

# The returning unclean spirit

(*Matthew 12:43-45*)

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”

What Jesus is bringing out very plainly in this parable is that mere faith-healing, either of sin or disease, will always leave a man open to something worse. It does not matter whether it is faith in a drug or any other form of medical or psychological treatment, faith in a person, in will-power, or in God — it is still faith-healing. Jesus knew the danger of this, for in his day there were many mystical healing methods, just as there are in our own time. Mrs Eddy also knew the danger of faith-healing and laboured to show that Christian Science had to be differentiated from it, because the attempt to say that they are one and the same could temporarily destroy Christian Science. Faith-healing would destroy Science because it leaves Science out of the picture.

It may be asked why Jesus gave what looks like a merely negative picture in this parable. Mrs Eddy points to the answer in her statement, “Error found out is two-thirds destroyed, and the last third pierces itself” (Mis.355:13-15). Jesus knew that every man *is* spiritual, and so if you thoroughly expose for him the bad effects of faith-healing and the power of error if left alone, he will be roused to see the foolishness of blind faith and also to find that which will *not* fail him. He will be awakened to discover what is ever at hand — the

answers of intelligence, which are already embraced in his consciousness. "When the human senses wake from their long slumber to see how soon earth's fables flee and faith grows wearisome, then that which defies decay and satisfies the immortal cravings is sought and found" (My.189:17-21).

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none." The "unclean spirit" may be any form of fear, ignorance, or sin; both fear and ignorance can be classified as sin, because sin is belief in matter. Jesus is making it clear that if someone believes that he has been healed of the effects of fear, ignorance, or sin — in other words, that an "unclean spirit" has gone out of him — he has to be constantly alert to the attempt of error to return, because as far as he is concerned it is still out and about in consciousness. It has not been destroyed or effaced from consciousness, but actually given increased identity through his belief that whilst he may be rid of it, nevertheless it is still real. The reference to the spirit walking through dry places in the search for a dwelling-place points to the fact that any healing based on faith alone, bringing no challenge to the intellectual capacity of man, eventually dries up on him, for it can give no inspiration or lasting satisfaction.

Belief in a reality apart from God does not exist without something or someone to identify itself with. It needs a receptive thought to rest upon, or it is nothing, just as  $2+2=5$  is nothing unless it has got hold of a small boy to believe it. So if we do not give identity in our own thought to evil, it dies to us. Its only hope of life is to get someone to say, "It's me" or "It's him."

"Then he [the unclean spirit] saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished." The very fact that the unclean spirit says, "I will return into *my* house from whence I came out" shows that its claim to reality has not been dealt with, but has been left by the individual with its identity enhanced in importance, whilst he takes on an attitude of self-congratulation conveyed by the statement that his house, his consciousness, is "empty, swept, and garnished." This is the pattern of faith-healing. It leaves a man "empty, swept, and garnished"

because he has done nothing. If a man has faith in something, this means that he does not have to do anything except have faith in it. That is why faith cannot produce real healing. Faith in a drug or even in God can heal a man temporarily, in that his faith enables the healing to take place, but the only lasting healing must be in *him*, in *his* conscious being. Faith-healing leaves his consciousness empty of Truth, swept of understanding and realization, and garnished with self-satisfaction.

The Master did not ask for faith in himself, nor did he have the attitude, "I've come to instil into you something that will raise you up." What he did was to show the individual that he was already whole and had only to express it. He woke him to what he was as the expression of God's being. He never ignored the rule of individuality. It might be said that he caused the individual to heal himself. A right understanding of his commands, "Stretch forth thine hand," "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise," "Lazarus, come forth," shows that he was calling on the individual in each case to express his true selfhood. "Jesus beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals. In this perfect man the Saviour saw God's own likeness," — it was always in the individual that he saw God's own likeness, — "and this correct view of man healed the sick" (S&H 476:32-4).

For true healing the vacuums of sense must be filled with the substance of spiritual understanding, filled with the activity of Science. Instead of consciousness being empty, it must be filled with the specific truth; instead of being swept of all reason, intelligence, and individuality, it must be fully furnished with all these; and instead of being garnished with self-satisfaction, it must have gratitude for the Principle and Science behind it all.

"Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Jesus points out the trap which can ensnare us and therefore indicates the type of work which is necessary when any form of error has been removed from our experience. It is essential to realize that it

was never there to be removed and never existed in fact or fiction. The warning is that the admission to ourselves that error was real at any time not only lays us open to its return, but to its return with the strengthened purpose symbolized here by the unclean spirit gathering to himself "seven other spirits more wicked than himself" and going back to the house or consciousness from which he had come out.

If someone believes he has been healed of some sin and yet it is only on a basis of faith, he is open to something worse. Having overcome something which he thinks of as bad, he then sits back complacently and congratulates himself on having a consciousness "empty, swept, and garnished." His thought is focused on the evil and he magnifies it and makes it more of a reality than ever. He does not realize that this very attitude makes him subject to it in a worse form. Self-satisfaction in so-called morality and a perfectly conducted materiality is the most dangerous thing on earth, because it hides belief in matter.

If a man believes himself healed of extreme immorality and becomes "swept and garnished" by his interpretation of chastity and purity, he may then swing over to suffer from bigger devils affecting the lives of others, such as an appetite for criticism and condemnation of anything which he thinks is an expression of immorality or materiality in someone else. When what he regards as the controlling devil in his character has been cast out, he has to watch that this does not lead to an egotistical narrowness which, without his being aware of it, can become devilish in its attitude towards others and their way of living. If the understanding given by Christian Science is abused, to make unreality more real, that is the devil. Such an attitude of mind is a worse state than the first of plain straightforward immorality or lust and therefore needs to be guarded against.

To take another instance, someone who believes that he has got the better of a desire for drink, but also believes that drunkenness is a reality playing hell in the world, throws himself wide open to the return of the loss of control exhibited in drunkenness, but in other forms of that loss of control which he does not recognize as such, yet which have the same bad effects, aggravated through his being off

guard through complacency. The error increases in power in his thought unless it is dealt with scientifically on the basis of its absolute nothingness because man cannot be deprived of the ability to express balanced thinking controlled by Principle, since the only Mind is God. Having acknowledged this, he must practise it by rejecting every suggestion that he cannot think in conformity with Principle, with the certainty, joy, and true satisfaction which this brings, for God is his Mind and he has no other. In life we all have first to see what to do and then do it, and we also have to see what not to do and take care that we do not do it.

An individual egotistically self-satisfied about having overcome something is not alert to see that he is still admitting the truth of that something he thinks he has overcome. His only safety is to know that it was never there in consciousness and that all that he has proved is that it was never there. It will come back in a stronger form if he thinks it is a *something* that is out of *him* through *his* or someone else's efforts. Error was uncovered, yes, but all that was really uncovered was his *belief* in error. The wise course is to get self out of the picture and let God in by realizing that the only Mind there has ever been is the divine Mind. "All consciousness is Mind, and Mind is God" (Ret.56:18). In that Mind there is no origin for error, no error, and no effects of error.

If, as Christian Science commands, man holds hatred in abeyance with kindness, conquers lust with chastity, revenge with charity, and overcomes deceit with honesty (see S&H 405:5-9), he finds that the continual exercise of the specific spiritual attributes in each case eliminates the opposite beliefs as naturally as light does away with darkness. The hatred, lust, revenge, and deceit are no longer part of his consciousness or experience in any direction or in any aspect. Error seen as error and made nothing through scientific understanding of its impossibility and through the practice of the truth of which it is a lie does not merely leave a man, but leaves all means of identity and all consciousness as far as he is concerned.

The joy of Soul is felt in its revelation of the sinlessness of mankind, which brings to the individual the joy of finding that that sin-

lessness has always been true of him and so there was nothing real to overcome and only the freedom and happiness of living the truth.

To turn from the claim of sin healed to the claim of disease healed: if a man has been healed of disease through mere faith — faith in someone else helping him, faith in Christian Science as a mysterious bestower of good, or faith in God in that same sense — then the danger of his position is that if the disease and its symptoms return, his faith has let him down and he has no understanding whereby to combat this attempt at a relapse. On the other hand there can be no return or relapse if he has been properly healed through his understanding of Christian Science or through the work of another individual uncovering to him the so-called cause of disease — whether it claims to be fear, heredity, age, accident, sin, a failure to express some character-facet essential to true manhood or womanhood, or any other of the myriad supposed causes of disease and inharmony — and then showing him that it is only a claim and has no reality or substance and in fact never truly existed. Through the understanding he has gained, or the practitioner has held, the disease cannot recur, for it was not physical disease healed by a blind faith, but a mental condition of belief in disease with a mental cause outside the perfect expression of the mentality of the normal man, whose only Mind is God. Mrs Eddy tells us, “Belief produces the results of belief, and the penalties it affixes last so long as the belief and are inseparable from it. The remedy consists in probing the trouble to the bottom, in finding and casting out by denial the error of belief which produces a mortal disorder, never honoring erroneous belief with the title of law nor yielding obedience to it” (S&H 184:6-12).

If someone believes he has been healed of a real disease through any form of medical treatment or through mere faith in a person or place, even if he calls it faith in God, in Christ, or Christian Science, he is not truly better but worse if he is left with a belief in matter made healthy; his belief in matter and in healthy matter is increased instead of diminished. He may be exuberantly grateful and feel rejuvenated and it is possible that this may continue for his physical lifetime, but the fact remains that he is now open to subtler forms of

error unless he sees clearly that it was not in matter that the disease originated or existed but in his *belief* in matter and his belief that diseased matter is something to be feared. "It is mortal mind, not matter, which brings to the sick whatever good they may seem to receive from materiality. But the sick are never really healed except by means of the divine power. Only the action of Truth, Life, and Love can give harmony" (S&H 169:23-28).

The one devil to be cast out is the belief in matter, and this belief may have been covered over through a belief in healing. "If we rise no higher than blind faith, the Science of healing is not attained, and Soul-existence, in the place of sense-existence, is not comprehended" (S&H 167:3-6). The only healing is that which makes matter *less* real, and this comes solely in the ratio that the understanding which Science confers that man is spiritual and perfect becomes *more* real in some specific direction. The one path which leads to true health and a grasp of the fundamental realities of existence is the understanding that man is wholly spiritual and therefore subject only to the mandate of Principle, which when accepted and obeyed reveals to him his true selfhood and true health.

In "Science and Health" is the statement, "We think that we are healed when a disease disappears, though it is liable to reappear; but we are never thoroughly healed until the liability to be ill is removed. So-called mortal mind or the mind of mortals being the remote, pre-disposing, and the exciting cause of all suffering, the cause of disease must be obliterated through Christ in divine Science, or the so-called physical senses will get the victory. Unless an ill is rightly met and fairly overcome by Truth, the ill is never conquered. If God destroys not sin, sickness, and death, they are not destroyed in the mind of mortals" (230:27-6).

Mrs Eddy wrote also, "Blind belief cannot say with the apostle, 'I know whom I have believed.' There is danger in this mental state called belief; for if Truth is admitted, but not understood, it may be lost, and error may enter through this same channel of ignorant belief" (Ret.54:15-19). She saw that scientific healing is entirely different and so she stated, "When you have once conquered a dis-

eased condition of the body through Mind, that condition never recurs, and you have won a point in Science” (S&H 217:16-19). The necessity is to be so clear about the Science at the back of a healing that the error of belief can no more return than  $2+2=5$  can return to the consciousness of someone who understands  $2+2=4$ . A child may have learnt by heart that  $2+2=4$  and yet may continually forget this and write down other answers, but once he has been shown in a practical way which brings it home why  $2+2=4$ , it registers in his mentality in such a manner that never again can the disease of  $2+2=5$  or anything else but 4 cause a relapse.

Faith can help someone temporarily, but unless it proceeds in the order of Science and becomes understanding, it has no lasting basis. Many an individual comes to Christian Science through faith in it, but then through his contact with its teachings and perhaps with the assistance of others his faith takes on the character of understanding, and it is in this movement that the strength of Christian Science lies. “Sickness is the schoolmaster, leading you to Christ; first to faith in Christ; next to belief in God as omnipotent; and finally to the *understanding* of God and man in Christian Science, whereby you learn that God is good, and in Science man is His likeness, the forever reflection of goodness. Therefore good is one and All” (Rud.11:3-8).

You go along with a child on a bicycle and you hold him and he thinks he can ride. But if you teach him the naturalness of balance, he has got it for himself and he cannot lose it. The principle of balance has been revealed and he can never return to a position outgrown — in this case, faith in someone else keeping him safely on that bicycle. In a similar way, in Christian Science you do not leave a patient leaning on another’s ability. You show him that the ideas given by Principle were what healed him. These ideas demonstrated that the disease never existed and the reason why, and this scientific realization constitutes genuine healing. Taking it all back to Principle restores it to its proper home, not as a personal demonstration, but as an activity of divine Mind.

All true healing must turn a man to Principle, showing him what he is and why he is, demonstrating to him that he himself is the ex-



pression of God, and that it is this truth understood which establishes his strength and his immunity from recurrence of the error.

Jesus did not leave anyone with a sense of being “empty, swept, and garnished” through some mysterious process which by-passed individual consciousness and left him free to carry on exactly as before. In his healings two motions are apparent. The first is the healing of the belief of sin, disease, or death, and here he was fully aware of his own responsibility to Principle and his individual ability to demonstrate it. The second was the showing of the individual whom he had healed how to take on his own responsibility to Principle, so that there was no recurrence of the error of belief. This second motion is not always recognized, but always present.

An outstanding example can be found in his words to the man at the pool of Bethesda after he had healed him, and just when the man must have been enjoying relief from the years of belief in infirmity. He had been mesmerized into inertia by superstitious beliefs, and Jesus let the uselessness of superstition expose itself in the man’s own words and showed him that his state of health was nothing to do with superstition; therefore he did not have to wait around for anyone or anything, but had the power to respond at once to the demand, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.” Then it is as if the Master was determined that he should never return to his old ways of thinking, but should recognize and maintain the wholeness which had been demonstrated to be his. He detected that he had not yet thoroughly shaken off his inclination to accept superstition as a line of reasoning, for he found him in the Temple, the very centre of superstitious concepts of God, often producing inertia in those content to “leave it all to God” in blind faith. The Master said to him, “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (John 5:14). In other words, he was warning him not to slip again into one of the greatest sins — namely, the inert acceptance of beliefs based on superstition — and the best way not to fall back was to go forward in enjoyment of his new-found spiritual freedom and wholeness.

To the woman identified as having been healed of a chronic “issue of blood,” he said, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in

peace, and be whole of thy plague." By "faith" he did not mean blind faith; he was making it plain to her that her own determination to go to him and touch his garment in order to be made whole, although it had seemed born of desperation, demonstrated not only a discernment of the Christ ideal of manhood, but also a courage diametrically opposed to the anaemic resignation and fatalism supposed to be associated with the female, which had plagued her through her submission to it. He wanted to emphasize her exercise of courage both before and after she experienced healing and thereby show her how never to return to the acceptance of those beliefs often attached to the female. She had displayed the element of strength which was the true male element for which she longed and thereby had thrown off the curse on woman — namely, female beliefs blindly accepted as unavoidable. (See Mark 5:25-34 and Luke 8:43-48.)

Why was it that disease was unreal to Jesus? Because it was so clear to him in detail that man here and now is a wholly spiritual being, living in a spiritual world, not subject to beliefs of matter and mortal mind, but subject only to the divine Mind and its influences on all his thinking and experience. As a spiritual being, as the presence of qualities that reveal God, he is immune from every belief of limitation and discord, for it is only in the realm of mortal mind and matter that limitation and discord can be conceived of or hold sway. When Jesus saw the man with the withered hand, for instance, it was so real in his thought that there can be no uselessness, since man is the perpetual expression of God's being, that he could not accept for a moment that the man was bound and fettered in mind and body by that belief. For this reason he was able to get the man to stretch forth his hand and discover and enjoy the usefulness which was his to be exercised. (See Matthew 12:10-13.) The spirituality of man was not mysterious to the Master, but supremely natural as the only reality. That was why he could "carry the day against physical enemies, — even to the extinction of all belief in matter, evil, disease, and death, — [and] insist upon the fact that God is all, therefore that matter is nothing beyond an image in mortal mind" (S&H 116:15-19). In proportion as we follow the Master there will be no returning

unclean spirits in our experience.

Faith-healing says, "God will heal you here in matter, here in your physical body." Understanding tells us, "There is no matter, and you have no material body. The only thing that is going on is God and His expression of Himself, and you are that expression individually reflected, and therefore you are wholly spiritual and perfect now." The understanding of this removes us from the realm and the experience of mythological thought-processes which are based on the lie that matter exists and is real. The fundamental error is always belief in matter, for it is this which leads to acceptance of the picture it presents as real and substantial.

A man may believe that he has been lucky enough to be relieved of a disease and so is now "empty, swept, and garnished" in relation to it, but he may also believe that that disease is still a reality rampant in the world and there are thousands of unlucky individuals suffering from it. There is no Science in such a belief. It has left the error as something which very much exists. The error remains in his consciousness as a reality. There is no Science unless he understands that there never was or is that error for any man anywhere, since it is non-existent and never had entity. So instead of congratulating himself on having come out of an error, he should see that it has no existence for anyone anywhere at any time, because there is no such thing. If there *was* an error, it could return. If it becomes nothing, it cannot slip into thought at any point. The only thing to do with any belief of disease is to make it nothing and keep it nothing.

Healing which does not make the error totally unreal to the patient, but merely isolates him from its influence, is no safe healing. If there is reality in an epidemic of disease in the world, there is no true safety in our feeling that we are secure from its effects, for such an attitude magnifies the belief that the epidemic exists. The only reliable course lies in understanding why there is no epidemic and seeing that the truth of its non-existence embraces not only us but all mankind. If something can spread, it must have started somewhere, so if we see that it could never have started, since it never had any cause, it is obvious that it could not take on the character of an epidemic.

Therefore the safe path is to devote thought to realizing that whatever the disease may claim to be, it never existed and could never possibly exist in the realm of Spirit to which we are now consecrating our understanding.

The error has to go out of all consciousness as far as we are concerned, so that we see that it has no "space to occupy, power to act, or vanity to pretend that it is man" (Mis.173:18-19). We are responsible for our consciousness of all consciousness. To admit an error as existing and as affecting others is surely nothing more nor less than malpractice in the realm of Science and stands in contrast to fully scientific reasoning. If something has been very much to the fore in our own experience, we are responsible for establishing the truth forever in the safety of Soul by knowing that no lie about it exists anywhere. That which is scientifically true is universally true and must be known as such. Principle can allow only perfection for everyone — and nothing else. Truth is universal or it is not Truth.

So the rule is that the rooms of consciousness that have been filled with error have to be emptied, but those emptied rooms must be filled with Truth. If they are, the "seven other spirits more wicked" than the first cannot gain entrance. Those seven stand for everything that tries to stop a man thinking intelligently, reasoning spiritually, enjoying a calm certainty, being controlled by Principle's processes in all his affairs, and aware of the strength of individuality, the clarity of Truth, and the resting assurance of Love. The seven synonymous terms for God equip us with the ability to destroy the multiple lies of sense-testimony and mortal reasoning embraced in Jesus' reference to "seven other spirits more wicked than himself."

Healing based on the realization that there *is* no matter and therefore no mortal mind and no adverse influences to approach man and enter his house, is strong and safe in the ratio of its realization that the reason for all this is the sevenfold nature of God, comprising the source and substance of all consciousness and all experience.

To recapitulate: all the way through this parable Jesus is bringing out very plainly by inference the difference between faith-healing and scientific healing. The opening words, "When the unclean spirit is

gone out of a man," imply that if anyone holds to the belief that sickness or error has "gone out" of an individual, he is admitting that such an error did exist and in fact still exists. All forms of faith-healing uphold that belief. Scientific healing, on the other hand, which is the only real healing, penetrates beyond faith with the true understanding available to everyone through Science, whereby it is seen that disease or error never existed and therefore has not gone anywhere. "The relations of God and man, divine Principle and idea, are indestructible in Science; and Science knows no lapse from nor return to harmony, but holds the divine order or spiritual law, in which God and all that He creates are perfect and eternal, to have remained unchanged in its eternal history" (S&H 470:32-5).

Mrs Eddy elucidates this point further when she states, "Invalids say, 'I have recovered from sickness;' when the fact really remains, in divine Science, that they never were sick" (Un.61:28-2). In other words, if we believe that we have been healed of something, but we still allow it to be a something, although we may feel that *we* have been relieved of it, this can happen only in that area of consciousness which is covered by faith, for scientific healing, true healing, can be accomplished only by knowing that the claim never existed, never established itself. This is the point of differentiation between Christian Science and all other forms of healing and is underlined in Mrs Eddy's statement in answer to the question, "What is the cardinal point of the difference in my metaphysical system?" "This: that *by knowing the unreality of disease, sin, and death*, you demonstrate the allness of God. This difference wholly separates my system from all others. The reality of these so-called existences I deny, because they are not to be found in God, and this system is built on Him as the sole cause. It would be difficult to name any previous teachers, save Jesus and his apostles, who have thus taught" (Un.9:27-7). So the important point of differentiation is knowing the unreality of disease, sin, and death, instead of giving them reality by believing that they have been overcome in particular instances but do still exist outside those particular instances. If they had ever existed, there would have been a moment when God did not exist. Science must be universal Truth in order to

be Science. We are never safe if we believe that we can enter a little sanctuary called Christian Science and be secure from something real which still exists to plague others. To enter the sanctuary of Christian Science we must reason scientifically as well as Christianly.

The parable serves to emphasize the one fact that never for a moment can we admit that error ever happened or existed. To Jesus there was no wonderful healing of a withered hand, for example; there was only the recognition by an individual of the ability which had always been there for him to accept. All that the appearance or claim of error should ever do to any of us is to enhance in our thought the presence and onliness of good and the absolute certainty that the error never existed.

When Jesus speaks of the unclean spirit going out of a man but then walking about seeking rest, he is showing that in belief the unclean spirit still exists as an entity, even though removed from the immediate experience of the individual, and belief in its entity increases its power to operate. The truth of any healing is not that the devil or disease has gone out of a man, but that the individual's belief that there *was* a devil or disease to go out has been proved untrue; therefore the only thing that has gone out is not a sin or disease, but the lie that there ever was a sin or disease to go out. An error, being an error, can never be true or ever have been true. It can have no existence at all at any time. True healing recognizes that sin or disease has not gone out of a man, but was never there to go out and in fact has no existence whatever. This truth understood ensures that it can never return, whereas a belief that it does still exist but that the work in Christian Science has removed it solely from the experience of the particular individual makes it in the first place more real in thought by giving it entity and in the second place opens the way for it to activate itself in a similar or a different form in that individual's experience. The only true healing is the outcome of realizing that there *is* no sin or disease, either in that specific form or in any other form, and therefore it is not a question of its going out or being removed from one individual's experience, but rather a question of that individual being healed of his belief that it ever

existed for him to have. That is true healing.

This parable issues a challenge which is the most invigorating and health-bestowing that man can have and is therefore the one which when taken up is the most attractive to him and the bestower of that true joy to which Jesus referred when he said to his disciples, "your joy no man taketh from you." The practice of Christian Science is an outward flow of Truth emanating from the divine source of a clear understanding of what God is and therefore an emphatic certainty as to what man must be in all his expression of that Being. This is certainly a faith but a faith made scientific through understanding and an understanding which leads to further revelation. Mrs Eddy tells us that with Jesus "life was not merely a sense of existence, but an accompanying sense of power that subdued matter and brought to light immortality" (Ret.58:7-9). How desirable it must be to come in some degree closer to having that Mind "which was also in Christ Jesus," as Paul puts it.

So when the Master issues the obvious challenge in this parable, he is really rousing thought to accept the wonderful opportunities which his teachings present to men and to put them into practice in a manner which eliminates everything symbolized by the term "unclean spirit." Moreover, this will show the student the importance of understanding clearly why the unclean spirit has not gone out of a man, but has never existed anywhere, in or out, and therefore manifestly can never return.