

Volume 31
January 1991
NUMBER 1

Published monthly by
**Fultondale Church of
Christ Meeting at**
2005 Elkwood Drive,
Fultondale, AL 35068

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Address

**POSTMASTER AND
READERS :** Send all
correspondence and
forms to **The Reflector**,
3004 Brakefield Drive,
Fultondale, AL 35068

Services

Sundays:
Classes 9:45 a.m.
Worship 10:45 a.m.
Worship 6:00 p.m.
Wednesdays:
Class 10:00 a.m.
Classes 7:30 p.m.

Meeting

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May 5-10, 1991

USPS 606-140
Second Class Postage Paid
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FROM FULTONDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST...

The Reflector

Satan Playing Into God's Hand

By EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.

God has the marvelous ability to turn Satan's more sinister schemes and diabolical deeds into glorious victories. Because of this we can "rejoice in hope", be "patient in tribulation" and "count it all joy when (we) fall into various trials". (Rom. 12:12; Jas. 1:2).

While we cannot "rejoice in iniquity" of others (1 Cor. 13:6) nor advocate their doing "evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8), we can be happy that we are the children of the living God who can bring good out of evil and triumph out of tribulation. He not only thwarts the designs of evil men, He often makes them serve His purposes — the ultimate of which is the bringing of many sons unto glory. (cf. Heb. 2:10).

We cannot allow ourselves to be overcome by evil or in any way partake of other men's sins without reaping the awful harvest of sowing to the flesh. Yet, as God's children and with His help, we can benefit from even the workings of Satan in the world through evil men. I believe that this is all a part of God's justice. He not only will punish eternally Satan and those who do his bidding, in the meantime, he heaps insult upon injury by turning their efforts into avenues of progress for the faithful — the very thing Satan is trying so hard to avoid.

Judas, the Jews, nor the Roman soldiers intended to do the Lord any favors by their treatment of Him just prior to and during his crucifixion. They were held accountable before God for their sin (cf. Acts 2:36-38). Yet, the very thing they did made it possible for them and the rest the world to be saved — if they would accept the terms of pardon. Though they did not intend it so, they carried out the "determinate counsel and

foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

God needed to discipline and punish a hypocritical nation — Israel. The king of Assyria was a arrogant and ruthless leader who had no intention of furthering the cause of Jehovah. (Read Isaiah 10:5-7). As to his purpose, the Lord said: "Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations." In spite of his evil purposes, God used him as a rod of His anger against Israel. God would later punish him and his nation for their evil (v. 12).

Given the sin in the world, there are certain things that must be. These are things that Christians must avoid like a plague. They can neither participate in nor encourage them. Yet, God has a way of turning these evils in others, sometimes directed against Christians, into an advantage for us.

The church at Jerusalem was severely persecuted. Saul of Tarsus was a ring-leader in making havoc of that church by imprisoning men and women (Acts 8:3). The church was scattered. Even in this, God was able to make it work to His advantage. Verse 4 begins with, "Therefore", indicating what followed was a direct result of the persecution described in verse 3. "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word." The Lord had already announced his plan for the order of the gospel's spread: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in *Jerusalem*, and in all *Judea and Samaria*, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Until now the gospel had been pretty much confined to Jerusalem, but as a result of this persecution, it spreads into "the regions of Judea and Samaria" (v. 1). What was intended by Satan's

agents, the persecutors, for the destruction of this Way turned out to the fulfilling of the Lord's purpose of spreading the gospel to Judea and Samaria and shortly after to regions far beyond. Once again Satan's designs backfired.

Saul was soon converted and became as zealous in preaching Christ as he had been in persecuting Him. He became the persecuted rather than the persecutor. He was imprisoned for the gospel's sake. While a prisoner, he wrote to the brethren at Philippi. "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel," (Phil 1:12).

Church problems that result in factions is a terrible thing. The Bible is clear as what must be done with a factious person. He is to be dealt with decisively. After proper admonition, without repentance on his part, the factious man is to be marked, rejected, avoided. (Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10). When factions come to a church good brethren should be concerned and deal with it as the Bible teaches. However, faithful brethren need to realize that the Lord can even use factions to His advantage. Read what Paul said about it, as translated in four major versions:

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which

are approved may be made manifest among you. (KJV)

No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. (NIV)

For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. (NKJ)

For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you. (ASV)

The Lord's people have problems, both locally and brotherhood wide. There are factions among us. There have always been such problems among Christians — even much of the New Testament is devoted to dealing with them. If one does not like to read about difference between brethren and church problems, he had best not read much in Paul's epistles.

When doctrinal issues arise, old allies for truth sometimes come down on different sides of the fence. The discussion of these issues often brings out the worst (and sometimes the best) in brethren's treatment of each other. Often ungodly attitudes and other things only remotely connected with the real central issue causes more problems and splintering than the basic issue itself. We can whine and

wring our hands about "all this confusion among brethren", or we can study our Bibles and take up each issue as it arises with a determination to stand upon what the Bible teaches on the subject at hand and to maintain a scriptural attitude toward God and all persons involved in the controversy. If we can determine who is causing the problem — either by false doctrine, forced personal judgments or ungodly attitudes. — we should deal firmly and scripturally with them.

During it all we need to be reminded that God can even turn the Devil's work of producing such factions among the people of God to His advantage. It can separate the men from the boys. It can prune the church of those hindrances who are not really committed to doing what is right. It can strengthen those dedicated to truth by goading them into more study and devotion.

Heresies, factions or differences is no reason for God's people to be overly discouraged. It is a time to arise to the occasion and realize that even this can turn out to the furtherance of the gospel.

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

Is Saddam Hussein The Antichrist?

By JAMES L. ZACHARY
From VOICE OF WEST END



Adolf Hitler, Charles Manson, John F. Kennedy, Mikhail Gorbachev, Saddam Hussein, and a host of others throughout history have been called *The Antichrist*. Men have written books, Hollywood has made movies, and preachers have preached sermons about *The Antichrist*. Before we go further, let me flatly

state, the Bible says absolutely nothing about a man called **The Antichrist**.

There are four passages which speak of antichrists, an antichrist, but never *The Antichrist*. In I John 2:18 John says at the "last time" there are to be antichrists, but he identifies the era of which he is speaking by saying, "even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." Clearly the expression, "last time" cannot refer to the end of time because John said, it is "now" and that was about 2,000 years ago! The writer of Hebrews said that ever since the first century we have been living in the "last days" (Hebrews 1:1,2). The expression *last days* or *last time*, does not refer to the

end of time, but rather the last or final dispensation of time, that is, the gospel age (John 1:17).

Now what is an antichrist? According to I John 2:22, it is anyone who "denieth that Jesus is the Christ" (verse 22). This would include first century gnostics, atheists of our generation and all infidels between. No singular world figure will arise and be called *The Antichrist*. John says, "every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God and this is that spirit of antichrist (I John 4:3). There are many deceivers in the world who confess not that Jesus is the Christ. They are called antichrists (II John 7). The word literally means "against Christ." We know men have been against Christ since He came in the flesh and will continue to be against Him even until the end of time. They are all antichrists.

The idea that some charismatic figure will arise, deceive the whole world, come to world-wide dominance and be called *The Antichrist* is nothing other than contemporary mythology resulting from poor Bible exegesis.

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Luke 14:15-33

Introduction:

- A. There are a great variety of attitudes toward being a faithful disciple.
 - 1. If and when convenient. (cf. vs. 18-20). - If I can do my thing first. (Mt. 6:33). Takes faith.
 - 2. If and when coerced. (cf. 2 Cor. 8:12). - When begged or threatened.
 - 3. If and when costless. (vs. 26-28). - I don't have to give up to much.
- B. There are great lengths to which one must go to be a "disciple indeed".

Discussion:

- I. **One must be willing to go IN THE WAY.** (Cf. Acts 24:12).
 - A. It is the Scriptural way. (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 4:6-asv).
 - B. It is the Exalted way. (Eph. 1:3).
 - C. It is the Profitable way. (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Tim. 4:8).
 - D. It is the Universal way. (Acts 10:34,35; Mk. 16:16; 1 Cor. 4:17).
- II. **One must be willing to go ALL THE WAY.** (Rev. 2:10; 3:15,16; Mt. 6:33).
 - A. In our commitment (Luke 14:33; Mt. 22:37; Job 13:15).
 - B. In our obedience. (cf. King Saul -1 Kings 15:22; Matt. 28:18-20)
 - C. In our teaching. (Acts 20:20,27).
 - D. In our service. (John 13:14; Gal. 6:10).
- III. **One must be willing to go OUT OF HIS WAY.** (Luke 14:17-20).
 - A. To obey the gospel. (Acts 24:25; 16:33).
 - B. To worship the Lord. (Acts 20:6-7,16).
 - C. To learn and grow. (Acts 17:11).
 - D. To help the Cause of Christ. (1 Cor. 9:19-23).
 - E. To show compassion. (cf. Jas 2:13).
 - 1. To each other - give benefit of doubt. (Mt. 7:1).
 - 2. To afflicted. (Jas. 1:27; Matt. 25:31-46).
 - 3. To weaker brethren (1 Cor. 8:11-13; Rom. 5:1-2).
 - 4. To those overburdened with work and responsibility. (cf. Moses, Apostles).

Conclusion:

- A. How far are you willing to go to serve the Lord?
- B. How much are you willing for discipleship to cost you?
- C. How much out of your way are willing to go to serve?
- D. How long to do you plan to put off getting right with God?

GOSSIP

By CLARENCE R. JOHNSON
In EXTON EXHORTER

King Solomon, the sage of Israel wrote, "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body" (Proverbs 18:6-8). And again, "A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends" (Proverbs 16:28).

This truth has been recognized by many before and after Solomon. Friendships and family ties have been sacrificed at the altar of gossip. Even whole nations have been brought low by slander.

Each of us, at one time or another, has been the object of another's gossip. We know all too well the power of the tongue to hurt and destroy. Perhaps the gossip needs to be reminded that "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Perhaps that is why the wise man said, "whoever speaks slander is a fool" (Prov. 10:18). Jesus Himself admonished, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them ..." (Matthew 7:12).

A good rule to follow when tempted to repeat a juicy morsel of gossip might be to ask one's self a few pertinent questions: (1) do I know this to

be a fact, (2) would I be willing to put it in writing and sign my name to it, and (3) will those to whom I tell it be made better by this knowledge? If we cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, let us refrain from the temptation to "tell all." If someone approaches you with a bit of slander, ask him to submit to this same three question test. If he "flunks out" consider the source of that which you have heard, and pour cold water on the fire of contention.

"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out: and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body" (Proverbs 26:20-22).

Take The Fifth, Preacher

By JAMES W. ADAMS

From THE APOSTOLIC MESSENGER

Television has treated the American public to an interesting spectacle. We have seen men in high office, testifying before congress, time after time claim their rights under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution saying, "I refuse to answer on the ground that it might tend to incriminate me." Some years ago, I read of a criminal on trial for his life in one of courts who said in answer to the prosecutor's question, "I refuse to answer on the ground that it might tend to *eliminate* me."

I came up as a preacher during the latter part of the Great Depression. Believe me when I say that places to preacher were difficult to come by, especially if you were a beginner. The questions I have been asked when being interviewed by congregations would fill a large volume of "believe-it-or-nots." However, I do not recall of ever having been asked for a *resume*. But that was when churches had elders for overseers instead of men whose only qualification as elders is their success in business or the profession of a college degree.

Quite often, I see ads in the subscription journals of the brethren from churches, many in remote places and so small they cannot even support their own preachers, seeking preachers to work with them. Many times they say, "Please submit a resume." I have heard of other churches, not so remote or small who can pay their preachers, sending men in whom they are interested as preacher prospects for their local work printed resumes with fill-in blanks to be submitted to them. I have heard of others who invite all the men of the congregation into a meeting

with a prospective "candidate for the pulpit," put the preacher on the witness stand, and allow any man present who so desires to ask him any "fool" question that may pop into his half-empty head about any subject he may choose. I have long had a prepared speech ready for such an occasion, but I have never had to deliver it. Fortunately, the elders of the churches

on the ground that it might tend to *eliminate* me." I promise solemnly: eliminate you it will, but you will have the consolation of having preserved your dignity, of not having allowed yourself to be relegated to the role of a hireling as a preacher, and of certain knowledge that you are better off for not being selected to work with such a body of people. Brethren, gospel preachers do not "hire-out." They labor in the gospel with brethren and churches and are justly supported by those who love the Lord among whom they labor. How, in the name of Reason and Right can churches expect preachers not to be mercenaries when they do everything in their power to make them so?

With fifty-six years of preaching experience among the churches who profess to be "of Christ," I suggest to all beginning preachers, in the words of Paul to Timothy: "Preach the word. Be instant in season, out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" ... "Give diligence to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" ... "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things you have heard among many witnesses, commit to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" ... "Keep thyself pure" (2 Tim. 4:1,2; 2:15; 2:1,2; 1 Tim. 5:22). If you do this you will be "well reported of by the brethren" (Acts 16:2) and you will not have to fill-out insane resumes to have palaces of worth where you can "labor in word and doctrine" among the brethren and among the lost in "fields white unto harvest" (Jno. 4:35).



with whom I have had contact had too much sense thus to proceed in selecting a preacher to labor with them.

Brother preacher, if you have the misfortune to encounter one of these "we require a resume" situations, printed forms and all, I would suggest that you take the course the criminal did whom I have mentioned in this article. With heavy felt-point, write in letters bold across the printed resume, "I claim my rights under the preacher's fifth and refuse to answer