



STANDING FIRM THROUGH  
*the* GREAT  
APOSTASY

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BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry* AND *Intoxicated with Babylon*

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A decorative floral illustration in a light gray tone, featuring intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, centered above the title.

## DEDICATION

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To My Mother,

Thank you for teaching me true Christianity through the way you lived your life. Where would I be without your example and your prayers?



*Introduction*..... 13

*Section One: THE TRUE AND FALSE CHURCH*

CHAPTER ONE: The Message of the Cross .....	19
CHAPTER TWO: The Meaning of the Parables .....	35
CHAPTER THREE: Conversion.....	51
CHAPTER FOUR: The Evidence of Faith .....	65
CHAPTER FIVE: Counterfeit Kingdom.....	79
CHAPTER SIX: Two Judgments.....	93
CHAPTER SEVEN: The Place of Hypocrites .....	109

*Section Two: THE GREAT APOSTASY*

CHAPTER EIGHT: The Rise of the Apostate Church.....	123
CHAPTER NINE: Spirit of the Age.....	133
CHAPTER TEN: Lovers of Pleasure .....	147
CHAPTER ELEVEN: Culture of Corruption .....	159
CHAPTER TWELVE: A Form of Godliness .....	169
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: Resisting the Power of God.....	181
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Crossless Christianity.....	193
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: Fallen Leaders .....	207
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: The Great Outpouring.....	219
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: The Fall of the Apostate Church.....	229

*Epilogue* ..... 241

*Notes* ..... 247

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## INTRODUCTION

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**T**his book is an examination of a very negative and tragic subject. It is not within the scope of this book to present a balanced overview of Christianity: her strengths and weaknesses, positives and negatives, and so on. My purpose is to write about the part of the Church\* that is in deep spiritual trouble. Writers of past centuries called it the Apostate Church or the Harlot Church. It is that segment of Christendom that has shown itself to be unfaithful to God.

As I extensively studied this subject in Scripture, pouring over commentaries and Bible dictionaries, a very disturbing picture began to emerge. I did my utmost to approach this subject with a sincere and honest heart. I wanted to know the truth no matter where it led me. Unfortunately, what I found was frightening and extremely upsetting. If what these men of old were saying was true, there was simply no escaping the fact that many people whom I care very deeply about are apparently heading toward hell.

One day, as I found myself becoming overwhelmed with despair, the Lord made something precious very real to me. This spiritual truth came to me in regard to my mother, Frances Gallagher.

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\* Throughout this book I will use the terms “Christian” and “Church” loosely to describe all those who profess to be evangelical believers—whether or not they actually are.

Ever since I can remember, she has gotten up long before dawn to spend time with God. Countless times during my rebellious teenage years, I would come home from a night out partying to find her sitting in her favorite rocking chair praying and reading the Bible. For 35 years she faithfully taught Sunday school to the young children of our church.

In 1990, at the age of 67, she began working as a volunteer at a local hospital. She would run errands, carry documents, deliver flowers and sometimes pray with patients. She did this in spite of the fact that, by nature, she is a shy and reticent person. She continued this volunteer work for 15 years until it became impossible for her to get to the hospital anymore. It should also be noted that for many years she sacrificially sponsored two children overseas—on top of all of her other tithes and offerings.

The revelation I received that day was that there are many like my mother in the Post-Modern Church. These “ordinary” believers simply live out the Christian life without fanfare. They are the quiet heroes of the faith. They work in offices, factories and yes, ministries. They shop at the same grocery stores, raise their kids in the same schools and usually attend the same churches. They are often unknown and “unimportant” in the Evangelical Movement.

They are *not* unknown in the hallowed halls of heaven or in the foul regions of hell.

They are the true saints of the living God. Their love for God is vibrant and contagious. Their willingness to sacrifice for the sake of others is evident to those who best know them. They are deeply consecrated to God and live with a keen awareness of the eternal realm. The Lord has His people and knows who they are, even if we often cannot discern the difference ourselves. (II Timothy 2:19)

Yes, there are a lot of tares in the field, but there is also a great deal of wheat as well. It is important to remember this as

you go through this book. Otherwise you could be overcome with despair in the same way I was.

My desire is to encourage you to take a very humble and sober look at your own life. Make sure you are of the faith, beloved. Once you have sincerely settled that matter, I hope that the message contained herein will drive you to your knees for loved ones, in the same way it has me.

“The world is always pleased to rest in outward observances, and to substitute the form of godliness for the spirit. The devil knows that and gives them, in his gospel, a full supply.”

☞ R. Hall<sup>1</sup>

“Until self-effacing men return again to spiritual leadership, we may expect a progressive deterioration in the quality of popular Christianity year after year till we reach the point where the grieved Holy Spirit withdraws—like the Shekinah from the temple.” ☞ A.W. Tozer<sup>2</sup>

“The greatest threat to America today is not Communism, nor the Arab oil blackmail pressed upon us, nor the severe ecology crisis. The greatest threat to America today is GOD. God was married to Israel. He divorced Israel and has not bothered with her for 2,000 years. Why does He have to tolerate our sin? Can He not walk out on us?” ☞ Leonard Ravenhill<sup>3</sup>

Chapter Eight:  
THE RISE OF THE APOSTATE CHURCH

*“That day will not come except the apostasy comes first [unless the predicted great falling away of those who have professed to be Christians has come].”*  
(II Thessalonians 2:3 AMP)

**A**lthough he is better known for his role on *The Love Boat*, Gavin MacLeod cited his supporting performance in the 2003 film *Time Changer* as “the most important thing” he had ever done. It’s hard to disagree with him.

The storyline occurs in 1890 and revolves around Bible professor Russell Carlisle, who is unwittingly transported by a time machine into modern-day America. For five days, he finds himself trapped in a wicked world to which you and I have become shamefully accustomed.

In his day, the term, “Gay Nineties,” referred to the nation’s innocence, not to the filthy and lewd behavior reflected in our past decade. Men married their wives for life, with divorce rates hovering around a microscopic 5%. Teenage promiscuity, marital infidelity and abortion were almost nonexistent. Pornography—even if you could find it—was typically an artist’s rendering of a topless woman.

Christian filmmaker Rich Christiano’s character, Russell Carlisle, is an awkward and unlikely hero who is thrust into the

America of our day. This results in the inevitable scenes of him marveling over modern technology and dodging speeding cars. More important, though, are his reactions to the stark contrast in morality between the two eras.

At one point, he is seen watching television. His horrified expression betrays the fact that he is witnessing the kind of blatant immorality which has become standard fare for many of us. But perhaps the most poignant scene occurs when he is invited by some Christians to attend a movie with them. Suddenly, he is shown running out of the theater screaming at the employees, "You have to stop this movie! That actor took the Lord's name in vain! He blasphemed God!"

If you or I witnessed a fellow believer acting this way, our first thought would probably be, "What a nut case!" We would quickly distance ourselves from him. And yet this scenario provokes a few pointed questions Christians should ask themselves. Why aren't we more outraged when we hear actors take the Lord's name in vain? How can we look upon scantily-clad girls on television without blushing? Why do we permit TV to indoctrinate our children with the world's values? The answer to these questions is clear: we have given our culture a greater place in our lives than the Word of God. In short, we are corporately backslidden.

#### PREDICTIONS FROM ANOTHER TIME

One of the challenges of examining biblical prophecies about the Church in the end-times is that we are in the throes of it right now. We are engulfed in the spirit of the age and do not realize how much it influences our perspectives. To put it another way, "we can't see the forest for the trees." The only way to get a proper sight of a forest is to rise above it by taking a plane ride or climbing a nearby mountain. From that vantage point a person can scan the entire horizon, see the lay of hills,

valleys and rivers and determine the best course through it.

The one who desires to “discern the signs of the times” also needs a view from the outside. One effective way of acquiring that objective perspective is to consider what writers from yesteryear saw pertaining to the end of the age. It is true that today’s teachers can “connect the dots” in ways that old-time writers couldn’t. They are witnesses of things that would have seemed inconceivable a century ago: atomic weaponry, Israel as a nation, microchips implanted under the skin, computer systems able to track and manage mankind, etc. Writers from past centuries didn’t have that knowledge at their disposal. Instead, they relied on the Holy Spirit to illumine Scripture about what the end-times would look like for Christians. In other words, they weren’t attempting to make Bible verses coincide with their opinions about what was happening around them.

Take Matthew Henry (1662-1714) for instance. When he studied the passage in Second Thessalonians 2 about the Great Apostasy, he saw it as a defection “from sound doctrine, instituted worship...and a holy life. The apostle speaks of some very great apostasy...such as should be very general, though gradual...”<sup>4</sup> He apparently believed this falling away would be very difficult to discern because it would creep into the Church over a period of time. It is the old “frog in the kettle” syndrome; i.e., the frog is oblivious to the fact that he is being cooked because the water in the kettle is heating up so slowly. When Mr. Henry considered the inconceivable reality that the majority of Christians would abandon the Truth, he surmised that this could only happen slowly and gradually.

He also saw it as being “general” in nature. In other words, he predicted that the apostasy would be widespread and extensive. This was not going to be a minor segment of the Church but a large percentage; it was going to be the norm, not the exception. Beloved, does that frighten you? It should!

Albert Barnes (1798-1870) saw a direct correlation of the Great

Apostasy with the spiritual climate Paul described in Second Timothy 3.\* He wrote: “It shall be one of the characteristics of those times that men shall be eminently selfish—evidently under the garb of religion...no one can doubt the correctness of the prophecy of the apostle that it would exist ‘in the last times.’...This shows that the apostle referred to some great corruption in the church; and there can be little doubt that he had his eye on the same great apostasy to which he refers in 2 Thes. 2. and 1 Tim. 4...He saw the ‘germ’ of what was yet to grow up into so gigantic a system of iniquity as to overshadow the world.”<sup>5</sup>

Paul’s words about pervasive self-centeredness offer a prime example of the adage: “we can’t see the forest for the trees.” Most of us in the U.S. have grown up in prosperity and have never known anything different. Although there have always been self-centered people, it has probably never been seen on the scale we have today in America. However, because we have grown up this way it seems normal to us. But there is a reason Jesus spoke of “the deceitfulness of riches.” (Mark 4:19) Indeed, we have been corporately deceived and now obliviously pursue our self-centered lives.

Barnes envisioned this selfishness bringing about a “great corruption” within the Church and growing into a “gigantic system of iniquity.” There is a true Church alive within the United States, but make no mistake about this: it lies within a false religious system that has taken root in our country and has spread around the world.

Pulpit Commentator A.C. Hervey (c. 1890) also saw Second Timothy 3 as a description of the apostasy: “Characteristics of the apostasy. The doctrinal degeneracy is marked by a widespread moral decay...They prefer the friendship of the world to the friendship of God. Thus, the long catalogue of moral enormity

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\* “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self...” (II Timothy 3:1-2a)

developed by the apostasy began with ‘the love of self,’ and ends with ‘the love of pleasure,’ to the utter exclusion, first and last, of the ‘love of God.’”<sup>6</sup>

If Christian pollsters are correct in their assumptions, millions of evangelical men are addicted to pornography. Hervey’s words about “widespread moral decay” makes one wonder if he took his own time journey from 1890 to 21<sup>st</sup> Century America! What would this man think if he came into our time and saw professing Christians regularly viewing images of people involved in aberrant sex? Could he possibly have been any more accurate when he saw the great falling away beginning with “the love of self” and reaching its climax in “the love of pleasure?”

Then there is the old-time Puritan, John Owens (1616-1683), who saw three prevailing characteristics of the Last Days. First, “the profession of true religion is outwardly maintained under a visible predominance of horrible lusts and wickedness.”<sup>7</sup> Wow! Do you realize what it must have meant for a Puritan of the 1600’s to envision masses of professing Christians dominated by an insatiable appetite for uncleanness? Somehow—and it surely must have been a great mystery to him—he saw this occurring openly in the Church.

The second thing he saw was a time when “men are prone to forsake the truth, and seducers abound to gather them up.”<sup>8</sup> This great deception is so prevalent in the eschatological writings of the New Testament that it is not surprising he would see it as a major spiritual development.

The third thing he saw was professing Christians “mixing themselves with the world, and learning their manner.”<sup>9</sup> A.C. Hervey wrote essentially the same thing: “They prefer the friendship of the world to the friendship of God.” Both of these men fully expected worldliness to be one of the principal features of the end-times Church.

How could any sincere person deny this fact? Christians

indulge the lust of the flesh like never before through countless forms of pleasure (indulgent eating, viewing pornography, abusing drugs, etc.) and entertainment (following sports, playing video games, viewing television, etc.). American churchgoers have the financial means to give themselves nearly any possession for which their eyes lust. Prideful ambition is driving people to ever greater heights of outward success and prominence. Yes, evangelicals are fully engulfed in a love for “the things of the world” and are seemingly oblivious to the fact that their “love for the Father” has grown ice cold. They can claim to love God, but their daily lives are a denial of it. Surely these predictions are unfolding right before our eyes!

### THE GREAT APOSTASY

What exactly is the Great Apostasy? Apparently, in the days just before the return of Christ, there will be<sup>†</sup> a massive movement away from a true, intimate relationship with Christ. In the passage of Scripture where Paul warned about the powerful nature of the deception which would accompany the Antichrist, he also said that our “gathering together to” Jesus would not occur “unless the apostasy comes first...” (II Thessalonians 2:3)

The word apostasy (Gk. *apostasias*) is actually only used twice in the New Testament. *Strong's Bible Dictionary* defines it as a “defection from truth... falling away, forsake.” The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* goes into a little more depth: “a standing away from, a falling away, a withdrawal, a defection... abandonment of the faith.” The *Vine's Word Dictionary* says, “a defection, revolt...to forsake...used politically of rebels.”

When speaking of an individual, apostasy means to abandon a relationship with God that a person once had. But regarding God's people in general, the term should actually be broadened.

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<sup>†</sup> The point of this book is to prove that we are in the throes of it right now.