance, all textures to try."⁵ These words came to prove true, and Karl even translated that very hymn into German.⁶

Because the Maesers came into the valley on the first of September,⁷ they needed to quickly establish a home, store fuel for the winter, and obtain sufficient employment for long-term sustenance. They had a warm reunion with the Schoenfelds, who invited them to bring their wagon to the Schoenfeld home on the west side of Salt Lake City. There wasn't sufficient room in the house for all to sleep there, so the Maesers continued to sleep in the wagon, parked in front of the home, until other arrangements could be made. Thomas Higgs would soon offer to let the



Main Street in Salt Lake City. Compared to Dresden, Salt Lake City was not very developed in 1860. Photograph by C. W. Carter, courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society.

family stay in the “Rhodes House,” where they would remain for nearly a year rent-free. This was especially helpful because Karl was able to earn so little as a new arrival.⁸

Karl entered the valley with a mission in his heart. Before Christmas he would organize, advertise, and begin a new school; help found the first Territorial Teachers’ Association; serve as the first president of the German Language Home Mission and attend its weekly meetings; and become a member of the board of regents for the University of Deseret. He would do all this while facing the challenges of surviving his first winter in Salt Lake.⁹

The day after they arrived was the Sabbath, and the newly arrived Saints gathered in the Bowery to have their first opportunity to listen to the prophet Brigham Young in person. Brother Brigham did not disappoint them. He spoke in both the morning and afternoon meetings, and while we don’t know Karl’s personal reaction to the talks, it seems that he could well have supposed that the sermons were addressed specifically to him, both as an educator and as a new arrival. In the morning, Brigham pointed out the diversity in man’s “capacity for learning” and

expressed his disappointment that too many Latter-day Saints displayed “a dull stupidity in regard to learning the things that pertain to life.” As if welding the ideals of Pestalozzi and the doctrines taught by the Prophet Joseph, Brigham continued:

For persons to understand themselves—their own organization—they must understand the character of that Being who has organized them, or they never can understand their own organization. . . . We are inseparably connected, and must be, to that Eternal Being who produced us. You will therefore readily understand that without the principle and Spirit of revelation, it will be impossible to communicate these principles to the people.¹⁰

He proclaimed that the gospel opens a gate to the highest type of learning “through which direct revelation comes to the children of men in their various capacities.” Everyone is invited to partake of this learning from God, but too often “they fancy that they can devise systems by which they can save themselves.” He continued: “Intelligent beings are



Brigham Young in the 1850s. He and Maeser met in September 1860. Photographer unknown, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

organized to become Gods, even the sons of God to dwell in the presence of the Gods. . . . We are now in the school, and must practice upon what we receive. . . . We are His offspring, and to Him we shall return.”¹¹

Many educators at the time were beginning to separate knowledge into the secular and the religious. If Maeser ever had been tempted to do this, Brother Brigham had made it clear that such compartmentalization was not justified.

This address also made it clear that the gospel becomes a key to all

knowledge and is not merely a type of knowledge: “Our religion measures, weighs, and circumscribes all the wisdom in the world—all that God has ever revealed to man. God has revealed all the truth that is now in possession of the world, whether it be scientific, or religious. The whole world are under obligations to him for what they know and enjoy—they are indebted to him for it all, and I acknowledge him in all things.”¹² Maeser would incorporate these doctrines into the foundation of his own educational philosophy.

In the afternoon, Brigham demonstrated that he was keenly aware of the very practical demands of establishing Zion. If the newcomers expected that their troubles were over now that they had reached the valley, then they didn’t understand the true nature of their own doctrine: “All your trials hitherto are but trifling in comparison to the trials you will now be called to meet.” He warned that some would apostatize because their hearts would not prove faithfully undivided.¹³ “God gathers his people to school them. . . . How can you be prepared, if you let little, frivolous, trifling afflictions and temptations overcome you and turn you away? The Lord has brought you here to try every fiber of your hearts, even as Abraham was tried.” He encouraged the newcomers to mingle their faith with the faithful, to “perform the acts of righteousness, to bring together to Zion, from every nation, kingdom, tongue and people, the good and the strength, power, and wisdom of God that has been dispensed to the nations.”¹⁴

Brigham concluded his address by encouraging the new arrivals to quickly find shelter, gather food for the winter, and find whatever work that became available. He encouraged them to forget the amount of wages they supposed they deserved, but to work hard, learn what they needed to do, and build Zion. The rest would come to them in time as surely as “the sun now shines.”¹⁵

Brigham’s address seemed to connect Karl’s educational philosophy with his next calling in Utah, in which he would integrate the theory and practice of education while trying to build an ideal community with imperfect participants. What better introduction could Karl have received from the man whom he considered a prophet, seer, and revelator?¹⁶

Setting and Conditions in Salt Lake

Though the Saints had been in the Salt Lake Valley only thirteen years by 1860, they had already accomplished remarkable progress in making the “desert blossom.” Salt Lake City had a population of approximately 14,000; the entire Utah Territory had over 60,000. Their system of irrigation had developed great efficiency, the gardens were quite productive, the wide streets were lined with poplar and cottonwood trees, and businesses were flourishing. “The fields were billowing with grain, the cattle sleek and thriving, the barns were filled, the wind-mills buzzing.”¹⁷ One interesting aspect of the valley was that the houses were less developed, making the distinctions between rich and poor harder to recognize.

In terms of the political atmosphere of the time, General Albert Sidney Johnston had left the valley in 1860 after defending the United States against “the rebellious Mormons” (without firing a shot),¹⁸ the federal troops were finally withdrawn, and Camp Floyd was closed. On the other side of the country, Abraham Lincoln was elected president of the United States, and South Carolina seceded from the Union.

The year 1860 also brought a renewed commitment to education in the Utah Territory. The census claimed that there were 173 public schools operating in the territory with 5,485 students.¹⁹ Numerous speeches were given affirming the value of a good education, and a number of new schools were founded. For example, Henry Doremus opened a school across from the tabernacle, and Hulda Kimball was teaching a class of about fifty in the Seventeenth Ward.²⁰ In February, Brigham Young appointed Orson Pratt Jr. to open a school in the Union Hotel at Union Square with James Cobb (not yet a member of the LDS Church) as his assistant. They called it the Union Academy. This was a tuition-free institution for young men, a place where they could acquire “a thorough, practical, scientific education.”²¹ Enrollment was limited, so interested parents were encouraged to apply early. This academy was the subject of an address that Brigham gave in the Tabernacle on April 8:

We wish those who attend the Union Academy to qualify themselves to be useful to themselves and this community, as speedily as possible. We shall urge the study of mathematics, and more particularly their practical applications. . . . We prefer to have scholars tolerably well advanced in arithmetic, writing, reading and grammar. . . . You may select any community of the same number, and in this particular we will favorably compare with the best of them, and I think we are ahead of them. But this furnishes us no reason for keeping children from school. . . . We should be a people of profound learning pertaining to the things of this world. We should be familiar with the various languages, for we wish to send to the different nations and to the islands of the sea. . . . We also wish them to understand the geography, habits, customs, and laws of nations and kingdoms.²²

Brigham announced in the same address his intention to build a similar academy for young women.



Maeser taught only one year at the Union Academy (1861–62) before taking a position at the Twentieth Ward School. Courtesy of Utah Historical Society.

Helping the German-Speaking Saints

As former president of the Philadelphia Conference and missionary to German immigrants, Maeser was regularly called upon to interpret from English to German and vice versa. Because he was the chaplain of the John Smith company, individuals had often come to him for help and understanding on the trek, especially the German speakers. Karl knew, through personal experience, the challenges and misunderstandings that non-English-speaking immigrants faced. He also recognized that the powerful words spoken by the Brethren weekly in the Bowery would not mean much to those unable to understand them. With his organizational genius, he immediately responded by proposing an institution that was to be called “The Home Mission among the Saints of the German Language.” Its first public meeting was held on the Wednesday following the October general conference, and its purpose was to provide “instructions in keeping with those given in the bowery or tabernacle.”²³ Karl served as president, with Daniel Bonelli and Johannes Priem as counselors.

In order to “guard the temporal interest of the German Saints not yet fully integrated into the English language,” Maeser and Bonelli drafted a constitution for the “German Intelligence Office.”²⁴ This nonprofit committee would greet new arrivals, gather information regarding available land and employment opportunities, communicate with local bishops, and help resolve “in an amicable way all financial difficulties among them.”²⁵ They kept tabs on all the Germans in Utah and organized biweekly visits among them. Priesthood meetings were also held every two weeks, at which reports were made regarding their spiritual progress. The German Saints were encouraged to attend both the English and German meetings and to “render themselves familiar with the language and ways of the people so as to become independent of assistance.”²⁶ They even offered English lessons four times per week.

Return to the Schoolroom: Humble Beginnings

Karl's next assignment was to find employment. He was not well suited to manual labor. His granddaughter recorded, "He was willing enough and tried, but was pitifully ineffectual."²⁷ On September 14, Franklin D. Richards wrote a letter of recommendation to Brigham for Karl to work at the Church Historian's office. Two of the historians had been called to serve missions, so Karl "inclined his mind in that direction with some degree of hope."²⁸ With years of advanced education to his credit and a glowing recommendation from a member of the Quorum of the Twelve who would become the Church's official historian, as well as the endorsement of President George Q. Cannon and Patriarch John Smith, there was good reason for him to "hope." However, the job offer was not extended to him (to the eventual blessing of the whole church). Instead, "as naturally as water seeks its level,"²⁹ he turned his attention to the classroom and began making arrangements to open a school for the Fifteenth Ward.³⁰

In October 1860, an advertisement in the *Deseret News* announced evening classes in "Instruction in the Higher Branches of Education," signed "Karl G. Maeser, Professor of Natural Sciences from the Budig Institute, Dresden & Alexander Ott, Graduate of the University of Berlin."³¹ There were courses in English, German, French, Italian, Greek, gymnastics, music (piano), drawing, bookkeeping, mathematics, and "all the branches of a sound and practical education." The teachers also announced that their day school "for the general instruction of Boys and Girls" would be opening soon. Classes began on November 15, but the facilities and arrangements at the "Deseret Lyceum" were not very conducive to learning.³² Tuition was set at six dollars per term for adults and three dollars for children, and those without money could pay in produce at the same rate as offered by the tithing office.³³ In November, the news of Karl's school was even reported in the *New York Times*: "We are to have another High-school in this city. KARL G. MAESER, 'Professor of Natural Sciences, from the Budig Institute, Dresden,' announces his intention of teaching 'all the branches of a sound and practical education,' including gymnastics. Verily, the world does move."³⁴

**INSTRUCTION IN THE HIGHER
BRANCHES OF EDUCATION.**

THE Undersigned beg to inform the Public that they intend **OPENING EVENING CLASSES** for English, German, French, Italian, Latin, Greek; Gymnastics, Music—Piano; Drawing, Bookkeeping, Mathematics, and all the branches of a sound and practical education, on the 15th November.

They also beg to inform their numerous friends that it will yet be some weeks before they can open their Academy for the general instruction of Boys and Girls in the ordinary branches of education, with which they will unite physical education or Gymnastics.

Those desirous of joining any of the above classes will call at the residence of **Karl G. Maeser**, north-east corner of the School-house Block, 14th Ward.

Terms: \$6 per quarter in advance. Produce taken at Tithing Office price.

KARL G. MAESER,
Professor of Natural Sciences, from the **Budig**
Institute, Dresden.

ALEXANDER OTT,
Graduate of the University of Berlin.

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Karl G. Maeser's first advertisement in the Deseret News, October 31, 1860, announcing evening classes. Courtesy of Utah Digital Newspapers.

Later, Maeser described this first attempt at a “school in Zion” as “conditions so primitive that teachers of today can have no conception of them.”³⁵ In Dresden, he had taught at an institution with the finest facilities and equipment, a school that commanded high social respect. His salary there had been sufficient for him to be quite comfortable; in fact, it would have seemed luxurious compared to his earnings in Salt Lake. Alexander Ott, Karl’s partner at the Deseret Lyceum, published a series of articles in the *Deseret News* describing the German educational system and how respected a good education was there. In a community trying to learn how to grow potatoes in the desert, however, classical languages and fine literature did not have a great appeal. Often Karl would have to visit the homes of his students with a wheelbarrow to collect whatever they could give him in lieu of tuition.

It must have been humiliating for a teacher so well prepared in the highest educational circles of Saxony to have to beg for any extra morsels his students’ families might be able to spare. This refined professor often

went door to door in hopes of collecting his fees in potatoes, squash, and cabbage. Unfortunately, few of his students' families had enough to spare, and often he returned with nothing to give his hungry family. In describing this time in Maeser's life, Alice Reynolds wrote, "He knew hunger, sacrifice and to have his neighbors say, 'If he is too lazy to work for his living let him starve.'"³⁶

Expanding His Influence on Utah Education

Karl's commitment to the proper preparation of teachers in Utah began even before the Deseret Lyceum had opened its doors. The first Territorial Teachers' Association was formed at the end of October 1860, and Karl became an active participant. Weekly meetings were held to help prepare the teachers in the territory to be more effective and, to the extent possible, "to aim at the attainment of uniformity in connexion with the practice of school teaching, by means of lectures, lessons, essays, readings, illustrations and criticisms."³⁷ Karl's reputation as a teacher quickly spread, and before Christmas he was appointed by the legislature to be a regent of the University of Deseret.³⁸ He was expected to know the laws regarding schools and to help oversee the establishment of schools in each ward or district. He was also expected to select textbooks, certify teachers, and evaluate educational efforts in the territory, even though the university was not operating at the time.

Around this same time, Karl bid farewell to many of his German-speaking friends who were leaving for southern Utah. At the October conference of 1861, Brigham called on 309 families to settle southern Utah.³⁹ Among this group were thirty-nine German-speaking Swiss families who, under the direction of Daniel Bonelli, settled Santa Clara (near St. George) to grow wine. This took a large portion of Salt Lake's German population who had become Karl's close friends, including both of his counselors in the German Home Mission. It also included Orson Pratt Jr., whose departure created a vacancy in the directorial position at the Union Academy.

By the fall of 1861, Brigham invited Maeser to leave the Fifteenth Ward School to become the new director of the Union Academy.

Maeser brought with him enthusiasm and a vision of a more comprehensive educational preparation than had been proposed. He wanted to see the academy expand by creating a teacher college; he planned to call it Deseret High School and join it with the Seventeenth Ward School. This would create closer coordination between higher education and primary education because it would allow the teacher candidates to improve their own skills by simultaneously teaching and taking classes. However, even though his proposal had received Brigham's personal approval, the board denied his request. This must have been a discouraging blow. Maeser viewed the denial of his proposal not only as a personal affront to him but also as a rejection of prophetic counsel. How could he keep working for a board that rejected the desires of a prophet?

Forces seemed to be converging to discourage Karl. Anna's pregnancy was not going well; she would eventually give birth to a stillborn child in February. It is likely that during this same time, Karl received the news from Germany that his mother had died on September 25; it was probably also with this news that he received a letter from his father pleading for him to return to Germany. His father assured him that money was available for his return and that arrangements had been made for him to be reinstated to the status of *Oberlehrer*, with all the professional security that it would provide. His wife and children would be comfortably provided for and his friends were anxious to greet him again. As Karl struggled with the difficult proposal put forth by his father's letter, he had a dream one night that answered his worries. His son Reinhard remembered him recounting the dream:

In this state of mind, he retired one night to his bed, and a strange dream was manifested to him. He saw before him a steep and very high hill which he must climb. There was not even a semblance of a path. He gazed upon the seemingly hopeless task; but he began the ascent. Step by step he climbed, and, after a fatiguing effort, he at last reached the top. To his amazement and delight, there spread out before him a landscape of transcendent beauty, traversed by a

smooth road of even grade. He awoke; it was the answer to his prayer. He knew what he must do.

Karl then told his family:

I would rather have suffered the afflictions of Job, by having all my friends turn against me, or have become a beggar in the street, or have been made to dig in the mines, than to have yielded to the enticements of my German kinsmen and pseudo friends. I would rather take my wheelbarrow and go day by day among this people, collecting chips and whetstones for my pay, than to have the Kingdom of Saxony open to me, if such meant the sacrifice of my knowledge and testimony of this Gospel. I flung the letter [from my father] into the fire and, retiring to my secret closet, poured out my soul in gratitude to my Father in Heaven, that I had found favor in His sight, and had accepted the Gospel of His Son.⁴⁰

When Bishop John Sharp approached Karl asking him to organize and direct the Twentieth Ward School, Karl was more than willing to accept, provided that Brigham approved.

At the Twentieth Ward, Karl began to expand his vision of education as he had hoped to do at the Union Academy. He was granted US citizenship in 1864, while his reputation as a teacher steadily grew. In April 1863, Anna gave birth to a daughter, Anna Camilla Maeser (who would pass away only two years later in March 1865), and in the same month Anna's mother, Henrietta Mieth, immigrated to Utah from Saxony and moved in with the Maesers.

Teacher to Brigham Young's Family

Karl taught at the Twentieth Ward School from 1862 until May 1865, when Brigham asked Karl to teach his family: "I have a school for my children for which I need a teacher. I would like to have them better schooled than they can be by schoolmistresses to have them receive such a course



Twentieth Ward School. Maeser taught here from 1862 to 1865. Photographed by G. N. Ottinger. Courtesy of Utah Historical Society.

of instruction as a thorough school teacher can give them.” Brigham also asked Karl to practice the organ so that he could perform in the Tabernacle.⁴¹ Accepting Brigham’s assignment was not a simple project: Brigham had fifty-six children of various ages and abilities. He had built a schoolhouse near Eagle Gate in 1860 specifically for his family. At its dedication, Brigham plainly stated his expectation that “no man or woman—teacher or taught, that profaned the name of the Almighty, should ever enter there a second time. Everything that could advance them in education would be furnished, but evil would be sharply looked after.”⁴² Karl was thrilled by his new assignment to work closely with the Young children and to serve the prophet so intimately. In August 1865, Brigham wrote to Karl expressing how pleased he had been with the “progress which my school has made under your direction and management, and I trust and pray that your efforts for the continued improvement of your scholars may be crowned with success and that the harmony and union which ought always to exist between the master and his pupils may increase in your midst.”⁴³ Karl taught at Brigham’s family school until 1867. Later Brigham’s daughter Zina Young Card reflected that Maeser “did more for us than any other teacher on earth to awaken our minds and hearts to a sense of true



Brigham Young's family schoolhouse was dedicated in December 1860. Maeser taught there in 1866–67. Photo by C. R. Savage, ca. 1880, courtesy of Utah Historical Society.

education.”⁴⁴ Two of Brigham’s sons, however, did not share Zina’s appreciation, at least at the time: fourteen-year-old Alfales and twelve-year-old Don Carlos requested of their father to be allowed to follow their older brother Willard and go to work. After frequent absences and complaints, Brigham allowed the two brothers to discontinue their schooling early.⁴⁵

Insights into Maeser’s Teaching Methods

At each of the schools in Salt Lake where Karl taught, he learned important lessons about himself. He learned about the challenges of building Zion and the spiritual challenges that come during temporally depressed circumstances. He met most of the top educators in the territory and gained the confidence of the leading figures in the Church. He learned the order of operations within the LDS culture by observing it intimately. Most importantly, he refined his educational approach by teaching students of all ages, abilities, and aspirations. He was able to stay abreast of the latest approaches in the United States, and he participated in the administration of educational efforts in the Utah Territory with both private and public education. With experience, he learned how to bond the educational

theories of Pestalozzi with the theological doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Pestalozzian educator is driven by a sense of personal mission—the task is to inspire and provoke the native capacities within each student. This cannot be done by merely “pouring in” information, tasks, or lectures. It can be accomplished only by “drawing out.”⁴⁶ Pestalozzians provoke questions, refine capacities to observe phenomena, and inspire a sense of wonderment, curiosity, and attention. Textbooks are secondary to the book of nature, and the teacher’s role is to coach the students while they construct meaning through their own personal observations and experiences. Maeser became a master of this approach. His lectures and writings reflected this same intent. He lived the maxim he often shared: “Strive to be yourself that which you desire your children or pupils to be.”⁴⁷ He prepared himself to address nearly every conceivable topic by pursuing and expanding his own questions and by developing his own approaches to engage a student’s personal power of observation and imagination.

Records indicated that during this time Maeser held regular public lectures on numerous topics. For example, in 1862, Maeser gave an address about “The Origins of the Continents,” which was described in the *Deseret News* as “fraught with information of a geological character. He thoroughly analyzed the doctrines of the Neptunists and Vulcanists and then contended that there was perfect order and harmony in the formation of all the continents, islands and peninsulas.”⁴⁸ In 1863, his topic in the same lecture series was a two-part lecture on “The Footsteps of God in History.”⁴⁹ Maeser also served on the committee to organize these lectures with such men as John Long, E. L. T. Harrison, Edward W. Tullidge, and James McKnight.⁵⁰ His position on this committee along with his continued participation as a regent of the University of Deseret placed him among the leading intellectuals in Salt Lake City. These intellectuals would later come to play another important role in Karl’s development.

While much of his teaching approach during this time would be left to speculation, his writings reveal his method. In 1866, Apostle George Q. Cannon began a biweekly magazine, the *Juvenile Instructor*. In it, Karl wrote a regular column under the title “Voices from Nature,” which revealed the

Voices From Nature.

For the Juvenile Instructor.

THE RAINBOW.

STILL vivid in my mind is the bitter feeling and inexpressible sadness, the first of any account in my life, which I experienced, when in my thirteenth year I got hold of a popular work on astronomy and read a representation of the nature of the heavens above us. Line after line, as I proceeded in reading, my cherished ideas I had formed for myself about the sun, moon, stars and our mother earth, were ruthlessly and irreparably torn to pieces, and I felt lonesome and chilly before the immensity of space that opened before my view. It took a long, long time for me to realise the beauty and superiority of truth and reality above the charming illusions of imagination and prejudice.

Perhaps my young readers also may give me little thanks for handing a subject to-day, about which they probably have already formed their own notions, and which notions may very likely be opposed to my statements. They may think my explanation on the subject, not half so nice as their own way of looking at it. But let us see. You all have seen a rainbow, when a dark rain-cloud hovered in one part of the heavens, and on the opposite side of it the bright sun would be shining. This glorious arch, stretching from mountain to mountain across the plains, is by far the most beautiful phenomenon our eye can behold in nature.

It will not have escaped your observation that there are two conditions necessary for the formation of a rainbow—a cloud on one side of you, and the sun on the other. Therefore you can only see a rainbow in the morning to the west of where you are standing, and in the afternoon to the east of where you are standing. You never saw a rainbow in the north or south, for

same arrangement, and this is called the sun-spectrum, to which yet other qualifications, however, belong, that have nothing to do with our present subject. You can never step underneath a rainbow; for the people who live at the place where you see it, can see no rainbow at all, or if they see one, it is still further off. In fact everybody sees his own rainbow, inasmuch as no two men can stand precisely at the same place in the same time. You cannot take hold of your own likeness in the looking-glass, for it is no substance, only reflected light, and so is it with the rainbow.

In all ages has this beautiful phenomenon attracted the attention and admiration of men, and various have been the conjectures, made about its nature, and some heathen nations of old took it for a bridge upon which the gods descended from the heavens to the earth; but its most beautiful interpretation is found in the Bible, where it is represented as the emblem of peace and of a promise of the Lord, that as long the earth should stand, wherever the rainbow should be seen there would be seed time and harvest; and to us all may it be an assurance, that, however the storms of adversity may visit us, and the tears of grief moisten our eyes, as long as the glorious sun of faith and confidence in the Lord is shining within us, it will produce the bright hope, uniting, like yonder beautiful arch in the clouds, the dark present with future better days.

K. G. M.

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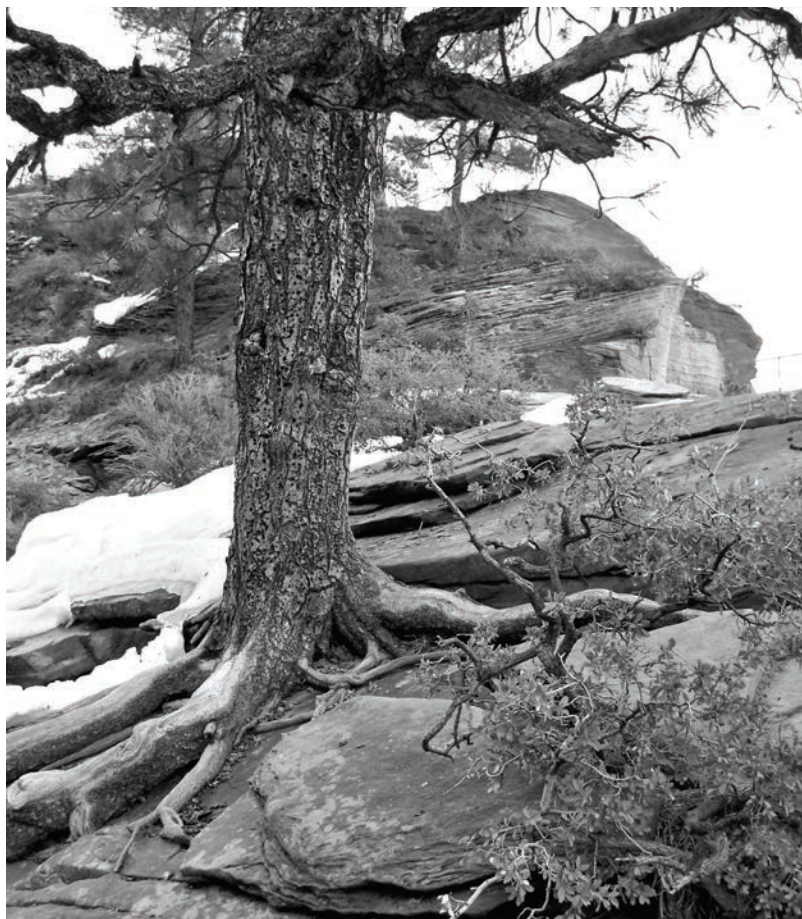
A CURIOUS LETTER.

THE following letter purports to be written by a Jew who was traveling in Palestine, in a merchant's employ, at the time the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, was upon the earth in the flesh. It was written by the young man to his tutor in the Netherlands. The letter was translated from the Danish of Dr. JUNG-STILLING by Elder JESSE N. SMITH.

We publish the letter as an interesting document; its chief interest being centred in the descriptions of the Savior; but we

In 1866-67, Maeser published a series of articles on nature for the Juvenile Instructor. They demonstrate his Pestalozzian approach to teaching. This one was about rainbows, March 1, 1867. Courtesy of HBL.

Pestalozzian foundation of his teaching. In most of the articles, he began with an observation of some phenomenon of nature and asked the reader to join him in a careful analysis of it. In his first article, for example, in January 1866, he invited his readers to join him on a trip to the mouth of the canyon to learn from a fallen tree. "What! Can a tree talk? You ask, and I answer, listen to him, he will tell the story of his own life." He then examined carefully the rings of the tree and counted 150. "This tree tells me, therefore, that he was 150 years old when he was cut down." The first thirty-nine rings were "fine, even, strong and regular," telling us "that the first thirty nine years of his youth were spent in prosperity." Then we "notice from the forty-fifth to the forty-ninth rings how thinly they look, how close they are together. In these years of his life he had very little to subsist upon, little snow in winter, not much rain in summer, and he went through a time of famine for four years." He continued his analysis of the tree, noting the year it was struck by lightning and how difficult the recovery from



As a Pestalozzian teacher, Maeser encouraged students to observe the lessons in nature. There is much to learn from a tree growing out of a rock. Photo taken by A. LeGrand Richards near Angel's Landing, Zion National Park, Utah, 2008.

it was. He observed which side faced the mountain and which part had been damaged by storms or wind. He then concluded, "When the voice of nature, even out of that tree, speaks to us such true and intelligible words of the works of God, should we not think that the finger of the Almighty has written down everywhere the great record of His workmanship." Even the smallest details of nature proclaimed God's glory.⁵¹

This article is a great example of Pestalozzi's teaching strategy—namely, the use of *Anschauung* (object lesson or sense perception). In this

method, the teacher coaches students to observe some aspect of nature. Then he or she asks questions, challenging students to draw their own conclusions and insights. Such teachers move from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract. Rote memorization is minimized, textbooks are less relied upon, lectures are less prevalent, and words follow experience—they do not precede it.

Over the next year, Maeser wrote similar articles about coal, water, flowers, night, and day. He wrote about the stories written in the stones around the benches of the Salt Lake Valley and about the stones carried enormous distances in Europe by glaciers. He examined the intricacies of the eye and the miracle of the ear. He wrote about the forces in nature with lessons on fire, steam, wind, and electricity, describing how each of these could teach their own mysteries and how they gave evidence of a divine creator. When “assisted by the spirit of revelation,” we could transform each force into a wonderful servant, but without controls they were dangerous masters.⁵² Rainbows, if studied properly, could reveal the nature and order of light. The tiniest creatures of nature could provide us examples of “carpenters, masons, weavers, spinners, musicians, miners, fishermen, butchers, upholsterers and ropemakers”⁵³ that could teach us diligence, order and creativity.⁵⁴

Maeser asked his readers to observe man’s latest technological advances. The telescope could reveal myriads of stars, “worlds without end.”⁵⁵ The microscope could reveal the unseen world of the tiny, where a population of thousands could live in a drop of water.⁵⁶ The telegraph could send messages across a continent in seconds, but the imagination of man could travel even farther and faster. He invited his young readers to imagine the view of the earth from space.⁵⁷ He said, “Where our sun would appear to us about the size of the beehive on the top of President Young’s house, we would see our earth of the size of a small marble, revolving around the sun about the distance of the Sugar House Ward . . . and the moon like a pea tied to it.”⁵⁸

Throughout this series of articles, Maeser declared, “All of nature testifies of the voice of God. He directs them all, leads them all, organizes them all, and all creatures in the universe follow that voice; the sun, the

moon, the stars, the rivers, the winds, the land and sea, the birds of the air, the beasts and creeping things.”⁵⁹ Only man “refuses to listen to the still, small voice. He alone denies the Almighty the right to govern and direct his worldly affairs, denying that God speaks to him any more.” Would He who speaks so ceaselessly through His creations cease to speak through his revelations? “No never! The thought is folly.”⁶⁰

Maeser was careful to point out that scientific observation often destroys long-held superstitions, prejudices, and illusions. He remembered that as a child his first study of nature “ruthlessly and irreparably” destroyed many of his fantasized notions, but in time he began to realize “the beauty and superiority of truth and reality above the charming illusions of imagination and prejudice.”⁶¹ If we have the eyes to see, he said, nature can teach us great and important personal lessons. At the same time, he warned his readers, “Mix not up your ignorant prejudices with the benevolent designs of the Creator, who gave thee reason and made thee in his image.”⁶² He prayed that all men would learn to listen to the true voice of Nature with “each tick of the operator’s apparatus [the telegraph] knocking at the bulwark of superstition, ignorance and darkness, until it has crumbled to pieces, and light, liberty and freedom of thought reign over the earth, enabling the kingdom of God to bless every kindred, tongue and people by its benign influence.”⁶³

Through the *Juvenile Instructor*, the Pestalozzian teacher had been given a wonderful outlet to express his training and his testimony. Once more Karl had settled into his life, had obtained a fairly secure position, and had built a respected reputation. He was content with his assignments, but mere contentment was not to be his lot.

Notes

1. Brigham Young, copybook, May 20, 1865, CHL.
2. It was formed on October 29, 1860. See “Instruction in the Higher Branches of Education,” *Deseret News*, October 31, 1860, 8.
3. It might be remembered that this was the topic of Karl’s presentation to the Saxon Teachers’ Association in 1854.

4. Wilford Woodruff, in *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 5:518.
5. “Think Not, When You Gather to Zion,” *Hymns: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 21.
6. A more literal translation of Karl’s version would read:

Think not when you gather to Zion
 that never again will bitterness touch you,
 That the crown of happiness and joy
 Will always there adorn your head.

No, no, for a fiery oven
 For each it appears to be
 That burns all straw, hay and stubble,
 From dross the gold to refine.

Think not, when you gather to Zion,
 That there you have nothing more to do,
 And that everyone there will ever only worry
 So that you could rest undisturbed—

No, no! For the Saints work
 United with all their might,
 That everything that God has spoken
 Will soon come to pass.

(“Denk’ nicht, wenn du kommest nach Zion,” *Der Stern*, October 1869, 160;
 translation by A. LeGrand Richards)

7. “Cousin John Smith’s company arrived in camp on the 8 ward.” John L. Smith, journal, September 1, 1860, MSS 680, LTPSC.
8. Reinhard Maeser, *Karl G. Maeser: A Biography by His Son* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1928), 37.
9. Karl served on the board of regents with such men as T. B. H. Stenhouse, John V. Long, Daniel H. Wells, George Taylor, Samuel Richards, George Reynolds, Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, Robert L. Campbell, Henry Doremus, Isaac Groo, and Thomas Bullock. For a

- complete list of the regents, see Ralph V. Chamberlin, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years 1850 to 1950*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1940), 574.
10. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, July 7, 1857, 4, CHL; hereafter cited as Journal History.
 11. Journal History, September 2, 1860, 5–7.
 12. Journal History, September 2, 1860, 8.
 13. This proved to be true for a number who were present and with whom Karl had worked previously, including T. B. H. Stenhouse, Peter Reinsimar, and even George D. Watt, the very stenographer recording Brigham's words at the time.
 14. Journal History, September 2, 1860, 9–12.
 15. Journal History, September 2, 1860, 14.
 16. It is interesting to note that Abraham O. Smoot, who would play such an important role in the establishment of the Brigham Young Academy, also spoke on September 2, 1860, in the Bowery.
 17. Kate B. Carter, *They Came in '60* (Salt Lake City: International Society, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1960), 4.
 18. After defending the United States against "the rebellious Mormons" in Utah, Albert Sidney Johnston left the valley. Later he joined the Confederate Army, and he was killed at the Battle of Shiloh.
 19. Ralph V. Chamberlain, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1960), 28.
 20. See "The Union Academy," *Deseret News*, April 11, 1860, 4.
 21. "The Union Academy," *Deseret News*, February 22, 1860, 4.
 22. "Remarks by President Brigham Young, Tabernacle, April 8, 1860," *Deseret News*, June 6, 1860, 1.
 23. Karl G. Maeser, correspondence, UA 1094, folder 1, LTPSC. This document contains two quarterly reports of the German Home Mission. The first is not dated, but the second one is dated June 13, 1861.
 24. Karl G. Maeser, "Constitution of the German Intelligence Office," in correspondence, UA 1094 folder 1, LTPSC. This is not dated, but it was likely in October 1860.
 25. Karl G. Maeser, "Constitution of the German Intelligence Office."
 26. Karl G. Maeser, "2nd Quarterly Report of the German Home Mission," June 13, 1861, UA 1094, box 1, folder 1, LTPSC.
 27. Georgia Maeser, "Reinhard Maeser," MSS 1841, box 1, folder 9, p. 1, LTPSC.

28. Franklin D. Richards to Brigham Young, Brigham Young Office Files, CR 1234 1, reel 54, September 14, 1860.
29. The phrase “as water seeks its level” has been used in numerous publications. It first appeared in an article announcing his death, “Death of Dr. Karl G. Maeser,” *Deseret News*, February 15, 1901, 9.
30. It is important to realize that the word *ward* referred to the specific area within the city and not necessarily to a Church unit. However, in many ways they were not separable. Teachers in ward schools, for example, were not always “called by the bishops,” though the bishops were certainly involved with many aspects (and some bishops were more involved than others).
31. “Instruction in the Higher Branches of Education,” *Deseret News*, October 21, 1860, 8.
32. Ernest L. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 1:89.
33. See “Instruction in the Higher Branches of Education,” *Deseret News*, October 31, 1860, 8.
34. “Affairs in Utah,” *New York Times*, November 20, 1860.
35. N. L. Nelson, “Dr. Maeser’s Jubilee,” quoting Jennie Bailey in Karl G. Maeser, *School and Fireside* (Provo, UT: Skelton, 1898), 355.
36. Alice Louise Reynolds, “Karl G. Maeser,” *Young Woman’s Journal*, July 1912, 361.
37. “School Teachers Association,” *Deseret News*, October 31, 1860, 8. Orson Pratt Jr. was listed as president, James Cobb and G. W. Mousley as vice presidents, W. Willes as secretary, and H. W. Church as treasurer. Maeser soon replaced H. W. Church.
38. *Journal History*, December 24, 1860, CHL. The University of Deseret opened in 1850 and operated for three years until Orson Spencer left on his mission to Germany. It then shut down until 1869, when it was revitalized under the direction of John Rockey Park. However, during the interim, the board of regents continued to exist as a type of territorial board of education. They recommended textbooks, set educational standards, certified teachers, and so forth. See John Clifton Moffitt, *The History of Public Education in Utah* (Provo, UT: John Clifton Moffitt, 1946), 42–47.
39. *Journal History*, October 7, 1861.
40. Maeser, *Karl G. Maeser*, 45–7.
41. Brigham Young, copybook, May 20, 1865, CHL.
42. “Dedication of President Young’s Private School House,” *Deseret News*, December 26, 1860, 5.
43. Copy in the Maeser family file, Eileen Thompson CD, MS 2742, LTPSC.

44. Zina Y. Card, "Karl G. Maeser," *Young Woman's Journal*, April 1901, 148–49.
45. P. Bradford Westwood believed that "it was the instruction of Karl G. Maeser that the boys wished to escape." Willard later wrote that Brother Maeser couldn't teach him or Alfales very much. This may have been due to their attitudes more than Maeser's competence. Their preparation, however, must have been sufficient for them to enter universities later. Willard attended West Point; Don Carlos, the University of Deseret and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; and Alfales, the University of Michigan. See P. Bradford Westwood, "The Early Life and Career of Joseph Don Carlos Young" (master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 3–5.
46. One of the German words for education, *Erziehung* (like the Latin word *educere*), means to pull or draw, not to push or pour.
47. Karl G. Maeser, *School and Fireside*, 266.
48. "Seventies' Hall Lectures," *Deseret News*, December 31, 1862, 4.
49. See "Summary of the Past," *Deseret News*, March 2, 1864, 4.
50. See "Popular Lectures," *Deseret Weekly*, December 2, 1863, 4.
51. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: A Tree," *Juvenile Instructor*, January 1, 1866, 3–4.
52. See for example, Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: Fire," *Juvenile Instructor*, July 15, 1866, 54–55.
53. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: Animals," *Juvenile Instructor*, October 1, 1866, 76.
54. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: Ants," *Juvenile Instructor*, July, 1866, 52.
55. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: The Telescope," *Juvenile Instructor*, April 15, 1866, 31.
56. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: The Microscope," *Juvenile Instructor*, February 15, 1866, 15.
57. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: The Moon," *Juvenile Instructor*, December, 1866, 90–92.
58. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: Stars," *Juvenile Instructor*, April 1, 1866, 27.
59. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: Revelation," *Juvenile Instructor*, September 1, 1866, 67.
60. Maeser, "Revelation," September 1, 1866, 67.
61. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: The Rainbow," *Juvenile Instructor*, Mar 1, 1867, 34.
62. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: Snakes," *Juvenile Instructor*, February 1, 1867, 18.
63. Karl G. Maeser, "Voices from Nature: The Telegraph," *Juvenile Instructor*, October 15, 1866, 78.