

to pursue their religious beliefs, and whether that right includes the right to decide on the type of healing to provide for their son. . . .

“Columnist Stephen Chapman, commenting on the Twitchell case, probably speaks for many non-Christian Scientists when he says, speaking to Christian Scientists, ‘You may pray to God, Allah, Krishna, Quetzalcoatl or Zeus without the slightest fear of punishment. [The Suffolk County prosecutor] cares only about your practices, specifically those that would ordinarily qualify as felonies.’ What Chapman is doing here, of course, is making a clear separation between faith and practice which makes sense only to the nonbeliever. It is a separation that is conventional in our secular, pluralistic culture, a separation that leads our media and the majority of our people to assume that religion is finally unrelated to the important decisions of life. . . .

“Chapman speaks out of a secular bias against a religious conviction that is truly believed, not just acknowledged in passing. ‘Christian Science would have survived,’ he says, ‘if the Twitchells had gone to a doctor. More important, their son would have, too.’ Here Chapman reveals his own ‘religious’ conviction: he is a modern man whose faith is in science. Meanwhile, there is a long tradition of documented healing in Christian history—and of belief that God is not just a poetic expression but an acting reality. While the Christian Science understanding of healing—based on a belief in the unreality of matter—differs from the traditional Christian one, Christian Science parents need our support, not our condemnation, for their difficult decision to follow their beliefs.”

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*Editors' comment:* This is the kind of editorial support, with its keen intellectual discernment and deeply Christian goodwill, that is both humbling and encouraging. It makes us want to do a better job not just of explaining ourselves but of living the healing Christianity we desire to explain.

## Feeling the presence of God

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Isolation, pain, fear, begin to lose  
their grip on us when we understand  
that we can never be separated  
from God.

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*Lynn A. Gray Jackson*

**I**T was a beautiful day for a picnic and a hike in the New Mexico mountains. My husband was carrying the baby on his back, and I was leading them on a narrow mountain trail that was very scenic.

We hadn't been hiking for very long when I fell and badly hurt my foot. I tried to stand up and walk, but only fell again. I knew I could turn to God for healing. I asked my husband to pray with me. We sat quietly, and we prayed to see that in truth I was the man made in God's image, not a fallen, hurt, suffering mortal. Again, I tried to stand and walk, but fell to the ground.

In exhaustion I mentally cried out, “God, what do I need to do?” The answer that came to me was simple, direct: “You need to feel the presence of God.”

Just then, I saw below me a beautiful valley, green, budding, flowering. It was filled with life, peace, and order. I began to pray once again. I reasoned that since God is divine Love, His creation must be harmonious. I knew that man, God's idea, His image, could feel the peace, goodness, and love that are God-bestowed. I saw the beautiful scenic view as a symbol of God's grandeur and knew that man, as God's reflection, includes this grandeur and loveliness.

Peace came over me, and I began to understand better that in

truth I am God's man, spiritual and inseparable from Him. This spiritual fact is true for each of us.

Within a few moments I was able to stand up; we continued our hike and then walked all the way back. My ankle, however, still did not feel completely normal.

I continued to pray—to hold on to the spiritual insights that had come to me when I first injured the foot. I held uppermost in thought God's perfect, spiritual creation and His love for His children. I knew that man, as the creation of God, is sustained by God. I understood that these truths were not abstract concepts. They were divine laws that would heal me. Being familiar with Christ Jesus' teachings, I knew God loves us and wants only good for us.

As a student of Christian Science, I had learned not to ignore problems or just to let nature take its course. I had learned to be persistent, faithful, and persevering in prayer. This prayer does not rely on human faith. Instead, it recognizes that God's love is omnipotent and that this love, understood, leads to healing.

The presence of God isn't something we make ourselves feel. It isn't something we simply demand or command to appear. It is the divine guidance, love, and direction that flawlessly lead us.

Feeling the presence of God doesn't simply mean we are cozy and comfortable. But it does mean that we don't fear the material conditions we may be facing. God's presence excludes the evil or discord that is unlike Him. His presence isn't felt by mere emotionalism, lofty sentiments, or a false mental "high"; His presence is felt through the calm, Christlike qualities of joy, love, compassion, and patience. This is the very presence of God. It healed me, and it will heal you too.

Sometimes people say, "Well, I know there's a God and I know He's present, but I don't feel His presence with me." Jacob, whose life story is told in the Bible, felt this way. He had been unjust to his brother and the time of reconciliation had come; but Jacob was frightened.

The Bible tells us: "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled

a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." And later the Bible tells us that Jacob asked the name of the man he was wrestling with. The account continues, "And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there."

Jacob knew of God's presence, but he too had to yield to it.

He wrestled with feelings of isolation, disloyalty, aloneness, self-pity, and fear. But as he prayed he felt God's power and presence. Jacob didn't let go of his newfound understanding until his life had been changed through his experience of the presence of God. His character had been softened, his integrity and trustworthiness established, and his joy renewed. The messenger who came to Jacob certainly communicated God's direction and transforming power.

In *Science and Health* Mrs. Eddy describes the light Christian Science throws on this incident: "Then Jacob questioned his deliverer, 'Tell me, I pray thee, *thy* name;' but this appellation was withheld, for the messenger was not a corporeal being, but a nameless, incorporeal impartation of divine Love to man, which, to use the word of the Psalmist, *restored* his Soul,—gave him the spiritual sense of being and rebuked his material sense."

Spiritual sense enables us to perceive the presence of God. The more we develop this sense, the more we feel the presence, the existence, and the reality of God. We learn that in spiritual truth we are never isolated from Him, never alone.

God's presence isn't sporadic. He doesn't come and go. He is always with us. *Science and Health*, speaking of God's presence tells us, "All substance, intelligence, wisdom, being, immortality, cause, and effect belong to God." This statement helped me

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**I understood that these truths were not abstract concepts. They were divine laws that would heal me.**

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understand how the presence of God heals and maintains man. Like Jacob, we can learn to hold to the angel messages until we are fully and completely blessed—until we *feel* the presence of our Maker. In this presence there is peace, joy, comfort, power—and there is healing.

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## FROM HAND TO HAND

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*The Sentinel is meant to be shared. In a world that is increasingly hungry for spiritual meaning, the Sentinel is vital food. Here's how our readers share it.\**

“I decided to send a subscription to the *Sentinel* to a woman in Tasmania who was having quite severe financial difficulties. She wrote that she found the articles very uplifting and cited two which had brought blessing to herself and her family. She went on to say how surprised she was to find many things she can pray about—family, friends, and people in other countries. Commenting on her own difficulties, she wrote, ‘I’m so grateful. The idea that there was a problem has passed. My life feels like a new year has started. My heart is very full.’”

D. L. R.

*\*Let us know of your experience in sharing the Sentinel.*

## Perfect ten or perfect one?

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Self-improvement and realizing spiritual perfection are not necessarily the same thing.

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*Annabel Keely*

**W**HO’S perfect? We often give high points to the person who always seems to do and say the right thing at the right time, someone who “has it all together.” The great number of self-improvement books published each year suggest how eagerly people pursue such personal excellence.

Can perfection be gained through these efforts? In our daily lives, perfection often seems elusive. Instead of finding fulfillment and satisfaction with our performance, we can feel frustration, competition, and maybe even doubt.

When this occurs, the problem may be that we are attempting to perfect human experience, which, to the degree that it is rooted in materiality, is imperfect by its very nature. Perfection is actually a spiritual quality. And at its best, the human longing for perfection is the deep desire to see ourselves as the spiritual, wholly good children of God.

As God’s child, man can have no qualities unlike his divine source. In the eyes of God, perfection is our natural state, whether or not we have realized it in our present human experience.

Even if we believe this, however, we might be moved to ask how perfection can be possible in our own lives. So much of our lives may seem imperfect! We begin to find answers to such questions as we get a better understanding of our true individuality as God’s expression, inseparable from Him.

In her sermon published in *Pulpit and Press*, Mrs. Eddy speaks