

READ YOUR SPIRITUAL BAROM

BY LYNN G. JACKSON

A barometer measures atmospheric pressure. It can forecast short-term changes in the weather, even when it looks as if conditions are stable, with no sign of a change coming. The barometer might predict rain on a bright sunny day, or sunshine when it's cloudy and dark, defying what you might guess would happen.

Mary Baker Eddy discussed this phenomenon in *Science and Health*: "The optical focus is another proof of the illusion of material sense. On the eye's retina, sky and tree-tops apparently join hands, clouds and ocean meet and mingle. The barometer,—that little prophet of storm and sunshine, denying the testimony of the senses,—points to fair weather in the midst of murky clouds and drenching rain. Experience is full of instances of similar illusions, which every thinker can recall for himself" (p. 122).

Kind of like a barometer, one of our daughters is known for spotting "strange clouds." She got this reputation as a second grader, when on family vacations she'd stare out the car window into the space she hopes to visit someday. On at least 80 percent of those trips, she was known to say, "Daddy, that cloud out there looks strange!" And we learned that if she said that, we were in for it—whether it was a tornado in western Kansas, a smoke cloud in Montana, a dust storm in west Texas, or a flood in south Texas. As her parents, those were the last words we wanted to hear while driving down the highway. But it's important to be alert to signs of danger, in order to pray about them.

Weather-related problems, and so-called natural disasters, confront the world in what seems like an almost constant threat, from China to Thailand, France, and the United States. I've certainly experienced my share of weather-related problems. But I've come to learn that we're not at the mercy of

ply an understanding of God's law of good. This doesn't mean that we as individuals control weather. Rather it means that acknowledging spiritually that God is in control every moment, under every condition, can bring the needed change into our lives.

God controls what He creates. And what He creates is always good, because God is good—is Love itself. This means, then, that God is never out of control. And we can appeal to Him to show us Love's control, right in the midst of storm and darkness. That's our spiritual barometer, naturally pointing to peace and calm, even when it looks otherwise.

It's important to see that extremes and destruction are not part of the divine plan. They cannot be. Keeping this truth in my thought has helped me face threatening weather patterns. As I've understood more of this truth, I've seen it destroy the effects of inclement weather conditions in my life. To face them with confidence in the spiritual understanding that a good God begets only good, enables me to stand with God and His love during times of fear and threats to safety.

Weather is a major factor where I live, because our city of Lubbock, Texas, and the surrounding counties, are agriculturally based. More than 35 percent of the world's cotton is grown within 200 miles of Lubbock. That's a lot of cotton! In the past two to three years, we've had some of the largest crops ever recorded. And impressively, it's dry-land cotton—meaning no irrigation is involved. The farmers depend on timely rains and heat units to mature the crops. However, this area also happens to be in the United States's "tornado alley," where thunderstorms tend to be extremely violent. There's a tendency for "localized" storms—ones that will appear out of nowhere, rain and hail all over a crop, destroy it completely, and then dissipate. Literally, one farmer's crop can be destroyed while the farm next to it will not have had a drop of rain.

A few years ago one of these localized storms gathered itself over our land where we grow cotton. Within a few minutes the hail had shredded it into nothing. When that happens, it's hard not to be discouraged. So, when another localized storm began to form the next year, my husband walked outside to face it prayerfully. He stood under an awning and called me on his cellphone. He told me it was raining and hailing, and he was afraid he was going to lose the crop once again.

We both began to pray. In our conversation together, we agreed that God was present and caring for us and our crop; that nothing could be harmed, because divine Love was the very source of all creation, including the crop. Further, we un-

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happenstance or dangerous atmospheric conditions. There's a "spiritual barometer"—a measurement of the circumstances as God knows them—that forecasts peace right in the midst of extreme fear and danger.

Whatever the circumstance, it's possible to pray and ap-



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derstood that Love could never relinquish its control to threatening forces, danger, or disaster. The crop expressed a right idea, maturing and preparing to supply people with needed resources. Mentally, I looked right through the clouds—or suggestions of destruction—to see God in complete control. I affirmed that there were not two powers, one good and one evil, but one power alone, and that it was spiritual. I affirmed that Love's care for us and for the crop, including those benefited by it, was unending and perpetual. Right where the destructive cloud appeared to be, I recognized God's harmony and bliss in operation. Harmony and bliss are truly always God's doing; destructive hail and rain never are.

My husband called back within what he thinks was a matter of seconds. He said the hail had stopped. The rain had turned gentle and sweet. The storm was no longer threatening and destructive, but nourishing. The dark cloud was still over our land, but it no longer posed a threat. It eventually vanished without harming our crop or anyone else's.

Lifting our thoughts to embrace the all-power of God, in this way, can effectively and tangibly reveal His infinite care and protection. Our family did just that a couple of years ago, during another violent storm in our area—one that was not localized but moving through the whole city.

Our eldest daughter had just begun college and was living on campus. But that particular Sunday afternoon she was home for lunch. Hearing a storm was on the way, she decided to re-

turn to her residence hall before the rain started. But soon after she'd left, she called us. Everyone was standing in the hallway of the residence building. The tornado alarm was sounding, and school officials wouldn't let anyone out of the building, or into their rooms. We quickly turned on the TV and heard the meteorologist announce that a tornado was headed straight for the corner of the campus where my daughter's residence hall was located.

Another great time to pray! Together we looked to God's power to save. We kept the TV news on a low volume but turned away from the picture of fear and alarm to pray by recognizing God's protecting power. We spoke to our daughter as we could, but cellphone reception was interrupted by the storm. Even though we weren't five miles apart, there were times when no communication could be made. When she could, she'd call to ask what the TV was reporting and then announce it to the others in the hall with her. We made sure that we not only reported the news, but reminded her that God's care was embracing not just her but the whole campus. Everyone, we agreed, had to come out of this experience safe and well. And we continued to pray in this way.

Within the hour, the threat had lifted. The tornado never touched the campus. In fact, it never touched down within the city. I know that not only our prayers were effective that day, but also the prayers of many others in Lubbock. It wasn't lost on us that most of the city had just returned home from church that day. Our city has been known to hold a day of prayer during droughts, with many pastors working together. I know that day the prayerful support of our citizens was certainly seen and felt.

A growing faith in God's love and goodness allows our own spiritual barometer to report the true facts, as we spiritually understand God's omnipotence in all situations. Our "storms" may not always be weather related. They may be relationship or economically based, or feel like a lightning strike at our employment and security. But in the midst of all difficulties, I'm convinced that divine Love is present, is omnipotent, is operative, and with each of us—right here, right now. **css**

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