

I Hate the Tempter and His Charms

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

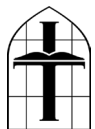
I hate the tempter and his charms,
I hate his flatt'ring breath;
The serpent takes a thousand forms
To cheat our souls to death.

He feeds our hopes with airy dreams,
Or kills with slavish fear;
And holds us still in wide extremes,
Presumption or despair.

Now he persuades, "How easy 'tis
To walk the road to heav'n;"
Anon he swells our sins, and cries,
"They cannot be forgiv'n."

Thus he supports his cruel throne
By mischief and deceit,
And drags the sons of Adam down
To darkness and the pit.

Almighty God, cut short his power,
Let him in darkness dwell
And that he vex the earth no more,
Confine him down to hell.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.
Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centalseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

June 6, 2025

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

The Power of Hate

Kevin T. Bauder

[This essay was originally published on March 15, 2013.]

Elvis Presley, that great sage and font of wisdom, is reputed to have said, "Animals don't hate, and we're supposed to be better than them." Presley was assuming that the experience of hate was beneath even the animals. As he saw it, if humans are above the animals, then hate should be even further beneath them. His words were meant as an indictment of human hatred: people who hate are engaging not only in something subhuman, but sub-brutish.

Presley's evaluation of hate reflects the widespread sensibility of early twenty-first century western civilization. Hate is considered to be the worst of attitudes, so bad that it has to be policed. Indeed, under certain circumstances it is criminal: hate crimes (which is another way of saying crimes committed in a supposed attitude of hate) are visited with greater penalties than exactly the same crimes committed in the absence of hate.

Many people view hate as a sign of weakness. They reason that hate grows out of fear, and that people only fear what is stronger than they are. To show hate is to show fear and, consequently, weakness.

People who hate are alternately objects of revulsion, of scorn, and of pity. To be accused of hate speech is to be placed so far outside the bounds of reasoned discourse that one's actual arguments or evidence will never be considered. To be labeled as a hate-monger is effectively to be excluded from civil society. The FBI even tracks organizations that it views as hate groups.

Ironically, those who are most vocal in their denunciation of hate are sometimes the worst haters. For evidence, one need look no further than any string of comments about Westboro Baptist Church, the Topeka congregation that has made itself infamous for its inflammatory protests against homosexuality. Martin Luther King, Jr. once commented that you cannot drive out hate with hate, but only with love. Few seem to be willing to apply his dictum to Westboro.

Hate is evidently an equal-opportunity sensibility. Wherever people may fall on the political spectrum or the economic scale, they discover within

themselves a capacity for hate. While they may hate different things, they all experience the inclination toward hate.

Not surprisingly. They are made in the image of God, and God certainly hates (Ps. 5:5; 11:5). The poet-king of Israel saw no contradiction in simultaneously affirming both perfect hatred and complete innocence (Ps. 139:21-24). Could it be that, under certain circumstances, and directed toward certain objects, hate is actually a virtue?

The answer to this question is provided by Hebrews 1:9. The verse occurs in a context that names three emblems of messianic rule. Messiah's throne signifies the eternal duration of His reign. His scepter symbolizes the justice of His kingdom. The anointing oil signifies the joy or gladness of His reign. After mentioning the scepter of justice, the writer quotes Psalm 45:7, "You have loved justice and hated lawlessness," adding the inference, "therefore God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions."

Jesus taught that those who hunger and thirst for justice are blessed, for they shall be filled. He is among those who hunger and thirst for justice. He loves justice, and precisely because He loves justice, He hates lawlessness. The two go together. One cannot love justice without hating its violation. Furthermore, because Jesus loves justice and hates lawlessness, God has promised to anoint Him with the oil of gladness to a superlative degree. He will be glad—overflowing with joy—when justice prevails.

Hate, under certain circumstances and directed toward certain objects, is a virtue. It is also a necessity. Hatred of the truly hateful is an indispensable mainspring of just action. Hatred of lawless deeds emboldens the timid and strengthens the weak. It makes the pursuers of justice intrepid and their pursuit relentless.

Near the end of *Perelandra*, C. S. Lewis alluded to the power of righteous hate. His protagonist Ransom, battling for the future of an entire world against the demonic Weston, has been fought to a standstill. Knowing that his strength is at an end, he wavers. Then, "an experience that perhaps no good man can ever have in our world came over him—a torrent of perfectly unmixed and lawful hatred." In the energy of this hate (a consuming hatred directed toward a perfectly hateful thing) Ransom finds the strength to attack the enemy, and in so doing, he experiences an unlooked for joy. "The joy," wrote Lewis, "came from finding at last what hatred was made for. . . . [H]e rejoiced in the perfect congruity between his emotion and its object."

Hate is unquestionably powerful, and anything that is powerful can prove dangerous. Furthermore, like all human sensibilities, hate is easily corrupted by sin, and like all human expressions, it can operate viciously. The same can be said of other powerful affections: love, for instance, or fear. The fact that they are dangerous means that they must be carefully nurtured and

directed rather than allowed to run wild. The fact that they can be corrupted or that they can turn vicious calls for examination and knowledge, not only of their objects, but of ourselves. Like love or fear, hate must be exercised with care, but it should no more be repudiated than they are.

It is always wrong to hate things that should be loved. It is equally wrong to love what should be hated. In fact, indifference to the hateful is the sign of appalling moral atrophy. Perhaps the time has come to restore a robust, biblical doctrine of hate.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
