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Hate Met With Love By Elise L. Moore

The organist of our church, Dr. Ralph Simpson, was the organist for Dexter Avenue Baptist Church while Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was minister there. Dr. Simpson was also one of Dr. King's friends. Events I read about as history, he lived as life. Like the night Dr. King's house was bombed.

It was a Monday night, January 30, 1956. It's impossible for me to imagine the outrage, the shock, the fear, that hit the black community that night. People poured out of their houses and out of Dexter Avenue Baptist where Dr. King was preaching at the time of the bombing. Several hundred people surrounded his house, many talking revenge. He appeared on the porch and spoke to the crowd.

From a historical perspective, this speech is not remembered the way his "I Have a Dream" speech is. Nor does it compare to the rhythmic cadence and brilliance of many of his sermons. But these words did not come from a script. They were not written in the silence of a church study or the tranquility of a winter evening. In the intensity of the moment, these words expressed what was in King's heart and mind. Perhaps he was talking to himself as well as to the crowd.

"Don't get panicky," King urged. "Don't do anything panicky. Don't get your weapons. If you have weapons, take them home. He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. Remember that is what Jesus said. We are not advocating violence. We want to love our enemies. I want you to love our enemies. Be good to them. This is what we must live by. We must meet hate with love."¹ The crowd dispersed. Ralph Simpson, along with several others, spent the night guarding King's house. No further violence occurred that evening.

This speech is deeply moving to me. Its simplicity and spontaneity illustrate a heartfelt conviction of the supremacy of love over hate, good over evil, God over men. It radiates grace, the divine influence on the heart reflected in the life. It reminds me of when Jesus was on the cross and prayed for his enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

¹ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 166

What courage it takes to respond to hatred with love. It takes more courage to love than it does to react in kind to animosity. Divine Love includes neither weakness nor submission. Divine Love is the ultimate authority and never gives in to another power. Love is an expression of the divine will. Hatred expresses human will. In the end, it is fear, hatred, and revenge that wind up surrendering, or submitting, to Love's authority

Divine Love and grace are spiritual power. Mary Baker Eddy notes this in her explanation of the Biblical angels Michael and Gabriel: “The Old Testament assigns to the angels, God's divine messages, different offices. Michael's characteristic is spiritual strength. He leads the hosts of heaven against the power of sin, Satan, and fights the holy wars. Gabriel has the more quiet task of imparting a sense of the ever-presence of ministering Love.... The Gabriel of His presence has no contests. To infinite, ever-present Love, all is Love, and there is no error, no sin, sickness, nor death” (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, pp. 566-567).

These angel messages are with us today. While the strength of Truth overcomes violent human will, the Gabriel of divine Love demonstrates the ultimate authority. They lead us to victory over oppression in all its aspects just as the supremacy of grace and Love led Dr. King to accomplish so much in overcoming years of injustice.

More victories await us. We must not become apathetic toward the needs of others for increasing freedom. There are those today who preach progress through methods of hatred and physical force. They define love as weakness. Loving one's neighbor is equated with submission, apathy and fear. Economic inequality and continuing racism are cited as proof that more than love is needed in order to end oppression.

Followers of Christ need to be alert to resist apathy, sensuality, and selfishness. We can utilize the power and grace of divine Love, God, to uncover and defeat prejudice, exclusivity, racial separation, and isolation. Then promoters of violence will have little audience, for the power of divine Love will be lived and demonstrated for all to witness.

We can resolve to actively love more. Through deeds as well as words, we can overcome eruptions of violence and hatred. Rev. Dr. King's words ring true now as they did more than thirty years ago: “I ... have a dream ... that one day this

nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed - we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”² Let us rise up, with the power of divine Love to work together faithfully to bless all mankind.

² James Melvin Washington, ed., *A testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 219