

## A Century of Christian Science Healing

Many wartime experiences have never been told except to close friends, and others cannot be published because they contain information of too personal or sometimes too political a nature. The final testimony in this group is a tape-recorded account of a testimony which has been given verbally but never before in print. It is given here in its full, unedited detail and conversational informality as an example of the many individual experiences not formally recorded.

I WAS LIVING in Austria, it was the year 1942. At the time I was in Stalag 17A. It was a prisoner of war camp on the Hungarian border. There were also young people there like myself whose parents were known to have worked in the underground.

Because I had very poor eyesight I was given two weeks of absence to seek the services of an eye specialist in Wiesbaden. The gentleman was quite a prominent doctor. I had corresponded with him and asked if I could come and see him. When he first examined me, he told me that he couldn't do anything for me, that what I needed was faith in God.

My answer was "How can I have faith in God? Do you want me to take it out of the air?" And he said, no, that he would give me a book to read, and that if I could understand God I could have faith. So he gave me the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mrs. Eddy, which was in German and in English.

I didn't read it. I wasn't interested in religion. I didn't want to know anything about God. But every day, every time I came to see him, he asked me if I had started reading the book. Finally, I started reading it. And I think the two things that startled me, that made me think that this was something tremendous, were, first of all, the definition of God. I thought that if a God existed, He would have to be the way Mrs. Eddy defined Him in the beginning of the chapter on Recapitulation. And the second thing was the idea that good had more power than evil, and that we could

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prove this in our lives. To me this was tremendous because we seemed to be surrounded by the power of evil and nothing else at all.

So when I had to return to the camp, I wanted to take the book with me. At first the doctor didn't want to give me the book, since you couldn't buy books at that time. He offered to send me quotations, but I wanted the book. So he gave it to me, and also a Christian Science *Herald*, a German *Herald*.

I returned to my camp, and just the little bit of reading I had done—about a week of reading—was enough so that the expression on my face had changed so much that some of the people in the camp didn't recognize me. I also picked up a Bible on the way to the camp, and when I got back, I started studying day and night. It just absorbed all my thoughts. I sat in this one room that we had—twelve women in one room—with one light bulb on the ceiling. I sat on the floor and just spent every minute studying that I possibly could.

I first received the book in September of 1942, and sometime in January, 1943, I was studying and all of a sudden I caught a glimpse of what man is: the spiritual image and likeness of God. It was just as if a fog had been let open and I saw that man—as he really is—cannot be detained in a prison, he cannot be confined in a camp, but he is as unlimited and unbounded as God. It practically seemed ridiculous to think that you could keep man behind barbed wires, or confined within anything.

So I picked up the Bible, *Science and Health*, my German *Herald*, and a few personal things, and I walked out of this camp by broad daylight. I didn't try to hide anything. I just walked out the one street—there was only one road out of the camp. There were watch towers, there were continually soldiers on duty, and they had trucks and armed vehicles. But I went down on foot for about two hours and a half to the closest railroad station, and I took a train to Vienna. No one came after me; no one even saw me walk out.

My motive, my only desire was to learn more, to understand more of this teaching. It seemed to me that I couldn't understand the explanations about God. I couldn't understand the explanations about spiritual existence, because all I had ever known was material



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existence — what we can see and feel and hear with our five senses.

So I tried to find my father, who at that time was working in the underground against Hitler, and I got hold of him for half an hour in a street. I told him very quickly that I had found this teaching and I thought it was tremendous. I had a terrific urge to find out more, and I absolutely needed some money from him to go and find people that could explain this to me. He thought that it was something to beware of, but he did give me the money I asked for. It was the last time I saw my father.

I took this money and put it in a little postal book, which you can take to any post office and draw out what you need. And with the German *Herald* in hand, I systematically tried to find a Christian Scientist somewhere that would help me. I started with Vienna, and I couldn't find anyone except Mrs. ——— who at that time was living with Princess ——— in her palace as her companion. She was willing to see me.

She told me that the Christian Science movement was not permitted — that they were not permitted to practice or speak about Christian Science in the Third Reich; and that there were churches and they were closed, there were Reading Rooms and they were closed. She thought that the best thing I could do was to study and listen and ponder. She assured me that what *Science and Health* contained was the truth, and for me just to go ahead and study quietly and not talk about it. She said she couldn't see me any more.

I still felt such a need to speak to somebody that I decided to go north to East Germany and find some of the people that were listed in the German *Herald*. I went eventually to Breslau.

I should say, too, that after leaving camp I didn't have any identity card. It was absolutely necessary in the Third Reich to have an identity card, because you were continuously checked on the trains, in the street cars, on the streets. But I was never checked. No one ever seemed to ask where I came from or what I was doing, although I really was of an age where people either had to work or they had to be in some form of effort to win the war. I also never had a food ration card, because you could only get the food ration cards by having an identity card. But I always had a meal when I needed it. Not having an identity card also meant that I couldn't

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go to a hotel, I couldn't go to boarding houses. But at that time the station had quite adequate deck chairs, because everyone was on the move. There were many soldiers coming from the front, there were people who had lost their homes through air raids, and there was a continual movement of people who didn't have homes, so it was quite normal to spend the night in a railroad station and wait for another train. No one ever questioned me.

By this time through reading the Christian Science textbook I had received a conviction that God exists; also that He is very willing to take care of us, and that we can ask Him for advice and guidance and that we would get the answers. I found that I would get very direct answers and very apropos.

I remember in Breslau I had no idea where I was going to go . . . I didn't know what to do. So I just turned to God and said: What do I do now? And the thought came to me that I should go to Berlin. That was in 1943, when the air raids were quite frequent. But I followed the inner voice. I got a ticket for the night train. It was all blacked out because of the air raids, and the person standing closest to me was a soldier who had just returned from the Russian front. The train moved, and as we stood there hour after hour, he started pouring out all the experiences that he had had at the front.

This sort of intimate communication from the heart prompted me to tell him about Christian Science, to tell him that somehow I felt it was a tremendous thing, but that I couldn't find anyone to explain anything to me; and yet that I had had proofs, and so I thought it must be true. It was such a wonderful thing if it were true, I said, and if I could only find someone to talk to, to find out if people actually lived this teaching.

And he said, "Christian Science! I've heard of it somewhere. You know I think I have an aunt and she has a friend, and I think that friend is a Christian Scientist, and her name is Miss —— and she lives in Rostock. Go and see her. I think she's a Christian Scientist."

So after having spent one day in Berlin in different air raid shelters I went back to the station and made my way to Rostock, which is northeast of Lubeck, in northern Germany, a very small town.



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I found the lady. She lived at the address that was given to me. She was in her eighties at the time. She was a lovely person. She was not afraid. She was a Christian Scientist. They had a small informal group in Rostock. They were never molested and their books were never taken away. They didn't hold any meetings at that time, but they did have all the literature. She said I could come, and I could talk to her, and she would give me any of the books that I might want.

I learned about the Christian Science movement from her. She tried to answer all my questions, and when I think about her—it was the erectness and the love she expressed which really impressed me, and the complete lack of fear. She did what was right, what she felt was right, in spite of threats—she didn't receive any personal threats, but I mean it was well known that you just didn't talk about Christian Science.

She couldn't house me because she was living with a sister in a small apartment, but she told me that I could come and talk to her any time I wanted. So I thought it was important that I find living quarters close to her, but I couldn't live in any hotel or boarding house or anything like that.

So as had become my habit, I stood in the street and I asked God what I should do.

The thought came to me to go to this hardware store and buy something very small. As I entered the door, I greeted the storekeeper in my Austrian way of greeting. Two gentlemen leaving the store stopped short. They had recognized my Austrian accent, and asked me if I was Austrian. I said, yes. They told me they were, also, and that they were working up there in the war effort. They were both Nazis, and they also had a car. They asked if they could do anything for me because I was a fellow countryman of theirs and up in northern Germany was sort of far away from Austria. And I told them very frankly that I needed living quarters.

They thought they could find them and they took me to Warnemuende which is a resort on the Baltic Sea. It was filled with boarding houses and hotels. They all stood empty, because everyone had been evacuated. It was a war zone up there, for fear that the British might land any minute. So they thought that I could just take any

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boarding house that I wanted and live there. However, as we drove there — to me it was just the working out of Love again — they talked to each other and they thought it really wouldn't be too good if I just lived alone in a boarding house. And they thought of an elderly lady that owned one of these boarding houses that had refused to leave. She just wanted to stay where she had always lived, and the police left her there. She was about the only inhabitant of Warnemuende at the time. So they took me to her and asked her if she could put me up. She was delighted to have a boarder, and she gave me the best room she had, on the first floor with a view over the canals and the ocean and a big, nice chair to sit in and think, and a nice comfortable bed. I stayed with her until August of 1943, going three or four times a week to Rostock, talking to Miss —, getting new books from her and taking long walks along the ocean to read them.

During that time I always had a meal, although I had no food ration card. And sometimes I got a meal in a rather strange fashion. One day somebody gave me a bread card for a whole month — just gave it to me, and I never saw the person again. And another time a policeman stopped and asked me if I already — it was a Sunday, and I was going along the ocean with my book — and he asked me if I already had eaten, and I told him I hadn't. He told me about a lovely place where they served gorgeous meals. Meals were sort of important at that time, because you didn't get to eat too often with food ration cards — I mean good things. So I thanked him for the information and he left. I knew I couldn't go there. But then he came back on his bicycle and said: "I thought perhaps you didn't have the necessary tickets." And he just gave me exactly enough for the meal. He tore it off his meat card and his bread card, and card where you get butter and that sort of thing — just enough for that one meal. I never forgot this, because here I was without an identity card and he could have arrested me; but instead he gave me enough tickets to buy a meal with.

It was a very fruitful time up there. I think I gained a great deal. I think the ocean and the wideness and the peace and quiet helped me greatly to understand the greatness and the wideness of God.



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Towards the end of July I noticed the two young men who had brought me there. They were living there in a different place and sometimes I met them in the street. It seemed that they asked me an awful lot of questions and they looked at me in a strange way. I had a feeling that perhaps I had better leave. I didn't feel completely welcome or safe up there any more, so I took leave from my landlady and I thanked Miss ——— for the many hours she had spent with me explaining Christian Science.

When I left Rostock, I went to Hamburg. I arrived in Hamburg toward the end of July of 1943. That night a week-long air raid started. I think the British came by day and the Americans by night, or the other way around. They came continuously for one week until the whole city was razed to the ground. The suffering was abominable. Everything was burning.

This was the first time that I could really prove the efficacy of Christian Science. I was led to the 91st Psalm. Later I found out that the 91st Psalm is the Psalm of protection. I didn't know it at the time, and yet this is where my Bible opened. With this 91st Psalm, not only I was comforted and protected; also the other people around me were comforted and protected. I read it to them in one of these air raid shelters—it wasn't really a shelter, it was just a basement, and they were very peaceful and quiet. But then the house collapsed on top of us, and we had to leave that shelter, too.

It must have been the next morning, which was Sunday morning (the smoke was so thick that we never saw the daylight). The suffering being so extreme, I felt that I must go and help. I found a crew of young people, which was something like Boy Scouts except it was an organization formed by the Nazi youth. They were going into the cellars trying to dig out people, and they laid them out on the street. Anyone who was willing to help was put into service. It was like nursing really. What you were supposed to do was to see if these people were living. If they were living, wash their eyes and their nose—wash the dirt off so they could breathe and open their eyes. And if they were dead, just go on to the next one. We were very short of water. I only had one canteen with water.

I had been studying so much and I was so sure of God's presence and His help and His love, I guess death didn't really enter my

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thought. I knelt down by the first one and I talked to him about God, that He was Life, and that they reflected this Life. I just knelt there and talked to them until they opened their eyes. Then I washed their eyes and their nose and I went on to the next one.

Now there was another crew of people working, and they took the people who had opened their eyes and that were obviously alive, and they put them on a truck. Then the truck took them outside of Hamburg into the surrounding villages, where the people had all opened their houses and took in these people from Hamburg and fed them and let them come to.

I remember well that long line of people in the middle of the street, and there were two rows of burning houses. I just knelt down beside each one and told them about God and about Life and it was so natural, the whole thing. They opened their eyes, and then I washed their eyes and went on to the next one. I don't know how long this went on . . . maybe a day, maybe two days . . . and by that time it was about Tuesday and someone took me and put me in a truck, too, and said: "You've had enough."

The truck took us outside, and I, myself, was taken to a small village. There were some people who took me in, and they fed me juices to drink. We all had very thick lips from all the smoke, and swollen ankles, but otherwise I was fine.

I slept for the night, and the next morning I woke up and I wanted to help, I wanted to do something. So I went to the Red Cross and asked them if I could help and they said, yes, I could. They put me into a school house that was converted into a hospital. There were just rows of people, lying on the floor, mostly with wounds of burning, and there was a doctor, two nurses and myself. We had 140 people to look after — 70 on each floor.

My experiences at this time in being able to comfort, help, and heal, slowly showed me that the truth did work. I could practice it, I could prove it.

Well, this is practically the end. I returned to Vienna towards the end of the year. I was in my early twenties then. I was married by that time, and my husband was at the front.

In the spring of 1945 the Russians came to conquer Vienna. They had conquered Budapest, had fought in Budapest for two



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months. It was rather a ghastly fight with a lot of cruelty and barbarism. The radio was full of all the things they had done and that everyone should try to get out of their reach before they came. Also, there were a lot of word-of-mouth stories, because many of the Hungarians had come west and had brought their horror stories with them.

Now I denied those stories simply on the ground that I felt that whatever was true was true about everybody regardless of nationality or friends or enemies. I was not willing to accept anything I knew was not the truth from the point of view of God's perfect creation.

But I would have liked to leave Vienna, naturally, and one morning a friend of my husband's came with a truck and he said: "Quickly, quickly, pack something. I'm going to take you over the border. I'm going to take you away from Austria, if possible, over the border into Switzerland."

It seemed wonderful at first, because I had been brought up in Switzerland and it was a free country, and no war; it just seemed like a dream. And I ran back into the house to get some things together and thought this was the answer to my prayers. But I had constantly been confronted with such big decisions. I was so used to turning to God before anything I ever did, that I stopped in the hallway and said spontaneously: "What shall I do?" And the answer came as fast as the question had been asked: "Whom are you running away from? There are no enemies." I saw that in God's creation there are no enemies, and there is no need to run.

So I went back to this young man, and I told him that I wouldn't be going with him, that I was going to stay right here. He tried to persuade me. Naturally he thought he had an obligation towards my husband, who was his friend, to take me to safety, and he thought I was just being very foolish, stupid. But I stayed, and I felt quite sure that this was it. By that time I knew that if I heard God's voice, I would obey it, and I stayed. By staying I gave a home to a cousin of mine who had lost hers, and to some others, also.

I didn't have much food. No one had any food at that time. But at the corner of my street only a few houses away, there was a grocery. And the grocer was a very heavy, big man who would

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come to my apartment for peace and quiet, and rest. It was rather amusing because he was twice my size and twice my age, and he would come and say: "This is like an oasis." And every time he came, he brought something—a loaf of bread or something else. Other people that came, too, would say: "There is so much peace here." And everyone brought something. You know, I always had enough food for the people that I had to feed, including myself.

There was a lot of fighting in the streets when the Russians came. Most of them were Asiatic Russians, who have customs that date back to the Middle Ages. When they come to a city, for three days they have complete freedom to plunder, to loot, and to do anything they want to. Even their commandant couldn't do anything about it, and told the population of Vienna that the only thing we could do would be to shut ourselves into our houses. And there were lots of Russians that came to my house, and I was completely without fear. I was so convinced of the truth that there is only one man, the man made in God's image.

They might have come to steal, but they finished up with one of those Russian dances to amuse my cousin and myself and they left slapping us on the shoulder and calling us "Mamuschka." So actually it was complete protection. And they brought food, too, so we had enough to eat. Some of the people on my street noticed and said: "You and your house, you are the blind spot in the eye of every Russian."

I still kept reading the textbook from cover to cover (that was about the fourth time by then). My desire to know more about Christian Science made me feel that as soon as I could I'd like to go to England. As soon as I had the opportunity, I went to England and, of course, the English people had had wonderful steadfastness and staunchness. They stood on the truth they had learned—the English Christian Scientists. The testimonies in the English churches after the war were just absolutely wonderful, and I was sure that this was it. So then I joined a church in London, and very soon after became a member of The Mother Church, and had class instruction. And that's it.

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