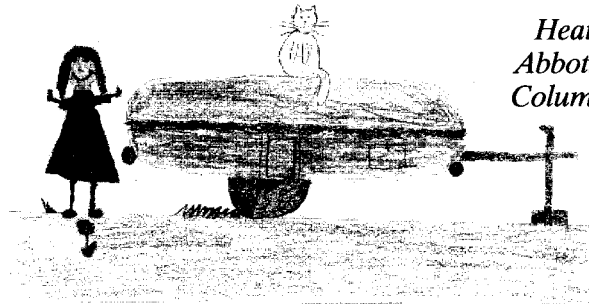


I learnt not to listen to error, because all I need to know is from God. He is Love, ever present, everywhere, for everyone. No goodness can ever be lost.

Sincerely,
Heather Bowness
Abbotsford, British
Columbia, Canada



Dear Sentinel,

In the past couple of years I have really started to understand Christian Science, and it has really helped me overcome a lot of things. I have learned that God does not make fear—we do. We alone give fear power by believing in evil. So why not trust in God, good?

I no longer fear much of anything. I won't let myself, because nothing good comes from it. This fact can really help you when you are feeling vulnerable.

Love,
Julee Robinson
Hemet, California

If you want to write us, please address your letters to
Dear Sentinel
One Norway Street, P-602
Boston, MA 02115-3122 U.S.A.

Watching for, and casting out, the mental intruder

Lynn G. Jackson

ONE afternoon while I was watching one of our new cats sleeping in a flowerpot, I noticed another cat jump our fence. He slowly and quite confidently walked through the bushes, flipping his tail. He passed right by the flowerpot where our cat was snoozing and made his way to her food. After he'd eaten, he retraced his steps with his usual strut. What astonished me was that, at first, my cat slept through the intruder's advance! Then when she did wake up, even though the other cat was still in our yard, my cat just sat very still and watched. She didn't chase the intruder off; she didn't hiss or threaten. She allowed the other cat to do what he pleased without any attempt to protect her own space.

I asked myself, Are there times when I am not alert to an intruder—a *mental* intruder—some suggestion that God, good, is not All? If I do awake, do I allow the intruding thought to take up residence, devour my provision of spiritual inspiration, and come and go at will? Do I sit back passively, hoping it will go away and leave me alone? I quietly answered, Yes.

False suggestions come in many disguises. Some parade boisterously, claiming to be a severe challenge. Others would slide into consciousness unnoticed. Their intrusion doesn't always come because they are openly invited, but rather because one doesn't take the watchful stand to ward them off. They linger, often because one doesn't guard against them. No matter what their approach or disguise, however, they can be ruled out of consciousness when we see them for what they are: false beliefs in a power opposed to God, suggestions that would keep us from

learning more of God and of our true nature as His reflection, thus keeping us from benefiting ourselves and others.

Understanding that difficulties are not external conditions but rather false beliefs, we can vigorously reject them. It's within our own consciousness that we face these beliefs and deal with them—through prayer. To view them as beyond control, as unpredictable, or as happenstance is to give them a power they do not possess, because they do not have the power of God behind them.

Prayer establishes in consciousness the certainty of the power and presence of God, of His allness. This fact is our fortress, our refuge from evil. When we humbly turn to God and listen to His commands, we find we're able to overcome any intrusion into consciousness. Prayer and watching align our thought with God and result in a life progressively aligned with God.

We should recognize as evil any thoughts that would keep us from advancing in our understanding of God—for instance, if one has had Primary class instruction in Christian Science, the suggestion of obstacles to attendance at his or her annual Christian Science Students Association meeting. Growing Spiritward is a demand of God. In founding her Church, Mary Baker Eddy strove to set up an educational system that would enable individuals to grow spiritually. This system includes the weekly Bible Lesson outlined in the *Christian Science Quarterly*, Sunday School, the Sunday church service and the Wednesday testimony meeting, and Primary class instruction. Instead of letting education stop with class instruction, the student can think of class as a basis for more growth and spiritual advancement. Mrs. Eddy provides a By-Law in the *Manual of The Mother Church* enabling those who have had class instruction to meet together yearly. She writes, "The associations of the pupils of loyal teachers shall convene annually. The pupils shall be guided by the BIBLE, and SCIENCE AND HEALTH, not by their teachers' personal views" (Art. XXVI, Sect. 6).

Attending one's yearly association meeting, and humbly listening to the address, gives fresh insight, helping one stay on the pathway of godliness. And whether or not we have had class in-

struction, letting God's message unfold to us helps us to express God more fully in our lives. Cultivating our inherent receptivity lets us hear what we need to hear in the way we need to hear it—throughout the year.

The association day is not a day merely to review, and it's not for debate, human opinion, or politics. It is a day to add to one's understanding of God. It's a day for expansion of thought, for planting new seeds of Truth. What students of Christian Science learn will enable them to return to their respective communities and more effectively put into practice the truths they've gathered.

It's never our duty to tell God where we belong, but to understand where we truly live and move—in Spirit. This fact makes evident why we can't be kept from where we belong, from where we'll learn the most from Him. Such prayer becomes our foundation upon which to stand during turbulent times.

Intruding thoughts don't sell their wares by loudly knocking on our door and screaming, "I'm here to sell you lies." Their main tool is subtlety (along with discouragement). Conflicting schedules, finances, emergencies, weather, and anything else that would keep students from the association meeting may seem beyond their control. By closely watching what we allow into consciousness, however, we can rule out any subtle suggestion and demonstrate God's constant and loving control over all.

Christ Jesus once gathered his disciples and taught them what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon he said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is the search for a deeper understanding of God and of man's relationship to Him. It is the spiritual drive that pushes us closer to God as we look to Him in times of need. When our thought is filled with His power and presence, we find His power and presence externalized in our lives. We find ourselves watching for, and casting out, the mental intruders. ■