



## SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS

by Jerry Lazarus, MA

### Get to Know the Real Enemy

I ATTENDED UNIVERSITY IN OREGON with a fellow Indian student, Viju. He often talked about “those terrible Pakistani Muslims.” Convinced they were bad people, he didn’t want to associate with them. As an Indian, Viju simply “knew” that Pakistanis were bad people. But Viju and his parents immigrated to the United States when he was just two. He didn’t grow up in India where anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim sentiments run high in certain fundamentalist Hindu circles, nor did Viju have any personal encounters with Pakistanis or Muslims in the States. So where did he get this prejudice? His visible animosity puzzled me.

I invited Viju to meet Fahim, a close friend of mine and a Pakistani Muslim. Initially, Viju resisted my invitation, but I reasoned with him to just give it a try. Honoring our friendship, he agreed to a visit. Fahim wasn’t aware of Viju’s prejudice when the three of us met for dinner and spent the evening conversing. Afterward, while Viju and I were walking back to our apartments, I asked him what he thought of Fahim. He looked at me and with a broad smile answered, “He is just like us!”

It’s good to get to know your enemy for it’s hard to hate up close.

C. S. Lewis wrote in his book *The Screwtape Letters* that a person might feel “encouraged to revenge himself by some vindictive feelings” toward his enemy. “But it is usually a sort of melodramatic or mythical hatred directed against imaginary scapegoats. He has never met these people in real life—they are lay figures modeled on what he gets from newspapers.” And I might add that this hatred is modeled from the general sentiment held in the larger society a person belongs to—be it family, friends, associates, or groups.


From the Cayce readings we know that some animosities may arise from past lives and appear as karmic patterns. Irrespective of their origin, however, if we reason from the perspective of the Christ ideal, from the teachings of Christ consciousness, such as “love your enemy” or “if your enemy is hungry, feed him,” then we are to turn the other cheek. (Matt. 5:43; Rom. 12:20) The question we need to ask ourselves is, What is the basis of my reasoning? If it’s founded in the spiritual ideal, it’s constructive, but if it’s “man-made,” it’s destructive. (262-11)

The Buddha said, “For never does hatred cease by hatred

here below: hatred ceases by love; this is an eternal law.” (Dhammapada 1:5) When we choose eternal law as the foundation of our thoughts, feelings of animosity and enmity are lost in the higher ground of love. The real enemies are the thoughts we have that deviate from the spiritual ideal. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “The only devils in the world are those running around in our own hearts. And that is where all our battles ought to be fought.”

Cayce said in a reading, “For if thou seest not in thine enemy that thou would worship in thine God, then thou hast not caught the light.” (689-1) And it was said of Jesus: “He healed even His enemies.” (262-88) None of this is meant to condone wrongs or to prevent us from speaking out about injustices, but rather to have us speak out with the power of the law of love, not with animosity. And that’s why Cayce said to hold an attitude of “loving indifference” to those who have animosity toward us, mistreat us, show contempt, or are difficult to interact with. To speak or act in contempt of another is to bring condemnation on ourselves. This, too, is a law.

Back in Oregon, I dated a woman from Myanmar (formerly Burma). She told me that if we were ever to marry, her parents would reject me because I’m an Indian—that they generally look down on Indians. It occurred to me that she mentioned many times that her parents were pious Buddhists, making frequent pilgrimages to Buddhist shrines. I wondered out loud to her how her parents could worship the Buddha while rejecting Indians in general. She was taken aback. Such prejudice and intolerance didn’t make any sense to her either.

In 1 John 4:20, we are told, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” In one of his readings, Cayce said, “For that ye worship as thy God is God of thine enemy also!” (257-181) And then there is Pogo, who summed this all up with, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” 



**Jerry Lazarus, MA**, is a spiritual teacher and counselor and the author of *Dreams: Listening to the Voice of God* and *Saint John Bosco - Dreams: The Guiding Voice*. He also leads workshops and small groups. Learn more about his work at [JerryLazarus.com](http://JerryLazarus.com).