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LESSONS ON APOSTASY FROM CHURCH HISTORY
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"Now all these things happened unto them for examples, an he are written for our
admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come." -- 1 Cor. 10:11.

"Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." -- 2 Tim. 3:12.

The history of the church from the very beginning has been one of persecution. Jesus was nailed to Calvary's cross. Just after Pentecost, Stephen was stoned for the cause of Christ. Next came James, who was beheaded in A.D. 44. Mark went down to Egypt and preached there for a time. Then he was taken by the people of Alexandria, and dragged through the streets until he died. Thomas went to India to preach the Gospel, and there he was thrust through with a spear and died for Christ. There we have the pattern already laid, a pattern whereby they went to the four corners of the world with the Gospel and died there for the cause of Christ. They were not ashamed of Christ nor His cause.

In the early church there were what we commonly call ten periods of persecution. I am not going to deal with all of them. These were conducted by Roman emperors between the time of Christ and 313 A.D. Some were attempts to suppress, and others to exterminate Christianity. The first persecution was under Nero.

Nero came to power in 54 A.D. One day he had to sign a death warrant for a man caught in the act and condemned to die. Nero actually wept because he was able to write. He said "I wish I couldn't write, for I have to sign my name to a warrant that will take a man's life." His conscience was that tender. Seneca, who was his teacher and an outstanding philosopher of that time, thought

that Nero was incapable of learning cruelty. You know the rest of the story before I tell it. In A.D. 55 he ordered the murder of his brother, Britannus. By A.D. 60 he had ordered the murder of his own mother. The murder of his first wife followed. Then he tortured his second wife to death. In A.D. 64 he set Rome on fire and burned 10 of the 14 precincts of the city, with many of the helpless people caught in the flames. He then blamed the burning of Rome on the Christians. In the persecution that followed, God only knows how many thousands of Christians died. Nero very aptly exemplifies what the carnality that lies in the human bosom can do if not eradicated.

One of his favorite means of torture was to dress the Christians in the skins of various animals, then turn wild dogs loose among them. The wild dogs, thinking that these people were in some sense the animals that they hated, would start cutting, tearing, and chewing on them, thus actually tearing them up alive. Multitudes were crucified. Others were burned on top of piles of wood. Still others had their clothes removed and dipped in wax and replaced on them. They were then lighted with torches and tied to posts in Nero's garden during the evening. Nero would then ride about in his chariot among them looking first at this one and then that one as they pleaded, screamed, and suffered. This he seemed to enjoy very much. It was during his reign that Paul was beheaded at Rome and Peter perhaps crucified there.

In A.D. 68 the persecution was relaxed. There was no persecution until Domitian came to power. He ruled from 81 AD. to 96 A.D. Domitian was naturally suspicious and cruel. He was never gentle and tender like Nero had been in his early life. He came to the throne bitter, cynical, and the very picture of cruelty. Moreover, he was very zealous for the state religion. Now, the Roman emperors did not persecute the Christians because they were Christians but because they refused to worship the emperor, so were not good citizens, they thought. Japan persecuted the Christians for the same reason just before the war. A man who was otherwise a good emperor was often the hardest on the Christians, because he tried to uphold the laws of the land and enforce them.

The Christians were also blamed for famines, floods, and earthquakes. For some reason, God only knows what, in the reign of Domitian, flood after flood, famine after famine, and then earthquakes swept across the Roman Empire. The heathen people naturally said that it was because of those Christians in the Empire who refused to worship the gods. The Christians were called atheists because, when their homes were entered, no idols or gods of any kind were found.

It was this same emperor under whom Timothy, Paul's son in the faith, died. One day at Ephesus they were having a feast to a heathen god. Timothy went out and met the men who were at the head of the procession, and said, "Folks, Christianity has been in Ephesus too long for you not to know better than this." They turned on him and clubbed him to death on the spot.

After Domitian's reign, persecution again let up for a time. You will note, however, that between the reign of Nero and the reign of Domitian there was no persecution for 13 years. During the severe persecution of Nero there were those who denied Christ. When persecution let up, they came back and wanted to join the church. Now, what are you going to do with that kind of people? They are on hand when there is no persecution, but they disappear as soon as persecution comes. This soon became a great issue in the early church.

Let us follow it through for a moment and see what did happen. I am going to jump now to the very last two persecutions of the ten. I have briefly noted the first two and am leaving out the intervening six.

The next to the last persecution was under Decius Trajan, in the years 249-251, and it was one of the most severe. Philip, the Arabian, had been emperor just before Decius Trajan. Philip had professed to be a Christian. (He is known as the first Christian emperor.) Because Philip had been a Christian, Decius Trajan felt that the Christians would favor an emperor who was a Christian and would be against him. For this reason he turned against the Christians and sought to exterminate them. Of course he had other reasons, too.

Under Decius Trajan, a man by the name of Julian, from the province of Cilicia, was taken and placed in a leather bag. Then there were also placed in it several snakes and a lot of creeping things. Julian could have gotten out by denying Jesus. After he lay in this bag with these creeping things and snakes for some time and still refused to deny Jesus, his persecutors added stones to the sack and took him to sea and he drowned with the snakes wrapped around his neck.

Maybe you think it is a small thing to profess Jesus today. Thank God that you are not in a country where persecution is on. But you had better be ready for it. You had better make sure you have something that is worth dying for; you had better make certain that the Holy Spirit dwells in your heart in all His sanctifying power.

In the days of Decius Trajan there was also a man by the name of Nichomachus. After being apprehended, he was laid on the racks. After being pulled out of joint, burned, cut, and tortured he felt that he could stand it no longer. He looked up and said, "I'll deny my Christ if you will let me off this rack." They let him off the rack and he denied Jesus. Ten minutes later he fell dead. When he fell, a young girl standing near said, "Oh, how terrible that this man turned his back on Jesus just before he died." When she was heard to say that, she too was taken. On being questioned she confessed Jesus. Thereupon she was severely tortured and died victorious. She stood the test, and you and I may have to stand the test one of these days, too.

However, not all were of this stalwart type of Christians. In a Manual of Church History by A. H. Newman, Vol. I, p. 165, [1] Cyprian is quoted thus: "Immunity from persecution had brought into the churches multitudes of people who had no proper idea of the obligations of the Christian life, and many who cannot be regarded as possessing a saving knowledge of the truth. Lamentable worldliness characterized many of the clergy who were spending their energies in secular pursuits rather than in the ministry of the Word. The Imperial edict struck terror to the hearts of all whose faith was weak. Many were conquered before the battle, prostrated before the attack. Nor did they even leave it to be said of them that they seemed to sacrifice to idols unwillingly. They ran to the market place of their own accord. Many were so impatient to deny their faith that they could hardly wait their turn. Some, by bribing the officials, secured certificates of having sacrificed, without committing the actual act. Some allowed others to say they had sacrificed or had them secure the certificates for them."

Many, who would neither flee nor sacrifice, suffered the most terrible tortures and died in prison or were at last cruelly executed. Among those executed at this time was the pastor of the Roman church, a bishop by the name of Fabian.

Now the persecution was over. Again the problem appeared. What was to be done with these people who ran and got those certificates to deny Christ so willingly? They wanted to join the church again and take their old place of prominence and go on as though nothing had happened.

Since Fabian had been martyred, it was necessary to elect a new pastor for the Roman church, or pope as he was called in later years. Two men, Cornelius and Novatian were nominated for the office. It was known that Cornelius had very lenient views. He believed anybody should be taken into the church who seemed sorry for his sins, and not worry about a lot of details. In particular, he stood for taking back into the church all those who had denied Christ under pressure, if they would just say that they were sorry. Novatian said, "No, sir, the man who would deny Christ under pressure is not fit to be taken back into the church." He also held strict requirements for church membership. The election was held and Cornelius got the job. Immediately he passed a law making it impossible for a pastor to require anything except repentance for church membership.

Now we have what we call the Novatian schism. The group under Novatian, who could not open the church for membership to anybody and everybody, either had to go liberal with the others or get out. They got out. In history we can trace this clean group started by Novatian down to about 600 or 700 A.D. when they, too, apparently got tired of the fight.

Then came the last and most terrible persecution. It came under Diocletian, who was the Roman emperor from 284-305. There was little or no persecution from 260-295. All those people who had backslidden in the last persecution had slidden up again and were members in good standing in a great liberal church that would take in anybody who would say, "Lord, forgive me," for, after all, if the Lord forgives shouldn't the church too? But did the Lord forgive? Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed." Then there was also a small, pure church, the Novatian church. It was actually the church.

About 303, Diocletian decided to annihilate Christianity. As he started to persecute, many of the Christians fled again. Some of those who had slid in so easy could now slide out again, and that took in the majority. They got out when the persecution was on, and right back in as soon as it was over.

However, there were men like the deacon Itomana who refused to deny Christ. Whereupon they flogged him until he bled all over. Next they placed him on the rack and stretched his arms and legs from their sockets. Then they took little hooks and tore off pieces of flesh here and there. Following that, they cut his body here and there with knives. Then they proceeded to scar his face in such a manner that he would never be fit to look at again, should he get off that rack alive. They knocked out his teeth and pulled out his hair. But he still refused to deny Jesus. They then strangled him, and he died victorious in the faith. [2]

There were some in every persecution who really stood true. They took the old-fashioned way. And we may see some of those things again, perhaps in our lifetime.

After this last great persecution carried on by a Roman emperor, persecution took a different form. From then on, it was this liberal church that persecuted the true church, in a much more fiendish way than any Roman emperor ever devised. Once again, in 305, this whole crowd wanted to get back into the church. What was the church going to do with them? Before Novatian had fought it in Rome. This time a young man who had suffered a good deal in north Africa stood out against these liberals. His name was Donatus. Following him was a group of earnest Christians who had stood the test. Many of their loved ones had died for Christ and others had served in prisons. Many had scars all over their bodies from persecutions. Many others were living who would come to a premature death because of the things they had suffered while on the rack.

Rome sent out orders to take in anybody. A drive for members was on. Donatus said, "No, we can't take just anybody into our churches. Those who have stood the test in the heat of the day are the church. These others, who denied Christ, have committed the unpardonable sin." Because Donatus and his followers refused to disobey their conscience or God, they were eased out of the church.

Now we have two very small groups who were not recognized, the Donatists and the Novatianists, who were actually the true church. They refused to lower the standard for church membership. That was the thing they stood on. And let me say, that is one thing that you and I have to stand on. The day that we lower our requirements for church membership, we take in a group of people who will tell us what to do. You remember that. The thing you have to do is to maintain that they measure up to the standard of a Bible Christian. Don't expect to change them after you get them in. They will wreck and ruin the church today as surely as they wrecked and ruined it back in those days.

The picture seems to brighten now. The year is 313, and Constantine is now trying to win his way into Rome. There had been four emperors in the Roman empire. The emperor just ahead of Constantine had appointed three to help him in the administrative duties. When he died, they all thought they were emperor. War followed. Our friend, Constantine, was fighting his way back to Rome, and just outside the city he was about to fight the battle of Milvian Bridge. He had heard that the man he was about to fight against had offered a sacrifice to every known heathen deity. Constantine thought the situation over. His opponent had beat him to every god known. Were there any gods left? After a search he remembered the Christians' God, and a happy thought struck him. Next morning he appeared with his flag and the account of how he had seen a cross in the sky and been commanded to conquer under this emblem. He publicly asked the Christians' God to help. His army felt confident and won an easy victory. Constantine believed that the Christians' God had given him the victory, so he proclaimed Christianity the state religion.

Christianity was becoming popular, yet our text says, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." How do we harmonize this popular church with Bible statements? Let us look a little closer at Constantine. In 313 he declared Christianity the religion of the empire. In 314 he called the Synod of Aries in southern France, to which all the bishops were invited. The Donatists and the Novatianists were Constantine's problem. The liberal church bishops and

Constantine could see no reason why they could not forget some of the things they stood for, and make one big, happy group of worldly Christians. The Donatists and Novatianists refused, so Constantine decided to exterminate them at the Synod of Axles. Many history books give a hazy picture of Aries. Fisher, in the Wesleyan study course, hardly mentions it. The facts of the case are that Constantine actually tried to wipe out the true church. For the next 6 or 7 years the Donatists and Novatianists suffered persecution. Their churches were destroyed. Their preachers had to flee or be killed. Their people had to join in the big church or die. True religion was still on the block. The church that had become popular was the one taking in anything and everything.

Now, for a few moments, since we have covered this period up to the time of Constantine, let us notice a few lessons we could draw from it. I have brought them out as I have gone over them.

We want you to know this: the church that is adopted by the world is never the true church. If your church becomes outstandingly popular in the community, find out what the trouble is. I am not saying this in the wrong sort of way. I am saying that the world never ceases to persecute the true church.

Another thing about the true church, it has had high standards of membership and has enforced them. Those two things are important: have high standards and enforce them. Don't you ever be guilty of taking somebody into the church who has no business being taken in. See to it that the members hew to the marks.

Another thing, low standards of church membership will very soon wreck your little church, by giving it over to the world. The members will tell you what to do. In how many churches have I seen that picture, as a few saints are grieved in their souls because of being told where to head in at by a bunch of worldly Christians who have been taken into their church. That is the picture over and over again throughout our nation today.

Now, we draw another lesson from this. A denomination that backslid has never been known to come back to God. In 251 A.D., what is now the Roman Catholic Church backslid. There has been effort after effort from that day to this to revive the Roman Catholic Church, but today she is deeper than she was at 251 A.D. If our Wesleyan Methodist Church lets down their membership standards and takes in the worldly crowd, we will go liberal, and that forever, for no denomination has come back to God that has once gone liberal. A lot of folks today are hoping to bring this denomination and that denomination back. But, my friend, if they ever do it, that will be the first. You may have a little local revival in this community, you may have a stir in that community; but if you do very much, it won't be long until they will push you out the back door, as quietly as possible. John Wesley had that experience, you remember. He thought he would revive the Church of England from within, and that was his aim and effort. Along about 1785, they opened the back door and just quietly shut it. John Wesley was out, and the Methodists that stuck with him were out, too. Luther thought he could revive the Catholic Church, and around 1522 or 1523 they quietly opened the back door and pushed him out. They tried to kill him first, and not succeeding in that, they pushed him out. And so it has always been down through the history of the world; once a denomination backslides, that's it. Their children will never have a chance to hear the right way. They are going down -- they're starting in toward heathenism, on toward eternal damnation.

I want to catch another lesson or two from this area. This period in the early church, up to the time when Constantine made it the state religion, teaches us a number of good lessons. Going back to a Bible character, remember Peter went down to Samaria. He was preaching there, and a fellow by the name of Simon Magus wanted to buy the Holy Spirit. He thought you could get the Holy Spirit without going down the old-fashioned way of dying out to sin. He thought you could get this experience for a price. Peter told him, "You're full of the devil." Now, that is about all we hear about it in the Scripture, but history takes it on from there. We are told that after this Simon Magus joined a woman by the name of Helena, who was a prostitute. He called himself God and he called her the female God. They set themselves up as deities, and started a church, and that church is what we know as Gnosticism in the early church. It was one of the worst heresies. It did more to damn people before the year 100 and shortly after than any other which came to the early church. This man was worshipped by the Samaritans. To begin with, he immediately denied Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and regarded himself as Jesus, and Jesus as a mere man. He said that he was the true redeemer.

Now the Gnostics had certain peculiar beliefs that are exactly like the beliefs of the liberals today. In the first place, the Gnostics took their name from the old Greek word, "to know": in other words, we are the smart crowd. They proceeded, in the first place, to do away with the God of the Old Testament. It was the Gnostics who first called the God of the Old Testament a "bloody bully." They are succeeded by the Methodist Bishop Oxnam who just a few years ago did the same thing. It's nothing new. It wasn't original with Oxnam. It was original with the Gnostics back before the year 100 A.D. They said that the God of the Old Testament is simply an inferior God, someone who wasn't too intelligent, and so wanted those blood sacrifices. But the true God was another god that was away back of Him and was controlling Him. He was not the true God, consequently the Gnostics threw out most of the Old Testament. Then they proceeded to throw out most of the New Testament, too, retaining only those portions which they liked to hold. Now, isn't that the liberal tendency today? The liberalists simply throw out what they don't want, and they keep and maintain what they like. They said that Jesus was only an appearance. This teaching is what history calls Docetism. He actually did not suffer on Calvary. It just appeared that way. It looked like there was someone hanging on the cross, but actually there wasn't. Well, they placed a great deal of emphasis on philosophy. And every time you find a church emphasizing philosophy, you find a church that's going to be wrong before very long. What is philosophy? Philosophy is some man's effort to tell us where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. There is only one true philosophy, and that is the Bible. You don't need to waste your time on other philosophies. I urge my students to stay out of philosophy.

Right along beside that there is only one true psychology. Psychology is the study of what makes you act the way you do. You know what makes you act as you do. It is either the Lord or the devil in you. We don't have to study a lot of books to figure out what makes people act the way they do. The Bible tells us very quickly. Yet there are hundreds of people studying psychology.

Another error of the Gnostics was that sin is in the flesh. They said you have to sin as long as you are in the flesh. When you die you get rid of the flesh, and then you'll be holy. Well, if Jesus Christ can't deliver you in this living hour from every known sin, and if death can, then death is stronger than the blood of Christ, and Jesus died in vain. But death is not stronger than the blood of

Christ. The blood of Christ can give us present deliverance from the powers of the devil. I know from my own experience that the blood of Christ can break sinful habits. It can give us victory over ourselves, and help us to be the men and the women that we ought to be.

The Gnostics made their inroads on the church. We believe that St. John wrote his First Epistle because of the Gnostics. Now, about 130 to 160 A.D., there arose a group of people called Montanists, in Phrygia in Asia Minor. The Montanists stood for some things. They stood against emphasizing knowledge at the expense of faith. And that is the trend on which many schools are going astray. I am in the field of education, but friends, we must have piety first and foremost. We must have, first and foremost, the fire burning in our souls. But how many lose it in the process of securing an education. It hurts my heart to see a young person come to school with a zeal, wanting to do something for God, and then go out cold and indifferent. Paul says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ... and have not charity, I am nothing." And that is exactly the facts of the case. We must have first and foremost an assurance that the indwelling Holy Spirit "sanctifies me now." Without holiness no man shall see God.

The Montanists also stood against laxity of discipline in church membership. They believed in a present, vital contact with God, that He can tell you something, and can guide you and direct your life. To them, religion was a present experience with God.

Something else about these Montanists. They didn't take any divorced or remarried people into their churches. Now, that is something we have to be careful about today. I'm surprised how many young people think it is all right to take into church membership people who have been divorced and remarried. Better watch that sort of thing. The Montanists refused to do it in 150 A.D.

Again, the Montanists rejected entirely the use of any alcoholic liquor. And yet you hear many people saying, "Well, back there the Christians used to drink." No, they didn't. In 150 A.D. the true church had no approval for a drinker. There have been liberal churches, of course, that allowed people to take a little drink now and then.

The Montanists held that flight under persecution or denial of faith under persecution was unforgivable. Furthermore, they were living constantly in expectation of Christ's return. Here is an item of interest on this problem of marriage and divorce. There were two men that we have record of who belonged to the Montanist church. One, by the name of Athenagoras, lived in 160 A.D., at Athens. He was a highly educated man, and had been a heathen philosopher. When he became a Christian, he put all his energies into the service of God. You know God can do great things with a person who is educated and yielded to Him. Such was the Apostle Paul, such was John Wesley, such was Calvin, such was Luther and other men who brought about the Reformation. If God can get a person educated and still keep him humble and keep him filled with the Spirit, He can do more with him than if he is not educated. But many lose that keen edge over education, and are not as spiritual as they were before. In one of his commentaries, which we have yet, in the AnteNicene Church Fathers, Athenagoras quotes Matt. 19:9, which is the only verse that seems to give the innocent party the right to remarry. At least, some people think it does. "I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." That little phrase, "except

for fornication," upon which the whole doctrine of the innocent party having a right to remarry, is built, is not in the Bible which Athenagoras quoted in 160 A.D.

The other man who belonged to this same group of Montanists was Tertullian. He is a little better known than Athenagoras. He was the son of a Roman army general at Carthage, who lived at 200 A. D. He was converted from heathenism to Christianity, and he too wrote about fornication and remarriage. In the Ante-Nicean Church Fathers, he quotes Matt. 19:9, and once again the phrase, "except for fornication," does not appear in this verse. I say, it looks as though somebody did some tinkering on it. In the Greek New Testament this verse is only half as long as it is in our King James Bible.

The Montanists are put in a bad light by some historians, and no doubt they were not all perfect people, but they were holding the best standard by far of all groups in their day.

The next lesson I want to point out is that the price of backsliding is great. In history you have studied about the medieval period or the Dark Ages. Why was it that under the Roman Empire you could travel anywhere? You could go from Rome to Palestine, to Spain, to Carthage -- anywhere. After Rome fell in 473 -- 150 years after Constantine's time -- you would not have dared be seen out on the highways. It wasn't long until a person was nothing more than a part of the land, and was bought and sold with it. There had been commerce and great developments of science and other branches of learning; but then the world was plunged into the darkest period known to man, the Dark Ages. Why was it? It was God's judgment on a worldly church. It was the price of backsliding. The Middle Ages, the Dark Ages, were the direct result of the backsliding that began in 250 A. D.

Let us take a little look at it. A man was bought and sold with his land. The feudal system came into being. Every one was a slave. He could be taxed within an inch of his life, and couldn't do anything about it. If a poor man had a field and a rich man wanted to go hunting, he could ride over the field and the poor man couldn't stop him. It might destroy his whole crop, but there wasn't a thing he could do about it. He had put his labors into it, but he had no recourse.

In the feudal system, as you remember, the rich man had the castle that protected all the poor people who lived for a short distance around. In case of war, they would flee into his castle. He owned the land of the people. A feudal lord was walking down the road and saw a poor man, who lived on his estate and who had three or four chickens. He said, "Give them to me; I want them." The poor man said, "No, I must have them. That's all I have to live on. I use the eggs. I have a family." The rich man said, "Give me those chickens." The poor man answered, "I can't do it." And the rich man not only took the chickens, but drove the poor man away from his farm and took away from him everything he owned. That is feudalism, and that is what you wish upon your children when you take an easy way in this matter of Christianity.

Another time, there was a nobleman out hunting, and he had with him some of his slaves. It was winter-time, and while they were hunting this nobleman's feet got cold. To one of his servants he said, "Here, you take this servant and kill him, and cut his body open." And he sat there and stuck his feet in the man's open abdomen to warm his feet. During the Middle Ages it was actually a law that a nobleman could take some of his serfs with him (however, the law limited him to two

or three on one hunting trip); and he could kill one when his feet or hands got cold, open the body and stick his hands or his feet in it to warm them. (See Church History, Newman, Vol. II, P. 70.) Friends, the price of backsliding is terrible. The darkness of the Middle Ages was the direct result of backsliding before the time of Constantine.

The people didn't have the privilege of hunting in the woods, or they couldn't fish in a body of water unless the man who owned the land and the water gave them permission. They also had a system of taxation called heriot. When a poor man died, the rich man who owned the estate had the privilege of going into that man's home and taking whatever he wanted, before the poor man's children could touch a single article. He always took whatever was of value; and that poor man, who already had almost nothing, left his children less than abject slaves. That was one price of backsliding. And that is what people are asking for today who want to look and dress like Hollywood and the world. They may say, "No, I'm not asking for that." Yes, they are, and it won't be too long until we see something like that in America unless we are very careful.

After the church had backslidden, they sent missionaries to England, and to Germany, and to northern European countries, so that by 1000 A. D. they were all Christian in name, but the type of Christianity was this backslidden type. About all they did was to baptize heathen gods. They also saw to it that the Christians submitted to Rome.

Now, there was a group of Christians in the east at that time, in Persia and in that general area, who were indifferent and cold and backslidden. A young man by the name of Mohammed was looking around to find rest for his soul, and he sought it by contacting some of these Christians. He said, "How can I find God?" But they were cold and indifferent. That young man finally turned away from the church. He said, "I don't want that kind of Christianity. I want something that will challenge a man, that will give him something to do, that will do something for him." And he started his own religion in 622, with the hegira. Thus Mohammedanism started on its course. Mohammed started out by destroying every single idol that he found. Constantine had made Christianity the state religion in 313, and by 350 idol worship was predominant in the church. By the year 700 A. D., less than a hundred years after Mohammed started on his course, his belief had conquered almost the known world.

At one time Africa had Christianity. Tertullian lived in Africa. There was a great Christian colony in north Africa; but they refused to be evangelistic, they refused to go out into the highways and hedges, they were satisfied to hold two services on Sunday, and two prayer meetings a week. Mohammedanism came through and simply wiped out that church. You can go almost anywhere in Africa today and find Mohammedans. The black people who are Mohammedans will perhaps become Communists.

Folks, it isn't enough to be pure and clean; we have to get out and win souls. Your church ought to be holding a street meeting somewhere once a week. Your church ought to be opening another church somewhere. You ought to be doing more than just operating at the home base and slowly dying out there. We need to be aggressive; we need to do something for God. Mohammedanism is a direct result of laziness on the part of Christians; it penetrated the known world and might have wiped Christianity off the earth, except for the mercy of God.

I might mention the Crusades. The Catholic Pope had the people worshipping one saint's whiskers, and another one's tonsils, and another one's coffin, and another one's bones. But he ran short of relics; he couldn't get all that he wanted. There was a whole supply of them in Palestine, but the Arabs had them. And so he started preaching that it was terrible that all these relics were in the possession of the Arabs and not in possession of the church. He stirred up Europe until, in the year 1095, he got a vast army of some 600,000 men to go to Palestine and secure some of those relics. In doing it, all but 40,000 of this army was lost on the way.

Before the year 1100 the Turks held Jerusalem again, and so the Pope preached another Crusade. This one occurred from 1147 to 1153, under the leadership of Bernard of Clairvaux. Some 1,200,000 fighting men, besides women and children, went on this great Crusade. What was their purpose? To get back those relics so the people could worship them. They wanted to worship the tomb where Jesus was buried. They wanted to build a monastery or convent in all those holy places. Catholicism has done that. And so all of Europe was going to do something, and they started out again with over a million fighting men. This Crusade was a complete failure. The Pope granted everyone forgiveness of sins before they started. If they would go on the Crusade, their sins would be forgiven -- past sins, present sins, and any sin they might commit in the future -- all were forgiven. The Crusades became one of the most immoral movements known to the history of the world, for here was a people who could not sin -- men, women, and children mixed together. Actually this man, Catholic himself that he was, said that this Crusade failed because of the utter sinfulness of the people who engaged in it. As if that were not enough, in 1212 a children's Crusade was preached. Some 30,000 boys and girls started out from France to recapture the holy relics in Palestine. Most of them died of starvation and disease on the journey. The Turks took those who did arrive and sold them as slaves, and they are still somewhere in Turkish territory. They are Turks when they should be Christians. These Crusades were nothing but a tool of the Catholic Church.

When the Crusades were over and their people got tired of going to Palestine, the Pope preached a Crusade against the old-fashioned Christians in southern France. It was called the Inquisition, and it was simply another installment of the Crusades. The Inquisition began in 1225 A. D. The Pope had been preaching Crusades and about getting relics back; now he preached on cleaning up the real Christians. And yet today we have crusades for this and crusades for that. I get tired of the very title "crusade."

In 1453 A. D. Constantinople fell, and the Greek Christians fled west, following their flight, there was a revival of Greek and Hebrew learning -- what is known in history as the Renaissance. The people of the world, for the first time since before Constantine, got out their Bibles and studied them in the original language. So far, they had taken what the Catholic Church had said the Bible meant. When they started studying it themselves, they had the Reformation. In 1517, a little over fifty years after the fall of Constantinople. Luther, studying his Greek Testament, said, "The just shall live by faith. What I have been taught as a Franciscan monk is not true." Although he was director over a whole group of monasteries in that area of Germany, he turned his back on their doctrines, nailed the ninety-five theses on the church door, and said, "I'm going to follow the Bible from here on out." We are getting away from the Bible, we are accepting what this man says or that man says. If we get back to the Bible, we will get back to God. The Bible will bring us back to the old-fashioned way.

The first Greek Testament was printed in 1516 by Erasmus. Shortly after that time it was carried to England. In 1611 it was translated into English, the King James Version, which is as good a translation as there is in existence. It combines accuracy and beauty in more passages than any other translation that we have. Don't throw it away. Don't take up with the New Revised Standard Version, for it is a product of liberalism. I say that in all sincerity, for I teach Greek, textual criticism, and Hebrew at Marion College, along with my church history. I am not saying that just to be talking. I am saying it because of what I have seen.

Now, I want to trace with you the true church from the time of Christ to the present. At one time there was not a heathen nation in the world. Every single nation had the knowledge of God at the time of Noah. The ancestors of the heathen of Africa knew God, but they backslid. That is the reason the heathen are in the depths of sin today. The Chinese one time knew the true God. The American Indians one time knew the true God, but they backslid. That is the reason they were almost annihilated. The price of backsliding is greater than you will ever realize. "Be sure your sin will find you out." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The early church began in the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles. The next time we see a new church was in 150 A.D., the Montanists; then in 250 the Novatianists; followed in 305 by the Donatists. These last two continued in existence to around 600 or 700 A.D., at which time they gave up the fight, seemingly. Then, beginning about 600 A.D., for a thousand years there was no church that we can call a real, old-fashioned holiness church. A church that approaches it is the Paulicians, the persecuted Armenians, as you have perhaps known them. Following them were the Bogomiles. They came into existence around 970 A.D. But the Paulicians and the Bogomiles were not genuine Christians, and were not capable of taking an all-out stand against sin. They were adoptionists in theology. The Paulicians, or Armenian Church, is still in existence and still persecuted by the Turks.

Then along about the year 1022 there were the Cathari. That was the name given to them by the Catholic Church. It means purity. They were also called Albigenses. They were the group that stood for holiness in southern France, and they were severely persecuted. It was against them that the first Crusade was preached after the Crusades to Palestine. They tried to annihilate the Albigenses.

Also about this time, 1170, the Waldenses appeared in France. A Catholic man by the name of Peter Waldo said, "I wonder what the Bible does say." He hired two men to come and translate it for him, so he could see what the Bible actually says. "Well," he said, "is that what the Bible says?" They said, "Yes." He answered, "Well, that's what I want." Others did too, and soon he started a church, the Waldensian, which continued for two or three hundred years just because one man had read his Bible, and found out what was in it.

Next, we find over in Bohemia, in 1340, the Taborites and John Huss. You remember John Huss was burned at the stake by the Council of Constance, in 1412. The true church had jumped over to Bohemia, which is today Czechoslovakia. Then in 1380 Wycliffe appeared in England, and his followers were called Lollards. They stood for the old-fashioned way. Some time later, in 1418, the Council of Constance dug up his bones and burned them and threw them on the river

Severn in order to blot out this holiness movement in England. But it didn't work. In 1450 we find the Bohemian brethren, in Bohemia of course. Following them was the Pietist movement around 1700, in Germany, which followed on through Zinzendorf and the Moravians in 1725. In 1738 the Moravians led John Wesley into holiness, and the holiness movement took a new and a fresh emphasis through the Methodist Church. But by 1850 it had largely lost the holiness fire. At that time a group of smaller churches the Salvation Army, the Wesleyan Methodist, the Free Methodist, etc., came out of it, and perpetuated true holiness. But they are gradually giving over, it seems; and now we have interdenominational holiness groups, which seem to take in most of the genuine holiness people who still want to go the old-fashioned way. We must either have such movements or remain with the worldly church and go down with it. By God's grace and help, I mean to stay in the old-fashioned way.

It was in 1517 that Martin Luther nailed the ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg. So from 1517 through 1600 the Protestant movement spread over Europe, taking most of the countries back under control. Then came what was known as the Thirty Years War. It was perhaps the longest war and one of the most devastating wars that the world has ever known, ending in 1648 with the peace of Westphalia. Then the Catholics of France set about to rid their country of Protestants. They had not had an opportunity to do it during the war. There was a large Huguenot population in France, people who were true to the old-fashioned gospel message. It was estimated that in 1650 there were around a million Huguenots. Then persecution set in. The Catholic king and people were determined to root them out. As the pressure was put on, the Huguenots fled, many of them from France. In 1685, when the Edict of Nantes was revoked, the Huguenots did not even have a chance to be citizens of the country. They could be hunted, they could be killed -- any way to get rid of them. Their churches were completely annihilated. Persecution was so severe that there could hardly be found a trace of the true Christian religion in France after 1685.

Now there were some folk in France at that time who gave up their faith. They joined the Catholic Church again rather than be persecuted. They had known what it was to know Christ as a Savior, but under the pressure of the persecution they turned back. It was their children who became the set of infidels who brought about the French Revolution. France was plunged into one of the darkest days of her history when in 1789 she was under the reign of the French infidels. France went through a blood bath with the guillotine, and heads fell one after another. Once again we see the price paid for backsliding. France shed a drop of blood for every drop that had been extracted from the Protestants, and twofold. The people turned against religion -- against the Catholic Church and against the Protestant movement. Since that day.

Now we take another look at England. Around 1700 there was a great revolt against the teaching of holiness. In 1738, you may remember, John Wesley was sanctified and started out preaching holiness across the length and breadth of England, trying to re-convert the Church of England. There were those who rebelled against him, and they turned out to be what we call the British Deists. Their doctrine is more or less liberalism. So those who rejected holiness in England, as it was taught under Wesley, turned to Deism.

Then, we take a look at Germany. Most of the liberalism in America comes from the German tradition. About the year 1700 there was a movement in Germany called Pietism. A man

by the name of Spener started out emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit, or holiness as we know it. In 1675 he had written a book entitled Pious Desires. At this time the Lutheran Church of Germany was extremely worldly. Very few were taking the old-fashioned way. This man started out by emphasizing a better knowledge of the Bible through small Bible study groups. Then he emphasized the fact that Christianity is not the knowledge of a fact, but it is an experience in the heart and life. He said we need piety in our ministry, as well as learning, and urged that preaching be practical. That was an unheard-of thing by the people in the church of that time, for they had gotten used to a form without any power.

About this time his devotional meetings were criticized as tending toward separation. That was the cry brought against him -- taking a stand of this kind is going to split the church. Well, we follow it on through. A man by the name of Francke was his disciple; and wherever he went, the first thing he did was to start a Bible class. He was accused of spiritual pride, contempt for science, of discouraging philosophical study, and laying undue stress on tithing and Bible study as the only things that were truly worthwhile. These two men set up what they called the University of Halle. It is a theological seminary located not too far from Berlin. Under their teaching this school became a center of spirituality, and many young men came here from all parts of Germany because it emphasized a personal relationship with God, and especially the working of the Holy Spirit. Now, of course, the devil didn't let that alone too long, but about 1706 he sent a teacher to the philosophy department, by the name of Christian Wolf. He was just about anything but Christian. He denied the inspiration of the Bible and did several other things until he was forced to leave the University in 1725. However, he was a man of very unique personality, and a very likable person. Look out for personality preachers. Before he left, many of the students had left the theology classes and had gone to the philosophy classes. His basic principle was that nothing is to be accepted in the field of religion which cannot be rationally demonstrated; unless you can prove it by hard and fast facts, see it, touch it, feel it, or taste it, you are not to accept it. You can see immediately what that did with the doctrines of the atonement, the miracles, the virgin birth, etc. But his teachings became so popular that the German emperor of that time forced the University of Halle to take him back to the philosophy department, and let him teach. When that was done, Pietism in Germany was crushed, so far as being a force in the Lutheran movement was concerned.

In 1755 Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher, appeared at the University of Konigsberg. He too was noted for his rational teachings; he is called the Father of Rationalism. He laid down the principle that we don't really need the Bible, but if each person would act in such a manner that his action at this moment could become a universal principle, then everybody would be all right; in other words, it was the Golden Rule! Don't do anything to anyone else that you wouldn't want done to you.

About 1800 the philosopher Hegel came along. He introduced the idea of development into theology. In other words, he taught that everything is developing; everything is getting better; everything is rising to a higher plane. That brought in evolution at this point. Now, most of you believe in just a little bit of evolution. Nearly all of you believe that in the past people did live in caves, had a lot more hair on their bodies than people have now, and were sort of rough-looking creatures. You saw pictures of them in your history books at school.

In those books was a good deal about pre-historic men. There's not a word of truth to it. But evolutionists have written the textbooks and so your child has so much evolution in him before he graduates from grade school that he can be led the next step when he studies biology and like subjects in high school.

Early men were on a higher plane than we are today. They had more beautiful and more perfect bodies, and some lived to be 800 or 900 years old. Human bodies today wear out in seventy years, and some of them in a shorter time than that. Early man was not some ape-looking sort of creature. There never was such a thing. About the best way to approach an evolutionist is to ask him this: "You say that you believe in evolution?" "Yes, we do." "You say that here on this particular stratum we find fossils that, were buried here millions of years ago?" "Yes." "That on this stratum we find fossils that were buried in a less remote time, and here we find fossils buried in a still less remote time?" "Yes." "All right, now show me one fossil that is halfway between two species."

There isn't such a thing in existence. They talk as though there is, but they can't produce it. If there were one iota of truth in the theory of evolution, we would find creatures fossilized that were halfway between two species, and yet there isn't one in existence. There are a few fossils of things we don't have today, but they are extinct species.

Another thing: if evolution were true, species today ought to be changing, and people ought to be changing. But there is not one single case of such development anywhere in the whole broad world.

The liberalism which grew up in Germany when the University of Halle revolted against Spener and Francke has been taught in the German universities down to the present time. It came across the ocean about 1900 and took the schools in America, so that there is possibly not one seminary of the larger denominations that actually believes the Bible today. That is a hard statement to make, but it is a fact.

One of the favorite teachings of liberalism is that the Scriptures were written much later than they were. For example, you and I believe that the accounts found in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers were written by Moses over a thousand years before Christ, for that is when Moses lived and died. We believe that the Book of Isaiah was written somewhere around 700 B.C. But the teaching of these liberal theologians is that the Book of Isaiah was not completed in its present form until about 900 A.D. That has been taught in all of the seminaries, and those who did not accept that as fact were laughed at because the doctrine of development "proved it." So students went out and preached that sort of thing in the liberal churches across America.

Then, in about 1948 God let them dig up some manuscripts in a cave over in Palestine, near the Dead Sea. One of those manuscripts was that of the Book of Isaiah. They said, "Ah! Now we've found the basis for our belief that we have been teaching." They searched it through hurriedly, and turned it over to some men who were most capable of dating it. Then all at once it was just hushed up, and we never did hear very much about those Dead Sea Isaiah findings. What happened? When those men examined it, they found that that manuscript of Isaiah was identical with our Hebrew Bible. The thing which the liberalists had taught, and laughed at you for not

believing, turned out to be utterly false. Sometimes you have to walk by faith, my friends, They may laugh at you, but don't you change. Hold to something that can be proved true.

In Isa. 3:16-26, quite a description is given of the types of ornament and adornment that womanhood wore in the days just before Jerusalem fell, and particularly before the Northern Kingdom fell. By the way, here is a verse that very specifically tells you that God is not pleased with rings, and it does not say "except wedding rings" either. You may check to make sure what this particular passage says. From 1926 to 1932, M. G. Kyle was doing some excavating at Kirjath-sepher, a town that was in existence when Isaiah prophesied. He said that every day when they were digging in the area of that town they would dig just a few inches and then sift the dirt to find if there was anything valuable. One day they uncovered a vanity pallet. He said that evidently every Jewess in town had one. (See Archeology and Bible History, J. P. Free, pp. 204-7). Now that was 700 B.C., not 1954 A.D. But you remember that God said because women took this course, men would die on the battlefield and the country would be devastated. They laughed at Isaiah and said, "You're a fanatical holiness preacher. There's nothing to that." But in 722 B.C. the armies came and carried the Northern Kingdom away. In 586 B.C. the work of captivity was finished by the fall of Jerusalem.

Today people laugh at us because we preach against some of these things. They say, "Why do you do it?" There's a reason. The women of today are taking the same course. You say, "Well, what is wrong with a woman cutting her hair?" The Bible says it is wrong; that is the first reason. But people don't accept that any more. If you quote the Bible to them, they look at you. You have to quote science, it seems. And so let's go on to science just a moment.

Some of you have heard about the Kinsey Report. Maybe some of you have read it. If you are a holiness preacher, I would advise you to look it up in Life Magazine of August 24, 1953, and read it. I don't take Life Magazine, but some folk who know where I stand, once in a while bring me some helpful articles from it anyhow. Now Mr. Kinsey, at the Indiana University, is far from believing what we believe. You know that as well as I do. But he made just a little study, and this is what he says. He found that of the women who grew up before 1920, 85 per cent were virgins at the age of 25, if they were not yet married. What happened in 1920? That is when the Hollywood fashions of cutting and curling hair, shortening dresses, and all the rest of it hit our country, right after World War I. Now what did Kinsey find out about the women who grew up since 1920? They say it doesn't make any difference how a woman dresses, but let us see what the Kinsey Report has to say. He found out that of the women who went through the teen-age period after 1920, only 64 per cent were virgins, if unmarried at 25. Over one-third had fallen before they were 25 years of age; but before 1920 only 15 per cent. He says that today only 50 per cent of the girls getting married are virgins. God said in the Bible that it would be that way. He warned against dressing as they do. Now we find the facts are verified in a report of this kind. I don't know what your opinion of the Kinsey Report is, but I am of the opinion that it is pretty close to the facts, though I don't particularly approve of everything in it.

If you wish, look up another Life Magazine -- that of June 18, 1951. In this particular issue is an article on the wedding ring. There is a good deal of argument about it today in some churches. Some want it in and some want it out. Some people have put on the wedding ring. They say, "We've got to have it for protection." "It is not an item of jewelry," and so forth. Now, the man

who wrote the article in Life Magazine is far from being a Christian. He doesn't care whether you wear a wedding ring or don't wear one, but this is what he had to say. Every month 850,000 wedding rings are produced in America (that was back in 1951). In the course of one year that would be 10,000,000 wedding rings; but there were only 1,669,934 weddings in 1951. In other words, out of six wedding rings that were sold one would be used for the right purpose and five for immoral purposes. His comment was, "Obviously most of the wedding rings are being used for immoral purposes." Some say they want a ring in order to show where they stand and in order to be protected. Well, actually, when they want to go into sin they buy one of those wedding rings, even if they have to go to the dime store to get it. But often it is the person who doesn't have one who is living straight.

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1 A Manual of Church History by A. H. Newman (2 vols.) is the text usually cited in this lecture. I have put the interpretation on many things he simply gives as facts.

2 Some of the martyr stories in the early part of the lecture came from Fox's Book of Martyrs.

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THE END