

Chapter 8

How the Papers Were Transcribed

“We’ll Find a Secretary for You”

Christy came to the group in an unusual manner. The small family group that functioned in the pre-papers period had become accustomed to the idea of communicating with extra-human personalities. In 1921, three years before the important Melchizedek announcement in 1924, they learned from their unseen friends that they would soon be receiving considerably more material by means of the human subject. The doctors realized they would need a secretary devoted exclusively to this project, so they asked the revelators how they could find a secretary competent and trustworthy enough to do this work.¹

“Don’t worry,” they responded. “We’ll find a secretary for you.” The doctors asked how they would know her when she arrived. “She will tell you about her number,” they answered. Mystified, they waited for someone to knock on their door.²

Not long after that enigmatic exchange, in July 1922, Dr. Lena treated a traffic accident victim at Columbus Hospital. The thirty-three-year-old woman had been out on a date that evening and was in an accident involving a taxicab. She suffered a broken arm and other bruises. Her name was Emma Louise Christensen, also known as “Christy,” a tall, no-nonsense woman of Danish ancestry. Dr. Lena and her patient soon became friends.

As Christy recovered, she spoke of her family life in South Dakota. Christy had been married and divorced before moving to Chicago on November 1, 1921. Before coming to Chicago, she lived in California for one year.³ Prior to this she had worked for the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis, Minnesota as Chief Clerk. She began at the Seventh Federal Reserve District in Chicago as Assistant Chief Clerk. She later rose to the position of manager in charge of 500 bank examiners in the Midwest. She was experienced at identifying fraud.⁴

While Christy was still in the hospital, she mentioned to Dr. Lena that she was having some difficulties with her vision. A long stream of numbers kept running through her mind day

and night. In an unusual step, she was invited to live in the home of the Sadlers while she recuperated.⁵

After describing their fascinating case of the previous several years, the two physicians told her they needed a secretary for a few evenings a month. As her vision difficulties faded, she readily agreed. She lived nearby in a rented apartment but sometimes stayed at 533 Diversey, eventually moving to the Sadlers' building until her death in 1982. The doctors introduced her as their foster daughter, although she was never legally adopted.⁶

Fifty-five years later, Christy was asked what she thought about the narration by the two doctors of their experiences with the subject. She said, “Well, I was curious, but I didn’t fully appreciate what I was getting myself into at the time.” What did she suppose would have happened if the injury to her arm had failed to heal so that she would not be able to take shorthand or type? She answered: “I guess they would have looked for somebody else. But later, when I got a chance, I asked the midwayers why they had to be so rough on me in the accident.”⁷

And what were the numbers that kept running through her mind? She learned sometime later that it was the number of her Thought Adjuster.⁸

*The number and order of each Adjuster indwelling each ascending creature are reported out by the Paradise authorities to the headquarters of the super universe, and from there are communicated to the headquarters of the local universe concerned and relayed to the particular planet involved. Human subjects are often known by the numbers of their Adjusters; mortals do not receive real universe names until after Adjuster fusion, which union is signaled by the bestowal of the new name upon the new creature by the destiny guardian.*⁹

The Role of the Secretary in the Contact Commission--The First Series

Emma Christensen, the contact commissioner who lived the longest, explained to associates that, besides handwriting, a variety of methods were employed for transmitting the Urantia Papers, as well as the pre-papers material and the later non-revelatory communications.¹⁰

For the first drafts of the first series, between 1925 and 1929, the subject came to 533 Diversey Parkway by pre-arrangement in the late evening and entered through the basement door on the Hampden Court side of the building. The original five contact commissioners were present when the first papers came. (Bill Sadler was not in the original group; he was serving in the Marine Corps between 1924 and 1928.) The contact commissioners sat in the same room where the unnamed subject lay on a cot in a state of unconsciousness, while Christy took shorthand notes on stenographic pads of paper.¹¹ During transmission of the text, she sat in a separate room near the subject. Christy was new to the group, and they wanted to preserve the anonymity of the subject. She claimed that she did not meet the contact personality immediately.¹²

The questions developed by the Forum were either read aloud by the contact commissioners to the celestial visitors who were present at the late evening meetings or had been previously removed by the midwayers and the answers read in the form of papers. The answers, which became the content of the paper, were dictated by the celestial personality or by a midwayer speaking for the revelator.

Christy explained that she took down the first draft of each paper in shorthand as the revelators dictated the wording and, as she explained, the spelling of unusual words, capitalization, italicization, punctuation, and indentations:

The words in The Urantia Book were dictated. The choice of words was in themselves a revelation. Any change could alter the original meanings intended by the revelators. The revelators carefully chose prefixes and suffixes of words.

They dictated the spaces between paragraphs, the layout, as well as the numbering of papers, sections, and items within paragraphs. The revelators provided titles of papers and, later, they indicated their preferences for the design of the text and the print face.¹³ It is uncertain whether the earliest papers were separated into three parts as they are today, but the papers in the current fourth part did not come until 1935.

Longhand and Shorthand

After each session, Christy handwrote the text from her shorthand notes before typing it. The commissioners were told:

They should choose their style guides and stick to them. They selected then current editions of Webster's Dictionary, Chicago Manual of Style, Harper's Bible Dictionary, and Historical Geography of the Holy Land, by George Adam Smith.¹⁴

Working from her handwritten text, she typed each of the papers on an upright manual Underwood typewriter.¹⁵ It was common practice in offices that worked with lengthy text to take the information down in shorthand and then transcribe from shorthand to longhand before typing the text. This enabled the secretary to adapt to the sound of the voices and to double-check spelling of unfamiliar or difficult words before typing. This avoided the need to correct errors on finished work and on the carbon copies. In the case of the Urantia Papers, it also reduced the risk of leaving discarded sheets of half-typed pages lying about to be seen by visitors and others in the building.

Christy explained that revisions to the original text were usually dictated. Other times a revised paper was given in the subject's handwriting. Christy did not take down these handwritten versions of the papers in shorthand, just the dictated revisions. Final versions of papers came in the handwriting of the subject after the last review and questions by the Forum. Some of the later additions to the text and the special revelator communications came in the handwriting of the contact personality and then were typed by Christy. Christy reported that she typed some of the text of the book five times.¹⁶

The first series (1925 to 1929) was comprised of fifty-seven papers. These papers appeared in the "usual place" where the questions had been placed. Christy did not say where the originals were kept, but the commissioners wrote in their 1960 history:

The carbon copy of the typewritten transcript [was kept] in a fireproof vault.¹⁷

There have been some questions posed concerning the handwriting in both the pre-papers period and during arrival of the papers. Were they in the contact personality's own handwriting or in another hand? One long-time Forum member, Clyde Bedell, and a later arriving post-publication leader, Meredith J. Sprunger, both declared they heard Sadler say they were *not* in the subject's handwriting.¹⁸ Others claim he said they *were* in the patient's own handwriting. In Dr. Sadler's oral interviews with prospective Forum members, Sadler told them that on several mornings in the pre-papers period, stacks of paper filled with the man's handwriting were discovered by the subject's wife on a table in the next room.

He denied writing them, and his wife, a light sleeper, stated he had not awakened her during the night. This is consistent with other accounts.¹⁹ Early in the process, during the pre-papers period, the doctor reported that handwriting analysts were brought in to evaluate the writing. Bill Sadler quoted the subject as saying he recognized the handwriting as his own, but he claimed he didn't write it. No one saw him write the items, and the man had no muscle stress in his hands or arms that would be expected after writing such lengthy text.²⁰

Nola Smith, a later Forum member who was especially interested in the matter, understood from her Forum interview that the handwriting was the same as the contact's handwriting. To her knowledge she never saw a sample of his writing while she was employed at Bill Sadler's consulting firm from 1949 for three years as a handwriting analyst.²¹

The handwriting of the final version of the papers in the 1930s or early 1940s was the same as the handwriting of the earlier pre-papers material written eighteen to thirty years before, as well as the written communications in the post-papers period until the mid-1950s. The contact commissioners were familiar with the handwriting of the subject in all three periods, even though he claimed he didn't write it. Dr. Sadler and Bill Sadler both made statements that the papers were delivered in handwritten English.

Until the galleys were printed in the 1940s, in preparation for publication of *The Urantia Book*, the Forum read only the typewritten copies, never the handwritten manuscripts. All of the writings by the revelators that came through the subject in the three periods—pre-papers, early drafts of papers, final written drafts, and revelator communications—were destroyed at various

points in the finalization of the text, upon orders of the revelators. The revelators directed that only one version of each paper should survive. All of Christy's shorthand notes, handwritten transcriptions and typed versions were likewise destroyed. The revelators approved any carbon copies of messages that were retained for the later education of leaders and other interested persons.²²

Dr. Sadler mentioned shorthand once in his book *The Mind at Mischief*, referring to the pre-papers period when an earlier (unnamed) "stenographer took voluminous notes."²³ Bill Sadler, speaking in Oklahoma, mentioned that the Forum was fascinated with the "shorthand notes" though the Forum never saw original shorthand or writings.²⁴

Dr. Sadler and Bill Sadler appeared to want to keep the story simple rather than complicating the account with dictation, shorthand, and transcription. They simply dispensed with those steps in their retelling and went to the final version of the papers which came in handwritten English. *The History of the Urantia Movement* of 1960 omitted details of the book's development. Christy, however, provided most of the labor. The questioning stage occurred more than once with some of the papers. The principle being applied in Christy's work was:

*The secondary midwayers could do all this work themselves; their superiors, however, required us to find humans to do the work.*²⁵

Although Christy was known by the Forum to use her shorthand in some way in the receipt of the papers, she did not discuss it publicly in the early years of the Forum. Later she told several people she had taken shorthand when Tabamantia visited in September 1924.²⁶ One Forum member recalled that the contact commissioners asked whether anyone in the pre-papers forum knew how to take shorthand since they might need a backup stenographer someday. He volunteered but was never called for service.²⁷

In 1964 Christy wrote a cautionary letter to a former Forum member in California, stating firmly:

*I did not take down any of the Urantia Papers in shorthand. The papers came through in the subject's handwriting and I copied them. I don't understand how people can get so many wrong ideas and persist in holding them!*²⁸

In writing the letter that she (supposedly) had not used shorthand, it was a pointed reminder that the various methods of receiving and transcribing the papers was not at that time to be divulged by persons other than contact commissioners.

In the early 1960s, issues arose among the readership concerning the propriety of Urantia Foundation copyrighting a revelation. A number of lawsuits occurred in connection with the copyright, beginning in California. There was concern by the Foundation trustees that Christy might be called to testify about what she knew concerning transmission of the text of the book and the identity of the subject.²⁹ At the time permission to publish was given, the revelatory commission reminded the contact commissioners that they were proscribed from divulging either the identity of the subject or the mechanics of transmission. They were allowed to tell *what* happened, but could not speculate about *how* it happened.

There was concern by the trustees of Urantia Foundation that Christy could be perceived by a court as having authorship of the papers when she was merely the stenographer and typist. She *did not* take down the *final* versions of the papers in shorthand, just the first drafts and some of the interim revisions from the revelators. Final versions usually came in the subject's handwriting. Later on, Christy was given permission to impart more information about the history of the papers.³⁰

In another related situation, she mentioned to trustees and leaders of Urantia Brotherhood that the contact personality “never crossed the threshold of 533 Diversey.”³¹ Some dictionaries define “threshold” as the main front entrance of a building, and in this case, the main entrance faced Diversey Parkway, not Hampden Court.

END NOTES FOR CHAPTER 8, HOW THE PAPERS WERE TRANSCRIBED

¹ Urantia Foundation 50th Anniversary book, *The Golden Years*, (Publ. by Urantia Foundation. 2000)

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- ² Christensen, E.L. oral rendition to Katharine Jones and Ruth Renn, 07/12/76.
- ³ Christensen, E. L., oral comment: lived in California, to author, 1/5/1975.
- ⁴ Christensen, E.L., contact commissioner, oral recitation of experiences to Forum members and to author.
- ⁵ Christensen, E. L., contact commissioner, oral recitation of experiences to Forum members Herman Schell, and Ernest Pritchard; and Wesley R. James from Elizabeth James, his grandmother.
- ⁶ Lapham, Joyce, Minnesota friend and confidant of Emma Christensen.
- ⁷ Christensen, E.L., to author during drive to first Ft. Wayne regional conference, 4/23/76.
- ⁸ Per Herman Schell and Ernest Pritchard, Forum members, to author.
- ⁹ (p.1188)[108.03.02&03].
- ¹⁰ Christensen, E. L., contact commissioner. Oral recitation of experiences to B.A. Newsom 1976 and from William Sadler, Jr. to Nola Smith.
- ¹¹ Kendall, Carolyn: "During the daytime, the basement was used for electroshock treatments for some of Dr. Sadler's psychiatric patients. I worked as part of the team that administered shock treatments. Patients rested on cots afterward before leaving for home with a family member. I did not realize that the basement was also used for the late evening sessions with invisible personalities at the time."
- ¹² Christensen, E. L., contact commissioner. oral recitation of experiences to Thomas Kendall, 9/1/1975.
- ¹³ Christensen, E. L., contact commissioner oral recitation of experiences to Barbara A. Newsom, 1976, and Nicholas Scalzo, 1978.
- ¹⁴ Christensen, E. L., and Marian T. Rowley, oral comments to author.
- ¹⁵ Idem.
- ¹⁶ Christensen, E. L., contact commissioner. oral recitation of experiences to B.A. Newsom. 1976.
- ¹⁷ Contact commissioners' 1960 *History of the Urantia Movement*. See Appendix II.
- ¹⁸ Sprunger, M. J, Ph.D., and Clyde Bedell. Mr. Bedell joined the Forum in the 1920s. Dr. Sprunger became a reader in 1956 after the book was published.
- ¹⁹ Sadler, W. S., M.D., Author's Forum applicant interview with Sadler, October 13, 1951; my fiancé's, my mother's and brother's Forum interviews; and two or three additional interviews I overheard while I worked for Dr. Sadler in his office at 533 Diversey, 1952 – 1955. It was apparent he wanted me to hear them again.
- ²⁰ Sadler, W.S., M. D., and Bill Sadler. Oral remarks to Forum applicants.
- ²¹ Smith, Nola, telephone conversation with author, rendition of experiences.
- ²² Christensen, E.L., oral recitation to Thomas A. Kendall, trustee of Urantia Foundation, 1963 to '83.
- ²³ Sadler, William S., M.D. *The Mind at Mischief*, {Appendix}. 1929, Funk and Wagnalls. See Appendix III.
- ²⁴ Sadler, W.S., Jr., speaking to group in Oklahoma, 2/18/62.
- ²⁵ Christensen, E. L., contact commissioner, oral recitation of experiences to B.A. Newsom
- ²⁶ Christensen, E. L., oral narration to author and T.A. Kendall; 02/18/78; and to Wesley R. James, 6/26/79.
- ²⁷ Bowman, C.N., diary notes.
- ²⁸ Christensen, E.L., contact commissioner, letter to Julia Fenderson, 1964.
- ²⁹ Urantia Foundation records.
- ³⁰ Kendall, Thomas A., trustee of Urantia Foundation, 1963 to '83; president, '73 to '83.
- ³¹ Christensen, E.L., contact commissioner, oral recitation of experiences to Thomas Kendall, 9/1/75.