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MOSES
or
ISHMAEL

Jude 3-4



JOHN B. COWDEN
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MOSES OR ISHMAEL?

After attending the N. B. Hardeman meeting in progress at the Ryman Auditorium I overheard on the street the following statement by one of the attendants: "He is the Moses of today." While this is too high a rating for any mere man, it must be admitted that he does have some things in common with Moses. He is a legalist and a literalist of the Mosaic order, propounding the law that condemns and the letter that kills. Rom. 2 and 7. However, if he has an antetype in the Old Testament, it is, it seems to me, Ishmael instead of Moses. The angel prophesied of him before his birth, "I will greatly multiply thy seed, and it shall not be numbered for multitude . . . ; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand shall be against him; and he shall dwell ever against all his brethren." Ishmael with his descendants, the Ishmaelites, together with the Medianites, the descendants of Medan, another son of Abraham, with whom they became amalgamated and identified, Gen. 37:25-36, settled east of the Jordan and became the all-time enemy of Israel. There is a striking analogy between Ishmael and Bro. Hardeman. Bro. Hardeman has a large following here in Nashville, which, added to his following throughout the South and West, can not be numbered. Also his hand is against every other man religiously, and every other man's hand is against him, that is, if he has any respect for his own religious views. Bro. Hardeman and his brethren dwell overagainst all other Christian brethren and are the all-time, relentless enemies of all that differ with them on religion. In justification of this hostile attitude he declared that the Restoration Movement, now known as the Church of Christ, came into existence through fighting the sects by the Campbells, Stone, etc., which was a misrepresentation of these pioneers. They did not fight

the sects; they united with them, both the Presbyterians and the Baptists; but there is no question as to Bro. Hardeman's fighting them; and he strove in his sermon (Oct. 23rd) to arouse his brethren to greater zeal in this religious warfare. He accused some of them of becoming spineless pacifists; and he labored to arouse in them the fighting spirit.

Strange to say, the subject of this sermon was The Spirit of Christ from the text, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." What a subject for such a sermon! It seems that the very text and the thought of Jesus as the Prince of Peace would have choked and smothered the words in his throat. He began, however, with a true definition and exposition of the Spirit of Christ as the spirit of humility, sacrifice, passive resistance, submission, obedience, altruism, holiness, etc. I could hardly wait until the close of the sermon to give him my hand of approval and commendation; but I soon saw that the above was only a tempting bait to get me to poke out my neck for the decapitating remainder of the sermon. However, this sermon, as he stated, was largely for home consumption by his own brethren, whom he accused of becoming religiously soft and sweet-spirited; and he hoped thereby to arouse them to active, aggressive militancy. To do this he strove to show that, while Jesus was a lamb in personal matters, he was the Lion of Judah in his opposition to all religious error. I quote his words as reported in the press as follows: "In personal matters he was comparable to a lamb, the meekest and most submissive animal; but, when the doctrine which he preached was assailed, he struck back with tremendous force. He was the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah.' In personal matters his enemies had their way, but the enemies of truth quailed before the fierceness of his attack."

To prove the above, he cited many passages and acts of Jesus and his Apostles, all of which I propose to show, he wrested and perverted. To

quote and apply Scripture indiscriminately without showing a like situation and people, is culpable perversion. His first citation was the words of Stephen to his perjurers and murderers, who were also the betrayers and murderers of Christ. Bro. Hardman, do you know of any one today that is being persecuted and stoned to death on false testimony as was Stephen? If you do, then the severe language of Stephen is authorized against such liars and murderers but not against those that merely differ with you on religion. The slayers of Stephen took no offence at his long doctrinal sermon; but at the close of the sermon when he denounced them for their moral crimes, they gnashed on him with their teeth and stones. To lead people, as you did, to conclude that Stephen's bitter words are applicable to those in religious error is rank perversion of this Scripture.

Next, Bro. Hardeman introduced the words of Paul to Elymas in the Acts 13:1-12. The record of Luke states that Elymas was a "sorcerer and false prophet, and Paul denounced him as "full of all guile and villany, the son of the devil, the enemy of all righteousness, and a perverter of the right ways of the Lord." Bro. Hardeman, do you know of such a despicable character today? If so, then the words of Paul are applicable to such; but to presume as you did that the church and Christian truth are being attacked by such characters today is most unfair to those upon whom you would cast suspicion and a perversion of sacred Scripture. Perversion was one of the things charged against Elymas, which you seem not to realize. Denouncing in the words of Paul to Elymas those that differ with you on religion or hold religious error, is rank perversion of this Scripture.

Next, Paul's rebuke of Peter for his race discrimination against the Gentiles, Gal. 2:11-12, was introduced. Race equality was not what you were seeking to prove, Bro. Hardeman, but doctrinal militancy, fighting religious error. It is

unfair to Paul to apply his words on race discrimination to arouse your hearers to "withstand to the face" those that differ with you on religion. You could have made a true application of Paul's words then and there, because race discrimination was being practised in your presence by the segregation of negro Christians in separate seats. If you wished to follow Paul's example, why did you not "withstand your ushers to their face" for their race discrimination. There may be justification of segregation on the grounds of expediency in the social realm, or so it seems to me, but in religion there can be none according to the teaching of the New Testament, John 4:1-24; Col. 3:11. Why then did you call on your brethren to withstand those whom you regard in religious error, when you failed to withstand to their face those doing the very thing for which Paul rebuked Peter? To apply Paul's rebuke to any thing except for what he gave it, namely, race discrimination, is rank perversion.

Bro. Hardeman cited next Paul's words about Alexander the coppersmith without telling who and what he was. He was an Ephesian Jew, a blasphemer, and an enemy of Christianity according to New Testament records, who like Demetrius, the silversmith, was engaged in some profitable way on the shrines of Diana, and therefore in sympathy with the other craftsmen that opposed Paul. "He greatly withstood the words of Paul"; but Paul did not fight back. Instead he committed him to "the Lord who will render to him according to his works" and to Satan for punishment, which was the Apostolic practice toward the enemies of Christianity. Combativeness, advocated by Bro. Hardeman, was never used by the Apostles against the enemies of Christianity, because it was not in harmony with the Spirit of Christ, "who being reviled reviled not again."

Bro. Hardeman, having finished with Paul, appealed to Jesus for proof that the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of combativeness against re-

ligious error. He cited first Christ's cleansing of the Temple, notwithstanding the fact, that there is not a word here about religious error. Christ's whip was laid upon those that were guilty of sacrilege, covetousness, and robbery of worshippers. Those bankers and merchants knew that they were guilty and fled before his accusations of these crimes; but he charged no one with religious error. It is, therefore, the height of presumption to apply these severe acts of Jesus to those in religious error, or to conclude that one is hereby authorized to lash with stinging words the backs of those that differ with him in religion, as Bro. Hardeman sought to prove. He claimed that such religious fighting brought the Church of Christ into existence, and only a continuation of such fighting can perpetuate it. This may be true, but he will have to look elsewhere than Christ's example of cleansing the Temple for proof of the righteousness of such fighting.

Lastly, Bro. Hardeman appealed to Christ's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matt. 23 to prove that doctrinal combativeness is according to the Spirit of Christ, or that Christ is the fierce fighting Lion of Judah toward religious error. There is not a word in this chapter against false teaching or religious error. In fact, Jesus commended the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees, vs. 2-3, but condemned them for their corrupt works such as imposition of burdens upon the helpless, vainglory, self-exaltation, religious obstruction, proselyting, hypocrisy, swearing, over-emphasis of the non-essential and under-emphasis of the essential, moral uncleanness, persecution of God's prophets, etc., vs. 4-36. Every act for which he condemned them was an immoral act of the deepest dye. Bro. Hardeman, do you know of any today that are guilty of any or all of these crimes for which Jesus denounced the Scribes and Pharisees? If so, who are they? You insinuated that the leading denominations of today are thus guilty; but you were not frank and brave enough to name them as did Christ.

Surely, you, the arch-destroyer of religious error and denominationalism today, are not afraid to follow in the steps of Christ, whose spirit of combativeness you profess to have. In view of your failure to name these denominations your silence must be taken as a blanket charge against all.

While I hold no brief for any denomination, not even the one to which I belong, the Christian Church, much less the one to which Bro. Hardeman belongs, the Church of Christ; however, I would defend any of them of the above crimes, of which Bro. Hardeman insinuated they are guilty. I would not say that they are entirely guiltless of Phariseeism. Even Bro. Hardeman's denomination, the Church of Christ, is not entirely free. For instance, they objectively over-emphasize the mint, anise, and cummin of today, instrumental music, church organizations, Bible colleges, Sunday schools, Sunday school literature, premilennism, etc., with little to say about faith, justice and mercy. Furthermore, even Bro. Hardeman could not claim that the Church of Christ is free of moral uncleanness, when some of his preaching brethren stand publicly condemned and confessed. He could have pointed out some of them Sunday; but his zeal as a moral reformer did not carry him this far. In fact, he was not trying to prove himself to be a moral reformer but a doctrinal reformer; but he appealed to the wrong example in the life of Christ, where Jesus appears as a moral reformer with nothing about doctrine; and he thereby perverted sacred Scripture and misrepresented Christ. Jesus was the Lion of Judah in his attitude to all moral evil but not to religious error, as Bro. Hardeman claims. If Bro. Hardeman would go forth as a moral crusader, he would have back of him the example of Christ but not as a doctrinal crusader against religious error.

However, Jesus had something to say about doctrine; but Bro. Hardeman avoided these pass-

ages, or at least was silent on them, because Jesus revealed himself charitable and tolerant toward religious error. Even in the 23rd chapter of Matt., where he denounced the Scribes and Pharisees for their moral turpitude, at the close when he thought of the deluded Jewish people as a whole, his heart overflowed in grief for them. They had been well-taught; but the moral depravity of their leaders had left their house desolate; and he wept over his misguided brethren, vs. 37-39. He is not seen here as a voracious lion but as a sorrowful pleader. John also recorded his words and attitude toward doctrine and religious error as follows: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself," John 7:16-17. He does not appear here as a destroying lion as Bro. Hardeman would lead all to believe. He did not say, unless you accept my teaching, I will fight you to a finish and destroy your religious views and convictions; but on the contrary he was tolerant and reasonable, appealing to their goodwill, sincerity, and judgment. Jesus was no dogmatist such as Bro. Hardeman. The Spirit of Christ, as clearly revealed in the above, is not the spirit of the doctrinal dogmatist but of the patient, tolerant teacher. Christ is so revealed also in his conversation with Nicodemus. Although Nicodemus was a Pharisee, the conversation contains not a word of harsh criticism, but every word is amiable and reasonable. Jesus peacefully led Nicodemus into the essential nature and mystery of Christianity, and closed with his immortal words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world not to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him." That is, the essential thing in Christ's teaching and Gospel is love, not doctrine; and his mission in the world was to save, and not judge and condemn. To Bro.

Hardeman, his mission in the world was to judge and condemn those in religious error and to fight as a lion all differing religionists; and Bro. Hardeman appears to regard himself as his chief modern Apostle to this end. He also rebuked his brethren for becoming soft and sweet-spirited on things doctrinal. Evidently, they had been reading John 3:1-18 and 7:16-17, and found out the true Spirit of Christ on things doctrinal. Bro. Hardeman's attitude toward those that differ with him on religion was anything but sweet-spirited. He neither asked nor gave any quarters. With him it is a fight to the finish, to the extinction of all that differ with him. He is the true successor to Ishmael. Believing as he does that this is the Spirit of Christ, he is consistent in his attitudes, words, and work; but as we have conclusively shown, combativeness of religious error is not the Spirit of Christ. We admire his zeal, but it is "zeal without knowledge" of the true Spirit of Christ.

But Bro. Hardeman's zeal for his reputation and prowess as a religious debater and fighter carried him too far. It led him to misrepresent facts. In his allusion to his debate with Bro. Boswell on instrumental music in the church he stated that at the close of the debate the question, where will the next debate be held?, was asked but never to this day answered, thereby casting discredit upon the Christian Church. I was on the committee that arranged this debate and others and know whereof I speak. This question was answered. The next debate was held at Shelbyville, and the next at Columbia; and at the close of this debate, the same question was asked, and some one arose and suggested that we take the towns as we come to them and hold the next debate at Franklin. Bro. F. W. Smith, the minister of the Church of Christ there, promptly arose and refused to allow the debate to be brought there. So it was the Church of Christ, Bro. Hardeman, that stopped these debates. The two committees, however, afterwards, met in Nashville to arrange a plan whereby the debates

could be continued; but the Church of Christ committee still insisted that the debate be held only in towns where both churches had congregations; and the Christian Church committee insisted that it be held in all towns where either Church had a congregation. This limitation of the debates by the Church of Christ stopped the debates on this question. Misrepresentation of these facts, every one knows, is not the Spirit of Christ.

The Christian Church was forced by humiliating challenges from the Church of Christ into these debates contrary to their faith and practice, believing that bitter religious debates are contrary to the Spirit of Christ; and we still so believe and practise. We stand opposed to all combative, antagonistic propaganda of religious doctrine. This is the chief difference between the Christian Church and the Church of Christ. The difference involves the Spirit of Christ, without which one can not be a Christian, so it is, therefore, an essential difference. All the other differences are over "mint, anise, and cummin," which, if both had the Spirit of Christ, could be settled as they have frequently been. Bro. Hardeman declared in his sermons that many in the Church of Christ are leaning toward more tolerant and sweet-spirited attitudes; and he severely rebuked them for becoming soft and spineless. He criticized his preaching brethren for their mealy-mouthed utterances in the pulpit and their soft-peddling over the radio. Bro. Hardeman, they have found out the true Spirit of Christ; and all your sarcasm and denunciation can not drive them back into their narrow bitterness and exclusiveness. Instead you had better join in with them in this more tolerant, liberal, and Christ-like attitude toward those that differ with you on religion. It is not only the Spirit of Christ but it is the spirit of a religious gentleman.

Accordingly, Bro. Hardeman disfellowships all the followers of Christ that do not agree with

him. Contrary to his views and desires, I call him "Bro. Hardeman," because I so regard him, notwithstanding the fact, that he cut the Gordian knot of fellowship and fraternity with me by returning the contribution of Vine St. Church to the expenses of his first Auditorium meeting, saying that we are a separate distinct people and can have no fellowship nor fraternity. Again in this he departed from the Spirit of Christ, who promised to fellowship all that meet in his name, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Jesus does not say that all that meet in his name are saved or are right in all religious respects; but he promised to meet with all such, to fellowship them. In your sermon, 3:00 P.M. the 30th, you declared that many religious groups merely "suppose" that Jesus is with them, thereby casting doubt upon the reality of Christ's presence with them. If they meet in the name of Christ, and his words are true, there is no supposition about it. They know it. In your exclusiveness, inferred from your far-fetched analogy on example of Jesus in the Temple at the age of twelve, you had Jesus breaking fellowship with his own mother. This is religious separateness gone to seed. Accordingly, I would not be surprised at your breaking fellowship with your own family; and you will soon be found standing alone in your cold, strict orthodoxy and dogmatism. Even now you declared that consistency on your part forced you dis-fellowship your boyhood friend, who stood high in another Christian group, because he had not been baptized and therefore not a Christian. But Jesus did not say, "Where two or three that have been baptized and are Christians are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst"; but he promised to fellowship all that meet in his name. It is evident, therefore, that Jesus recognizes this follower of his, whether you do or not. But you refuse to recognize also many that have been baptized, in fact, like John, all that "follow not

with us". Mark 9:38-39; but Jesus rebuked John for his sectarian narrowness and exclusiveness. It is evident from this that the fellowship of Christ includes all that work and worship in his name. Bro. Hardeman like John refuses to fellowship those that "follow not us," him and his religious group. Evidently, however, many of Bro. Hardeman's brethren, especially laymen and women, have read the above passages, because they are leaning toward a broader fellowship, for which Bro. Hardeman rebuked them. Many have said to me that they do not hold with their leaders in this bitterness and militantcy against other groups of Christians. A broken fellowship and a divided brotherhood is the inevitable result of the combative spirit, which is the pity of it all. This is written to show that such is not the Spirit of Christ, but his Spirit is irenic and tolerant toward religious error; and we plead for the same spirit in our differences today.

Furthermore, if Paul could write a Christian letter to "all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours," Bro. Hardeman, why can you not fellowship the same today. Are you disposed to contradict Paul in saying "their Lord and ours?" Do you deny that Jesus is their Lord and affirm that he is "ours" alone? If Jesus Christ and Paul could fellowship "all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," why can not you and your brethren do the same? In so doing, you do not necessarily approve and endorse all that they teach and practise. If this were true, you could not fellowship any one, because you severely criticized your own brethren for differing with you in your attitude toward religious error.

In conclusion, it would be a glad, victorious day for the church, if all would say with Jesus, "One is your Master, all ye are brethren." He said this in Matt. 23; but Bro. Hardman purposely overlooked this passage in his efforts to prove the combativeness of Christ toward religious error. If Jesus could fraternize all his followers, why

can not his followers do the same? Again hear the voice of Jesus in his prophecy of a united church, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and they shall become one flock, one shepherd." The voice and Spirit of Christ are still calling all to come into this one fold of Christian fellowship and fraternity; and this is written and published that more may hear his voice and manifest his Spirit.

Christ's longest and most earnest prayer was for the unity of his disciples, "that they all may be one". If Bro. Hardeman and all other preachers would cease their religious warfare and endeavor instead to lead their hearers into this one universal flock of Christ instead of trying to maintain and propagate their little sectarian folds separate and distinct from all others, the prayer of Christ would soon be answered. The Campbells' and Stone's passionate desire for a united church (not their fighting religious error as claimed by Bro. Hardeman) brought the Church of Christ into existence, which, however, has been diverted by Bro. Hardeman and others from its high and holy mission into a narrow sectarian denomination, the strictest sect of all. What a sad, contradictory end for a high and holy cause. However, many other churches today have espoused the cause of unity; and many have already united. Many even in the Church of Christ are leaning toward a more tolerant spirit and a broader fellowship, whom Bro. Hardeman repeatedly rebuked in his sermons, all of which gives hope and promise of a united church, for which Jesus prayed and Paul worked.

From—
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