

and ceremonies of cults which are devoid of the basic principles of true religion.

To every one of you Peter is saying, "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." All the above efforts are nothing more than a rebellion against God as He has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ. Try these things if you will. But some day, maybe soon, you will look upon Him whom your sins have crucified. What will you say then? God will not see your knowledge, virtues, or faith-

ful observance of rites and ceremonies which are outside of Christ. He will see only the blood of Jesus which alone can cover your sins. Without it you will hear only the fateful words of Luke 13:27, "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

While there is still time and opportunity, I beg you to turn in faith to Jesus. Trust in Him this very second as your Saviour. For apart from Him there is no salvation!

THE ANSWER TO INTIMIDATION

April 19, 1959

Scripture: Acts 5:25-32

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men"—Acts 5:29

Despite the opposition of the Sanhedrin, Jerusalem was filled with Christian teaching. Finally, all the apostles were arrested and brought before the Jewish rulers. The high priest charged, "Did we not straitly command that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." To which the apostles replied, "We ought to (must) obey God rather than men." This was their answer to intimidation.

The Christian Gospel was a threat to the Sanhedrin, but they were also a threat to the Christian message. The Sanhedrin was composed of Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees were rationalists. They accepted only the first five books of the Bible as inspired scripture, rejecting all else which did not fit their preconceived views in religion. They denied the existence of angels, the reality of miracles and the resurrection. In short, they were opposed to a spiritual concept

of religion. The Pharisees, on the other hand, believed all these and accepted all of the Old Testament as God's Word. However, they went to seed in the observance of rites and ceremonies in the expression of their religion. Thus, they lost all concept of the vital meaning of religion. So actually the formidable forces which opposed these early Christians were rationalism and ritualism.

It is in this light that this incident has value for our present day. For in rationalism and ritualism New Testament Christianity meets its strongest test. This is true in regard to personal salvation. Under the guise of Christian witness rationalism tells you to accept only that portion of the Bible which adapts itself to an intellectual and humanistic approach to religion. Its emphasis is on self-righteousness and social reform in meeting the deepest needs of men. Ritualism, on the other hand, insists that it accepts all of the Bible while seeking to combine Old Testament form with New Testament truth. Thus it empties the Gospel of its vital reality and deprives the seeking soul of a personal experience with Jesus Christ.

This same effect is seen in the broader aspect of rationalism's and ritualism's contrast with the approach of New Testament Christianity to the work of evangelism. The Sanhedrin demonstrated its scorn for the apostle's message by refraining from the very mention of Jesus, speaking of Him as "this name" and this man." Their modern counterparts do the same as they replace the living Christ with their deification of man and his powers on the one hand, and their emphasis upon ritualism rather than upon a vital spiritual experience on the other.

But consider the apostles answer, and ours, to both of these forces. "We must obey God rather than men." Notice that in answer to both rationalism and ritualism they preached Jesus whom they had crucified and whom God had raised from the dead. The heart of their message was that although rationalism and ritualism had denied Jesus, God had exalted Him, making Him both *Prince* and *Saviour*. Jesus, then, is not only a Saviour to be accepted, but a Prince to be obeyed. Hence "we must obey God rather than men."

In this very fact we discover the difference between first century Christianity and its modern counterpart. Then as now great multitudes gathered to worship God. But whereas they were a mighty power challenging rulers and religions bereft of spiritual power, we have become as one expressed it, "Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null." The difference may be seen in the simple statement "We must obey God rather than men."

Many years ago Dr. G. Campbell Morgan defined the Sanhedrin's method of fighting New Testament Christianity as opposition, patronage, and compromise. These are the foes of New Testament Christianity today.

First, they opposed them with the threat of bodily harm, even death. Such are comparatively isolated incidents today. But they are among us. From Italy, Spain, South America, and Communist dominated areas come reports of threats, arrests, church closings, and even bodily harm which hang over our Christian brethren. But the answer in every case is "We must obey God rather than men."

THE BAPTIST HOUR STATION CHANGES

(Sunday, Unless Specified)

Where times are not listed please consult your local newspaper for the listing of The Baptist Hour.

NEW STATIONS

Calexico, Calif.	KICO	1490 kc	5:30 p.m.
Fayetteville, Tenn.	WEKR	1240 kc	(See local listing)
Danville, Va.	WILA	1580 kc	8:30 a.m.

CANCELLATIONS

Gadsden, Ala.	WGAD
Port St. Joe, Fla.	WJOE
Millen, Ga.	WGSR
Louisville, Ky.	WMTM
Salisbury, Md.	WICO
Indianola, Miss.	WNLA
Picagune, Miss.	WRJW
Hickory, N. C.	WHKY
Dundee, N. Y.	WFLR
Bend, Ore.	KBND

Physical opposition to Christ's cause has never succeeded. Where the fires of persecution have burned the hottest, Christian enthusiasm has been the strongest. Someone said of the Baptists, "If you fawn upon them they will dry up and die; if you oppose them they will take the country." The same can be said of any other group committed to the cause of Christ. When Christianity has been persecuted it has been pure, strong, and adventurous for her Lord. One could almost pray that God would again allow us to be purged through persecution. Then doubtless the faithful would answer, "We must obey God rather than men."

Second, the Sanhedrin proposed patronage. While not specifically stated, all through these pages of early Christianity runs the idea that all will be well if you will simply join us rather than oppose us. Instead of preaching the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, join with us in our rationalistic and ritualistic expressions of religion. In 325 A. D. the world hailed as a Christian victory the act of Constantine in declaring Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. But history records it as the greatest tragedy in Christian experience. For it meant the union of Church and State, whereby Christianity came under the patronage of the State. The Dark Ages in Europe are a direct outgrowth of this. The overrunning of the land of our Lord by the followers of Mohammed was made possible for a weakened Christian spirit and witness. Christianity around the world has not recovered from it to this very hour.

For when Christianity became popular it became powerless. Hordes of pagan people rushed into its folds through ritual void of a regenerating experience. Subsequent generations became members of the church as they became citizens of the state, by the accident of physical birth rather than through the power of the new-birth. The result is that vast areas of the earth are little more than baptized paganism. In one European country

ninety-nine percent of the population are members of the state church, while only two or three percent ever darken the doors of a church. The fact that in America half of the church members never attend church and only twelve percent are vitally active speaks of the same vicious practice. In the first century only those who gave evidence of faith in Jesus as their Saviour were baptized. No wonder that they said, "We must obey God rather than men."

Third, the Sanhedrin proposed a compromise of the Christian message. In Acts 4:18 we read, "And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Notice that they did not forbid them to preach and teach, but forbade them to do so in the name of Jesus. In short, compromise your message to fit the mood of the times and our concept of religion. The apostles' answer was all the more to preach the gospel with courage and conviction. "We must obey God rather than men."

Compromise is the greatest threat to vital Christianity today. Our cultured age frowns upon physical persecution. The pressures of the nuclear age have shown the inadequacy of rationalism and ritualism to meet the deepest needs of men. The danger to the Christian religion today comes from the suggestion of the rationalists and ritualists who say, "Let us get together on the basis of compromise. Let us discard our differences on incidentals and major on our agreements." A new system of theology has emerged wherein they endeavor to adapt the language of New Testament Christianity to their rational and ceremonial ideas, leaving the language void of meaning. The most profane word in their vocabulary is "intolerance."

But what are the "incidentals" of which they speak? The infallibility of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus, the miracles, the blood atonement, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the person and power of the Holy Spirit, and

the autonomy of the local church. These are the very things for which the apostles were contending as they stood before the Sanhedrin! These were the elements of the Gospel to which Paul referred in Galatians 1:8-10, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. . . . For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The golden word of first century Christians was "intolerance," intolerance of error, of compromising the gospel of Christ for the approval of men. Their answer was ever "We must obey God rather than men."

Every word in this verse needs emphasis today. To persecution you should reply, "We must obey *God*." To patronage you should say "*We* must obey God." To compromise you should declare, "*We must obey God*." To every suggestion that would weaken our preaching of the whole Gospel you should avow, "*We must obey God*." (author's italics).

Notice that this affirmation is our greatest defense against every kind of intimidation. When the Sanhedrin considered killing the apostles, Gamaliel, one of their number, counseled, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38ff).

Time will tell. By their fruits ye shall know them. Repeatedly throughout history rationalism and ritualism have led the world into the blind alley of confusion and failure. Each time God has raised up men to proclaim the New Testament Gospel, thereby leading men back into paths of certainty. The world today is in another blind alley. We long for some sure word of God. It will not come from halls of state or from the reason or ritual of men. It will be heard only in the fearless preaching of the New Testament Gospel of the crucified, raised, and living Son of God. Never has there been an hour when we need more to say, "We must obey God rather than men."

When we do, our message will be empowered by the Holy Spirit. The apostles said, "We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost (Spirit), whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). And what are witnesses? They are not merely talkers but *martyrs*. A martyr is a witness not only with his lips but with his life also. This is what Paul meant in Galatians 6:17 when he replied to those who opposed his Gospel. "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks (brand marks) of the Lord Jesus."

When you become such a witness, you will be used of the Holy Spirit. He is God's power working through His people and His Gospel. "We are his witnesses . . . and so is the Holy Spirit." Thus will New Testament Christianity move forward from victory unto victory!

THE ANSWER TO THE UNANSWERABLE

April 26, 1959

Scripture: Acts 7:54-60

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"—Acts 7:59.

Stephen was not an apostle but a deacon. However, like the apostles, his zeal for Christ, soon brought him into conflict with the Jewish rulers. The San-

hedrin falsely charged him with blasphemy "against Moses, and against God" (v.11), "against this holy place (temple), and the law" (v.13). For, said they, "we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us" (v.14). They spoke truth