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## A PIONEER ABROAD — FRANCES THURBER SEAL

The following are excerpts from the 83-page autobiographical book, **Christian Science in Germany**, written by Frances Thurber Seal. It is intended to provide a brief history of the activities of Mrs. Seal, who was one of the pioneer workers in Germany.<sup>1</sup> Space does not permit including anecdotes and accounts from the book which are in themselves inspiring to read.<sup>2</sup>

My father became a missionary at the age of eighteen, going into Texas and Mexico. In these countries he traveled over wide territories on horseback, preaching and teaching wherever he went. He continued to preach the Gospel during the remaining years of his earthly life.

From my earliest childhood I saw my mother suffer with what was called an incurable disease. She did not have sufficient strength to enable her to take charge of her household. Life seemed a constant recurrence of sickness and death. One after another of the family was taken, until at last I resigned myself to despair.

But one lovely summer evening as I walked along a street in New York City, I saw a building with the words, "First Church of Christ, Scientist."



Frances Thurber Seal, C.S.B.

1. Chapter XXVI of *Historical Sketches* by Clifford P. Smith, published by The Christian Science Publishing Society, gives additional information on the early years of Christian Science in Germany, including the work of Frau Bertha Gunther-Peterson.
2. Mrs. Seal's biography is included in *Pioneers in Christian Science*. *Christian Science in Germany* and *Pioneers in Christian Science* are both published by and available from Longyear Historical Society.

As if I had been called, I crossed the street and went in. It was a testimony meeting, and there I heard a new message, that man suffers not because of the will of God, but through ignorance of God.

I went forth from that meeting a new creature, joyous with hope, for I saw that if this was true, everything else in the world of thought, religious or otherwise, was based on a false premise and must fall; and I knew that if it was science it could be learned, and determined that I would learn it, and thus find God and understand life. I inquired how I

might learn more of this teaching, and was directed to a healer who was also a teacher, Mrs. Laura Lathrop, C.S.D., a student of Mrs. Eddy.

For many years I had been a victim of a serious disease of the stomach, which was said to be hereditary, and my sight had been failing since early girlhood. The oculists agreed that I would be totally blind before I reached the age of forty years.

I went to this lady, Mrs. Lathrop, and told her of my difficulties and said that I wanted to know about God. She lent me the little book, *No and Yes*, by Mary Baker Eddy, which I

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read through three times that evening. At the conclusion of this reading I realized that the physical troubles were entirely gone. They have never returned, although I have worked beyond what is called human strength and endurance for many years.

I then purchased the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy, and a week later entered a Class taught by Mrs. Lathrop, where I enjoyed a series of uplifting and inspiring lectures.

That first winter was a happy one. I read the textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, many hours each day and late into the night, and the Church gave an opportunity to work for God and His Cause.

I observed that the Reading Rooms were open only in the daytime and asked if they could not be open in the evening to give the many people who were employed during the day an opportunity to come and learn of this Science of being. Our Reading Room was immediately opened and placed in my charge in the evenings, and thus began my activity as a worker in the Cause of Christian Science.

I loved this Truth and hoped to grow in understanding and to be useful to the Cause of Christian Science, but that I should be considered for such missionary work as carrying this Science to a foreign land and establishing it there, seemed an impossible thing. Nevertheless, this was exactly what my teacher directed me to do. A member of the church lent the money to make the journey and to

maintain me for some time after I reached Germany.

I sailed from New York on an afternoon in December, 1897, on a nine-day steamer, for Hamburg. We did not reach our destination, however, until the thirteenth day, as we ran into a hurricane which lasted four days and blew us many miles out of our course, crippling the ship and doing much damage to the cargo. It was my first trip across the ocean, and, but for the firm conviction that God had called me to do His work in Germany, and that His presence was with me and would sustain and protect me under all conditions, it would have been a terrifying experience; but at no time had I any thought of fear, and with the help of a steward I went to meals, and was the only passenger at the table after the storm became violent.

Two days later the captain came to me and said that there was an almost unanimous request that I should conduct the Sunday service in the salon the following day. I did so, taking the parts of both the First Reader and Second Reader, as there were no other Christian Scientists on board. Two clergymen and two physicians, with their wives, were present. All thanked me for the reading, and three asked for an address where the textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy, might be obtained. Years afterward I learned that two of the ladies had become active Christian Scientists.

I reached Dresden on Friday evening, and went into a pension kept by Miss Emily Cotton, an English lady. A

young American lady who was studying singing in Dresden and who took her meals at this pension, had a copy of *Science and Health*, and was most interested to meet someone who could tell her more about Christian Science. On Sunday morning after my arrival I went to her room and we read the Lesson together.

People came from many directions asking for help. Some Germans came through the healing of (a) Russian singer, then a young Norwegian clergyman, who had learned of Christian Science through a friend who was a ship captain and voyaged to America. This clergyman had been ill and unable to carry on his work for a number of years. Physicians had not been able to restore him to health. His seafaring friend heard of Christian Science and its healing work through relatives who lived in America. He inquired of them where a healer could be found, and learned of my presence in Dresden.

Working with (the young pastor) was a beautiful experience, as he knew the Scriptures and loved them, and loved the Christ. He asked many intelligent questions. This turned me constantly to the teachings of the Master and of our Leader. He was soon satisfied, and sent for his friends.

They settled in different pensions, and as they told their fellow boarders why they had come, their cases were watched with great interest by a number of people. All were healed, and this opened the way for the healing power of Christian Science to become known in Dresden. Many came through the witness of these people from the North. Others came from afar — one came from Italy, another from Persia.

The first meetings in Dresden had been held in January, 1898, and in September we began Sunday and week-day services in the German language. Those who had been healed came regularly. Most of them knew English and began studying the textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, earnestly. Among this group was a lady who had been healed of leprosy; another, a woman of seventy-six years, had been healed of ulcers in the stomach, and of atheism.

During the summer of 1899 I went to Berlin and found a suitable apartment in which to live, leasing it for a term of two years. Thinking it wise to tell the owner that I would use it for



View of Dresden, Germany. From a postcard sent to Mary B. Longyear in 1909 by a student of Mrs. Seal's in that city.



something other than living purposes, and have permission in the lease, I told him that I would have meetings for the purpose of teaching Bible lessons. He asked how many would attend these meetings, and as I wanted to prepare for progress, I told him that before the end of the lease there might be as many as twenty-five. This showed how little I knew of the power of Truth to attract, for there were more than one hundred and twenty-five attending the meetings within the first six months.

An English lady, Miss Amy Bentinck Beach, a sister of my good hostess in Dresden, accompanied me to Berlin and helped me to settle there.

We had our first service the first Sunday in October, 1899, there being eight persons in the congregation. The services were held in English on Sunday and on a week-day at the same hours as in America; the German services were held at ten o'clock on Sunday morning and at six-thirty on Friday evening. Fraulein Johanna Bruno, my first German student in Berlin, translated the Sunday Lesson, and she and I read it. I practiced with her several hours each week. Through constant prayer and the consecrated study of the English Lesson, in addition to coaching by her, I was soon able to understand the translated word and read it so that it was not only satisfactory to the people, but brought out much healing. This was pure demonstration, as I had never studied German, having had to give all my time to studying Christian Science and to the healing work.

One of the cases of healing at this time was that of a lady who was totally blind. She was sixty-seven years of age and believed she had reached the period when life and hope were behind her.

I arranged for a time of quiet one day, after seeing patients during the morning hours. Just before noon I was called to the door to speak with someone, and found there a lady who told me that her mother suffered with her eyes, and that she had been told that if she would bring her mother to me I would heal her. I told her briefly to bring her mother the following day.

After breakfast I went into the kitchen to arrange the flowers that had been sent in. Then I took some flowers out to the living room. As I opened the door I found two ladies sitting there — the one who had come

the day before, and a beautiful white-haired woman. The younger one told me that it was her mother and she was blind, and the mother echoed this statement.



Mrs. Seal about 1918

The mother talked for some time and I sat looking out in the sunshine, happy in the presence of divine Love, and with no consciousness of what she was saying. When she paused I took her hands to help her to her feet and told her that she might go. She said that if God would let her look once upon her daughter's face she would be willing to die. I replied that God would let her look upon her daughter's face and live. I then bade them good morning and left the room and did not think of them again until the following morning when I entered my study to begin the day's work. I found the mother there, radiant with happiness; and when I asked her if her daughter was waiting in the other room she told me no, she had come alone, that her sight had been restored and she could see as she did when a young girl.

She told of her past sorrows, and said that when she had left my house the morning before, her daughter had led her to the street car and placed her in a seat, and that she had looked out of the window and seen the street and the trees and the flowers and for a moment forgot that she had been blind. She spoke of what she saw, then her daughter screamed and told the people that her mother had not been able to see for many years.

It must have been a thrilling experience for the people on that street car, for both mother and daughter talked, telling of her past affliction, and that God had healed her.

Our weekly testimony meeting took place on the following evening,

## NEW LONGYEAR TRUSTEES

Two Trustees have recently been added to the Longyear Foundation Board, which brings the number of Board members to five. The new Trustees are June A. Austin and John E. Auchmoody, both residents of New Hampshire.

Mrs. Austin is a Christian Science practitioner in Nashua, and has served First Church of Christ, Scientist, Nashua and Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Various positions she has held include First Reader, President, Board Chairman, and Sunday School Superintendent. She has also been active as a voluntary probation officer and recently became a licensed private airplane pilot.

Mr. Auchmoody is a graduate of Harvard Engineering and Business School. He was formerly Vice President of Old Sturbridge Inc. and President, Sturbridge Corporation. Currently he is Executive Director of Shaker Village, Inc., Canterbury, New Hampshire. He is also Director of the American Heritage Publishing Co., and Trustee of Old Sturbridge Village. He is a member of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Laconia, New Hampshire. He has held various positions in the Laconia church and other churches, including First Reader, President, and Sunday School Superintendent.

and everyone who had been on that street car attended this service. The seats were all filled and the people stood in the hall and adjoining rooms.

The attendance at the services held in my home had increased to such a degree that it had become necessary to find a hall some months before. We had found a beautiful one called the Kaiserin Auguste Victoria Saal. This was in an art school which was under the patronage of the Empress, and the director was a Countess Schoenburg von Cotta, who sometimes attended the meetings in order to assure herself that Christian Science was all right.

The first intimation that the Emperor was opposing us came through this director of the school, who notified me that she had been instructed that we were not to use the Saal again for the services. She came herself to tell me that she was deeply sorry and ashamed, but must do as she was told.



The next day my landlord sent me a written notice to vacate the apartment within three days, warning me that if I did not do so, my things would be set in the street. I at once leased another apartment, but when only a few pieces of furniture had gone in, the police notified that landlord that I was an undesirable tenant, and he refused to permit me to go in. I had to store my furniture, and for several months was unable to find a place to live.

I stayed here and there, sometimes as a guest, and again where I might pay for lodging, but never more than two or three nights at a time, as the police always warned the people.

During all this time I had had no place to receive patients, and went from house to house seeing some of them in their homes, and others in the homes of friends. After perhaps six months of this, during which time I worked from sixteen to eighteen hours a day, I found an apartment for the Church where I was permitted to receive patients, and to hold as many services as we chose, but without music. Before this we had striven to find a hall, but wherever we went we found that the police had warned the people against us. The owner of the house into which we now moved was an American, and at that time the only American who owned an apartment house in Berlin.

After opening a Reading Room and having Sunday services and testimony meetings for some months, always reading the hymns instead of singing them, some of our people found a hall. It was in a dancing school owned by an Italian, and was in an old part of Berlin in a shabby neighborhood, but it was in a garden back from the street, and was less apt to attract attention than if it were more public.

This seemed a strange place for a Christian Science Church, as we had to go through a shabby archway where carts were stored as in a stable yard, while the hall itself bore witness to the different character of its purpose; but we were so grateful to have a place in which we were free and that was large enough to accommodate all who wished to come that we cared little for appearances — we were as happy a group as though we were meeting in the chapel of the royal Court.

There were many healings at the meetings, and as quickly as the word flashed about that we were again



Frances Thurber Seal, at the right, and Mary P. Howe, C.S., of St. Joseph, Missouri, during a visit with Mrs. Longyear in the late 1920's

holding services, the little place filled up with earnest and enthusiastic seekers for Truth.

One of the great lessons learned was in the experience with the Police President. For eight months his officers had mercilessly pursued us and attempted to crush our work, but when he was notified that I was a citizen of the United States of America and obedient to the law, he recognized my freedom and ceased to attempt to intimidate me. The function of a government is to protect its citizens, and so long as they are loyal to their citizenship it cannot fail them.

The work was going steadily forward in Dresden during this time, and in February, 1900, the room that had been used for the services was found to be too small, and the workers secured an apartment that had been intended for business purposes, and had the walls taken out, giving them quite a large church room and leaving two small rooms for the Clerk's office and for the books to be kept on sale. They used the church

room for a Reading Room also. They held the first service in these new quarters on February 17, 1900, and the following day met and formally organized First Church of Christ, Scientist, Dresden, Germany.

On October 20, 1900, just one year from the time I began the work in Berlin, we organized First Church of Christ, Scientist, Berlin, Germany, under the laws of Germany. The police department treated us with the greatest courtesy.

We had four services a week, two German and two English, and a Sunday School. Our English congregation averaged about fifty; the German congregation averaged seventy-five on Sunday, and from one hundred and twenty-five to one hundred and fifty at the week-day meetings.

During this time the work in Dresden grew and waxed strong. The Dresden police took a similar position to those in Berlin. They attended the services and watched the workers, but as they did not have the Emperor back of them they were not so strong in the activities, and church services were held regularly. The many cases healed brought more and more people to the Church, and more seekers for healing.

Within a year after the cessation of the police interference, several of the detective force became earnest students of Christian Science, and with their wives and families attended the services.

The demand for the healing work continued to increase. Each year brought out new workers and all grew in spiritual understanding and consecration.

At the end of the year 1906 I felt that my work was accomplished. The workers were tried and true; they had been tested and proved faithful and wise; they were ready to carry forward the work of our beloved Cause in their Fatherland. So I left it with them and returned to America to continue my work of healing and teaching in my native land, the land that was the birthplace of Christian Science and the home of its Revelator.

Frances Thurber Seal

LONGYEAR FOUNDATION: Board of Trustees: Mrs. Marian H. Holbrook, Frederick D. Herberich, Robert C. Dale, June A. Austin, John E. Auchmoody. President: Richard C. Molloy. QUARTERLY NEWS is published four times annually, in the Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, at the headquarters of Longyear Historical Society, 120 Seaver Street, Brookline, Massachusetts 02146. Inquiries about memberships, subscriptions, and services are welcome.