

## THE SECRET PLACE

### *Understanding the Furnace Experience*

Many good people go through experiences as severe as mine. The furnace experience is not unique. But when it comes upon us as we are working so diligently in Christian Science, it is hard to understand — unless we have some insight into animal magnetism and its reaction to our work in Science. We should be prepared for this ordeal in order to get through it.

Otherwise, we become like Job — perplexed at having such severe trials. We ask, "Why me?" for we seem not to deserve this dark and dreadful experience. But when we know that the experience comes to bless us, we can stand and absolutely trust that God will not let go of us. *During these dark times, we must not for one second doubt Mrs. Eddy's revelation nor neglect our study and the treatment, since they are the means for getting through this challenging phase.*

So long as evil seems real, we are going to be afraid of it, and so we remain in bondage to it, and suffer from believing in a power apart from God. Once our fear of evil has been broken and we are unintimidated by its mesmeric lies, we exercise ever-increasing dominion over it. We handle it as one having authority over it. We can separate it from person, place or thing, and destroy it metaphysically. Such work is quick, powerful, even instantaneous. This absolute conviction of evil's unreality is a major development in our work in Christian Science.

### *Evil's Aggression*

The attacks of evil come in many ways — through undeserved abuse and hatred from others, from misunderstandings and unjust circumstances over which we seem to have no control, through loved ones who fail and reject us when we need them most, through loss of income, and through physical problems. In

this fourth phase, it seems that animal magnetism tries to obstruct our progress through every human weakness it can find in us.

Whatever the challenges, however severe they may be, they are intended to make us lose our faith in Christian Science. Evil is working to destroy our spirituality, our inner rapport with God, because we are on the verge of understanding that it is nothing. When we do, it no longer controls us. We are in control of our own mind. The purpose of this fourth phase is to show us how to uncover and destroy evil fearlessly and completely in the heart of prayer.

When this furnace experience takes place, every human resource fails us. Money is useless. Human prestige, influence, and power are nothing. Rationalization, intellect, education and experience are worthless. The self-will, human planning, and drive, which we may have used in the past, prove futile. Even the metaphysical work that had been successful does not help us. When we pray as before, nothing happens. As the furnace gets hotter, we are forced to yield up every human thing and rely completely on God for help. Even then, evil seems so real, so overwhelming at times, that we doubt our ability to overcome it. Yet if we endure, if we continue to study and pray, if we learn what God is teaching us, we will overcome our fear of evil.

### *The Ultimate Breakthrough*

When, for the first time, you stand in the face of evil's most hateful attack and press on as best you can, never giving up, never admitting defeat, and at the darkest hour standing alone with God, refusing to doubt Him, you will realize a turning point — and evil will collapse. It will actually dissolve into nothingness. This is a great revelation, an awesome discovery. In a sense, it is the ultimate breakthrough. You begin to understand how evil can be reduced to nonexistence through prayer alone. Never again will evil seem so intimidating as to make you believe it is real. Each time

you hold your ground, endure the suffering, and work on, you will find that evil can be made to disappear into nothingness.

When taking this stand, you learn how to turn on evil and fight against it until you feel the hypnotic suggestions weaken and give out. In each battle with it, you will sense a turning point in which your strength and power is greater than the mesmeric suggestion. Using this mental strength to banish the suggestion, you will feel it weaken, give way, and fade out of consciousness. And so you prove that God, good, is a presence and power greater than evil. This conviction is so absolute that you can from then on face evil and handle it with such authority that you can defeat it.

This is the astonishing and unexpected result of your battle with evil. When you turn and fight it, rather than run from it, it collapses into nonexistence. It is no longer there! If you refuse to stop praying, mesmeric suggestions, seemingly so real, so ominous, begin to weaken. They gradually dissolve until they disappear. If you will not admit they are real, if you stand and refuse to believe that they have any power, they fade away. Then you know that evil is nothing but a bluff, an illusion, an unreality. Indeed, evil is nothing!

### *The Challenge of the Furnace Experience*

Mrs. Eddy once told her mental workers, "Hold on and persist for good, because there never is a hopeless situation. When error meets with resistance, it begins to be scattered. Where a situation seems unbearable, it is because error is letting go." This statement sums up the demonstration over evil.

During this furnace experience, our human life is shaken to the core. It becomes bleak, empty, discordant, almost unbearable. And so we are forced to press through the unreal mental images within and find to some small degree our oneness with God. And it is there!

When this wilderness experience follows upon the discovery that matter is unreal, you must realize that you have not failed in

your work. Indeed, you have been so successful that you have entered a new phase of the work. Evil is threatened to the core. It is about to become unreal to you, and so it stops at nothing in keeping you from this ultimate breakthrough. After passing through this Armageddon, you have a form of divine intelligence that you could not have attained in any other way.

In this fourth phase of your journey, the trials you face may be many. You may overcome one challenge, only to find it followed by another just as difficult. Each trial must be resolved metaphysically. In this phase, you learn that in the mortal realm, evil is not nothing. It is an unmerciful force with a black and bitter hatred of the Christ-consciousness. It is sadistic. It inflicts pain and suffering on mankind without conscience. It is at its worst when its hold on the mind is threatened. And so we cannot say evil is nothing — until we can prove it is nothing.

*In the spiritual realm, evil is nothing.* Through an understanding of Christian Science and the prayer of affirmation and denial, you can face evil fearlessly, reverse its hypnotic suggestions, and reduce it to what it really is — absolutely nothing! You can refuse to consent to the aggressive mental suggestions of evil. You can de-mesmerize consciousness, and prove again and again the unreality of mortality and matter. Each time you deal with a problem as hypnotic suggestion coming from animal magnetism, rather than a bad relationship, or lack, or a physical claim, you strengthen your ability to control evil and put it out.

The purpose of Christian Science is not to make us comfortable in a material life, but to so educate us in spiritual things that we begin to have dominion over all forms of evil. Only then are we safe from its malicious control and the suffering it brings. This requires that we face the mesmerism that evil puts forth and lose our fear of it. We then reach a point where we remain unmoved, uninfluenced, untouched by evil at all times and under all circumstances. As we reduce the hypnotic suggestions to nothing, we learn that there is no power in evil to limit or harm us.

When I was learning this very hard lesson, there was a simple little story that summed up this battle with evil. There was a dog that was always chasing a poor little cat. Day and night the dog gave the cat no peace. Then one day the cat couldn't run any longer. It was exhausted, and so in desperation it turned, arched its back, and hissed at the dog, and the dog turned and ran.

When you turn on animal magnetism — at times out of desperation and exhaustion — and decide to fight it out with evil, when you refuse to submit to its lies any longer, you can realize a victory over it.

In the battle with evil, you struggle mentally with the onslaught of hypnotic suggestions until you reverse them, see through them, and replace them with the truth of being. The more you do this, the easier it becomes. You come to see that evil has no power except what you give it.

This new-found ability to handle evil so effectively revolutionizes your healing work. You know as fact — not theory — that evil has no power or reality. You develop the strength and understanding to battle with it. In fact, I believe God does not bring us into this advanced lesson until we are ready for it. Mrs. Eddy writes of this in *Science and Health*, "If good enough to profit by Jesus' cup of earthly sorrows, God will sustain us under these sorrows."

### *Using Metaphysics — Not Human Means*

If we are going to demonstrate dominion over evil, it has to be done subjectively. We cannot use human means or will-power for resolving these challenges. When this testing time comes, we must have the courage and strength to stand and face evil down — *metaphysically*. There is always the temptation to deal with adversity in a human way. But the lesson in these trials is to teach us that evil is nothing. We must understand this fact, not merely believe it. In this phase of our work, we should not resort to human means for resolving our difficulties. Instead, we must withdraw into the closet,

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face each crisis or challenge, and fight it out with animal magnetism until we are free of its hypnotic suggestions. We do this by destroying its power to make us afraid of it.

Rather than give up in despair when things seem black, you can decide that each trial is an opportunity to prove your power over evil. Then stand! No matter what the outer picture seems to be presenting, refuse to believe that evil is true or real. Decide that you will fight it out on the mental battle field until evil gives out. Then continue to do so until you feel its hypnotic attack weaken and begin to fade away. At that point, work on with even greater determination, and you will have your healing

### *When Problems Worsen*

Sometimes when you work like this, the problem seems to grow worse. And so it may appear that your work is not being effective. Actually, the very opposite is taking place. When your work is successfully destroying evil, its resistance becomes so intense that the problem seems to worsen, and you may believe that you cannot meet it. This is what evil wants you to believe. Therefore, this is the very time when you need to work the hardest, for the work is being so effective that it is forcing evil's resistance to the limit. When you out last it and work on regardless of the outer picture, evil's resistance to your work gives out, the problem will yield, and healing will follow.

The purpose of this phase is to teach you that evil collapses into nothing if you resist it with the truth understood. No matter how ominous or overwhelming it may seem to be, evil is nothing but hypnotic suggestion, and any hypnotic spell can be broken through dedicated metaphysical work.