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How to stop hate and its effects

By Elise L. Moore

How can God, who is perfect, divine Love, permit hateful acts to occur? Those who do not believe that God is infinite Love shrug and say, “Evil happens.” But those who have experienced something of God’s power know that God is good. They expect more of God, including protection and safety. It is possible, and important, to prove the ability of God’s power to combat evil effectively—to prove that God creates only good.

It's not people we are battling. We are battling blind and selfish thinking that would lead someone to justify doing evil. These aggressive thoughts, like bolts of lightning on a hot summer night, often flash without warning. What is our defense against unseen thoughts that erupt suddenly into violence? For me, the answer is prayer and a deeper acquaintance with Christ.

It is Christ, the Messiah, or “God with us,” that saves from sin, whether our own or another’s. Christ is “a divine influence ever present in human consciousness...” (Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. xi). By cultivating an ability to listen to the divine influence, the Christ in human consciousness, we are engaging a divine defense system. This active listening is an aspect of prayer. Such prayer can alert us to impending aggression and even help defuse evil impulses and hatred.

Waiting for a tragedy to occur before we start praying isn't good enough. We need to pray daily to be delivered from evil, as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer (see Matt. 6:13). Daily prayer is preventive prayer and keeps evil from succeeding. We may pray with Psalm 140, which begins, “Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man.” And ends, “Surely the righteous, shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.” Praying in this way, letting our whole heart be inspired by the spiritual meaning of these messages, can help us or someone we may never meet resist and avoid aggressive impulses.

Aggressive behavior is either intentional or unintentional. A term that gets to the real culprit of such actions is *animal magnetism*. “As named in Christian Science,

animal magnetism or hypnotism is the specific term for error, or mortal mind. It is the false belief that mind is in matter, and is both evil and good; that evil is as real as good and more powerful. This belief has not one quality of Truth. It is either ignorant or malicious” (*Science and Health*, p. 103). Unintentional aggression is a mesmeric state of thought where one is so caught up in selfishness that violence seems justified almost without thinking. Crimes of passion, spontaneous rage, violence due to panic, are examples of this.

How does one defend himself or herself against unintentional aggression? By praying daily to be delivered from evil and cultivating the spiritualized consciousness that warns of instability. There's an account in the Bible where King Saul's behavior is an example of spontaneous violence (see I Sam. 18:6-11). Saul became increasingly jealous of David. One evening at dinner, his brooding thoughts erupted, and he suddenly hurled a javelin at David, intending to kill him. David deftly avoided being hit and fled. Surely it was his communion with God, the divine Mind, that alerted him and enabled him to respond instantly.

When a second unprovoked attack occurred (see I Sam. 19:8-18), David left. He didn't continue to allow jealousy to attack him. David responded to ignorant violence by being watchful and vigilant. No false loyalty could lure David into staying in an unsafe environment.

Intentional aggression, on the other hand, is the intent to harm. Moral sense is turned off. Guilt or a moderating influence is banned.

How can one defend against this malicious mentality? In addition to daily prayer and alertness to the Christ, we defeat malice through vigorous counter efforts to know and do good. It is not enough merely to avoid malice. Good must be understood as more powerful and active than evil.

David proved this in dealing with Saul. As Saul's ignorant aggression grew into an all consuming malice, he hunted David for years, trying to kill him. David turned to God constantly and received guidance and protection. But David went further and at every opportunity actively did good to Saul. In fact, on one occasion, David's good actions so touched Saul that the Bible says: “He said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.... And Saul went home” (I Sam. 24:17, 22). Although the malicious impulse was not entirely quenched, still the effect of doing good defused the immediate danger.

David was not naive in his efforts to bless Saul. He was careful not to expose' himself to attack. Doing good was the direct result of his close communion with God, who is good. Man, as the image of God, naturally and necessarily expresses intelligence and goodness.

Christ Jesus taught his followers how to handle hatred and intentional aggression when he said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). Jesus followed his own counsel to do good to those that hated him when he preached to the officers sent to capture him. They were so touched by his teaching that they returned to the Pharisees without him (see John 7:32, 45, 46).

While working as a chaplain at a homeless agency, I was especially touched by one young man whose life had been transformed through the good done by others. He had been taught that no one mattered except him and his immediate family. He was also told that no one else would ever care about him or be there for him. This attitude translated into a callous disregard for anyone outside the close family circle. Juvenile delinquency rapidly escalated into random and violent crime until he was incarcerated.

While in prison he began to learn of God as Love and of the love of Christ. He saw others trying to do good toward him. This awakened him. His attitude toward strangers changed. The callous disregard for others disappeared, and so did the violent impulses. The example of individuals who were following Jesus' counsel to do good to people who behave in a hateful way transformed his life.

The Discoverer of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, wrote an article on how to deal spiritually with the phases of intentional and unintentional evil. She concludes: "Because this age is cursed with one rancorous and lurking foe to human weal, those who are the truest friends of mankind, and conscientious in their desire to do right and to live pure and Christian lives, should be more zealous to do good, more watchful and vigilant. Then they will be proportionately successful and bring out glorious results" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 213).

Our own daily prayer that all be delivered from evil, and our efforts to listen to and heed the voice - of Christ, will protect us and transform others. Everyone's prayer counts-including yours.