

## **ETERNAL SECURITY: Critiquing a Sermon by Pastor Charles Stanley**

By Steve Ray

Hello Protestant Friend:

Even though I have watched his show off and on over the months, I had no intention of watching Charles Stanley on television last night. It was just that I was tired after getting home and was getting some iced tea to drink and flipped on the TV and—there he was as big as life.

His Bible was dramatically floating up and down with pages flapping as he paced in front of the audience. I understand, as I learned the same speaking style as a Bible teacher. It is something pastors learn in Bible school. Delivery is crucial. His style or manner is similar to Kenneth Copeland's but not quite as dramatic and certainly without Copeland's arrogance.

He caught my interest tonight because his topic was judgment for the sinner and Eternal Security for the believer. Jesse and I sat together and watched while we wound down after the long, hot day.

After watching Charles Stanley last night I couldn't help but write a short note to you relaying my simple observations. Charles Stanley is a professional, smooth, having the experience of many years behind him - he's been around a long time; in fact, I remember listening to his tapes while driving between 1972 and 1974 before he became a household name. Back then he was just a up and coming Baptist preacher.

I have his recent book *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?* published by Nelson. He is the consummate Baptist preacher, successful enough so to become the leader of the Southern Baptist Convention. He even has the smooth Southern drawl. He is easy to listen to and doesn't tax his listeners with complicated or deep theological subjects. For a full-fledged Fundamentalist he is comforting and soothing to listen to, like a good old hymn from the good old days. It is very easy for me to go back in time to when I was a Baptist and settle right in with the Amen's and Alleluia's. However . . .

. . . I don't listen to these preachers indiscriminately anymore. My son Jesse and I listened carefully tonight as Pastor Stanley "broke open the word", which, as you know, is Baptist jargon for "preaching from the Bible". As you also know, we are required by St. Paul to "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thes 5:20-21).

So, to help Jesse understand these things, we decided to check out Pastor Stanley's conclusion by comparing it with the Bible. What especially caught my ear was his statement that "*we who teach the word of God must make sure we are absolutely correct in our teaching*". We had to ask: How does Pastor Stanley know *he* is absolutely correct? Does he consider himself *infallible*? In theory he would say no, but in reality, one has to

wonder. By what standard does he judge his teachings? And by what standard do those who listen to him judge his words? We will see shortly that if his word was accepted “as Gospel” last night on television, there is a serious deficiency in the “proving all things” department.

I have never heard Stanley, or those who join him under the title Fundamentalist ever refer to the Fathers of the Church, those who were the first to receive the Gospel from the mouths and pens of the apostles. I am now surprised that modern Protestants are so concerned with what their own pastors tell them about the faith, but don’t even know what the very first pastors taught in the first and second centuries - some of whom even knew the apostles personally.

I didn’t say anything substantiating his teaching - verifying his theological opinions with other authorities which would collaborate his teachings. Since he doesn’t “consult” the early Christian, as is typical of Baptist preaching, could it possibly be because the first Christians don’t substantiate Baptist teaching, or because he doesn’t want to confuse or tax his listeners with the teaching of the first Christians?

Is the Bible so perspicuous (“easy to understand”) that someone like Stanley can just flip back and forth through the pages of Scripture with such self-confidence? And do you or other listeners ever challenge his assumptions and conclusions? How does one judge his teaching to know if he is in the line of godly men down through the centuries, or is his preaching in line with the apostles?

His listeners have no objective means of “judging” his preaching except by using the New Testament; yet, their “Baptist tradition” prohibits them from seeing the Bible objectively. They have been trained by men like Pastor Stanley to understand the Bible like he does. Martin Luther, John Calvin, Philip Melancthon, Martin Bucer, and the other Reformers in the sixteenth century would roll over in their graves if they heard Stanley preach. He is no heir of the Reformation theology; his tradition comes from American Revivalism that is of recent origin.

Last night on television, Pastor Stanley was trying to prove that the judgment spoken of by St. John in his *Revelation* was only for those who did not “pray the sinners prayer” (Endnote 1) - the prayer by which they are saved, which makes one “eternally secure” regardless of whether they obey Christ, take up his cross, or live righteously before God or not.

The Bible verses Stanley used were plucked out of context from all over the New Testament at such a rapid pace that the average listener would have no idea if Stanley was practicing integrity with the passages or not. One would have to trust Stanley implicitly, hoping that he was using the Scriptural passages honestly, as the original writers intended and in the proper context.

I don’t think Charles Stanley *intends* to be dishonest with Scripture, nor does he hope to mislead people. He was taught the Fundamentalist tradition through his education and

pastoral training and now propagates it himself with the best of intentions.

In order to prove his point—that the final judgment is for sinners only and that those who have prayed the sinner’s prayer are eternally secure—he turned to Revelation 3:5 (Endnote 2). His intent was to prove that those who prayed the “sinner’s prayer” would make it to heaven no matter what; their names could never be erased from the Book of Life. The verse he used, without mentioning the other passages in Revelation using *overcomer* went like this:

*“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”*

I thought I would give my son Jesse the experience of “judging all things” like the Bereans were commended for practicing in Acts 17:11ff. If you have a few minutes I will demonstrate how Jesse and I proceeded with our investigation. We *could* take *all* the passages Stanley flipped to, but let’s just look at the most obvious ones. We will look at each phrase of Revelation 3:5 - one phrase at a time - and see if Charles Stanley is “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).

Please tell me, if you stop Stanley long enough to think about this verse which he rapidly refers to, how does it prove his point of “eternal security”? In fact, if you look at it carefully, even an untrained reader will see that it actually *disproves* his point. And if he is found to be using Scripture unfaithfully, out of context, to promote his own private judgment what can be said?

And if one discovers that “his gospel” is never found in the Church before the Sixteenth century “Reformation”, but not in the first centuries, not in the whole 1,500 years prior to Martin Luther, what is one to think of Charles Stanley’s theology? Did the Holy Spirit fail to teach the Christians the truth right out of the starting gate in the earliest years only to finally reveal it to Luther? Didn’t God reveal his truth, the “*Faith which was once delivered unto the saints*”.

Did no one know how to “be saved” for 1,500 years? This whole Fundamentalist gospel is a *new invention* - a tradition of men - and should be viewed with great suspicion, especially since our souls and eternal destinies, and those of our loved ones, are at stake. Even Protestant scholars are beginning to see Luther’s “gospel” as an innovation, a new teaching never taught or understood before the 16th century. Now let’s analyze Stanley’s use of Revelation 3:5.

**First phrase to analyze: “He that overcometh . . .”**

What about the word *overcome*? Strong’s Greek Dictionary defines “overcome” as used in the Bible “*of Christians, that hold fast their faith even unto death against the power of their foes, and temptations and persecutions.*” Calvinists believe only those who are predestined will overcome, all others will succumb and go to hell. Overcomers are those predestined to salvation by God; others, even

though they may desire and pray for salvation are destined and *predestined* to hell. If you don't think they really believe that, then ask a real Calvinist and they will tell you about TULIP (which we don't have time to discuss here). Fundamentalists, on the other hand, believe anyone who is "born again" by praying the sinner's prayer is automatically an overcomer (Endnote 3).

This does great violence to the whole text as I'm sure you recognize. It assumes that you overcome by saying the "sinner's prayer" and has nothing to do with resisting sin and living the required holy life before God (e.g, Heb 12:14). (Endnote 4). But look at the other places in *Revelation* where St. John uses the word *overcome*:

Revelation 2:7 "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*"

Revelation 2:11 "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that **overcometh** shall not be hurt of the second death.*"

Revelation 2:17 "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that **overcometh** will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*"

Revelation 2:26 "*And he that **overcometh**, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.*"

Revelation 3:12 "*Him that **overcometh** will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*"

Revelation 3:21 "*To him that **overcometh** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*"

Revelation 21:7 "*He that **overcometh** shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*"

With a casual reading of these contextual verses containing the word *overcome*, does it sound like a teaching of "easy believism," of "say a prayer and you'll slide through the pearly gates"?

How can Stanley use a verse with the word *overcome* in it to sanction his "Eternal Security" view of salvation? He can't. Especially when Paul says in Colossians 1:22-23, "*In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unproveable in his sight: **If** ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not*

*moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.”*

According to Paul’s exhortation: what if you don’t continue? And what if you aren’t grounded and settled? And if you are moved away, what then? Why didn’t Charles Stanley bring Paul’s *conditional* verse to our remembrance in his sermon? So, who are the overcomers? Would you be surprised to know that *no one* in the early Church agreed with Lehman Strauss or Charles Stanley?

**Second Phrase to Analyze: “. . . clothed in white raiment . . .**

Did Charles Stanley take the time to tell us what the *white raiments* were, as used by John in the Book of Revelation. “White garments” are referred to eleven times in his revelation. What do they refer to? Several times we are told about them: robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, garments “undefiled,” etc. The verse immediately preceding Revelation 3:5 says, “*Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*” (Rev 3:4).

If our robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb, how could they possibly become defiled? How could we defile our robes, which, according to the Fundamentalist, are the righteousness of Christ covering us, if all our sins are automatically forgiven: past, present and future? And how do we keep them undefiled? John tells us that those who overcome and have kept their robes undefiled and “*are worthy.*”

Aren’t we taught by Fundamentalist preachers that only *Christ* is worthy, that *we* are corrupt and ridden with sin? Aren’t Fundamentalists counting on the “righteousness of Christ to cloth them”? Something is definitely wrong somewhere here in Fundamentalist thinking. It needs to be considered when souls and eternity are at stake.

An interesting side note before we continue: Try to find one time where the New Testament uses the phrase “the righteousness of Christ”, as in “we are covered with the righteousness of Christ”! It is not in the New Testament! We find “the righteousness of God” and “the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev 19:8). Why do these preachers used this “man-made” formula, leading you to think Paul himself uses the phrase “the righteousness of Christ” over and over again when the phrase is never even found in Scripture?

What do the “white raiments” represent? Let’s look at this more closely, in context, to see what John says elsewhere: “*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*” (Rev 19:7-8).

I had to read this several times when I first discovered it before the implications sank in. As a Baptist I would have defiantly claimed that the white garment covering the Church and the individual Christian - the saints, the bride of Christ - was the righteousness of Christ. But that is not what John says. John says the white garments are the “righteousness of the saints” and those who overcome will be clothed in the

righteousness of the saints as they follow the Lamb (Rev 19:14). No wonder Luther disliked the book of Revelation along with the epistle of James; it was far too Catholic for him.

According to the Fundamentalist's reactionary theology, how can all this be? It is fun for me now to read their literature and commentaries and see how they dance around these verses that don't fit their Fundamentalist tradition, doing great injustice to the text, and to the whole teaching of Scripture and the early Church. They allow their tradition to nullify the word of God - isn't that what they accuse Catholics of doing? Do we see *any* hint of *faith alone* in these passages? No wonder Luther hated the book and thought it uninspired. Philip Melancthon had to argue with Luther convince him to leave it in his German translation of the New Testament based on the weight of centuries of tradition.

I don't remember Stanley bringing any of these points out either. I wonder why?

**Third Phrase to Analyze: “. . . I will not blot out his name out of the book of life . . .”**

Anyone who understands language at an elementary level knows this could very well imply that one's name *could* be, under some circumstances, *blotted out* of the book of Life (Endnote 5). Is it possible to be blotted out of the Book of Life? The first mention of “*blotting out*” comes from Exodus where it says, “*So Moses went back to the LORD and said, ‘Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written’. The LORD replied to Moses, ‘Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book’*” (Ex 32:31-33).

God can, and does, blot names from His book - those who sin. The Catholic Church has taught this from the first centuries and continues to do so today. Should one have unconfessed sin in their life, or if they alter the words in the book of Revelation (Rev 22:18,19), can they be sure that they are “eternally secure”? You may say yes; but to do so you must ignore Scripture and Christian teaching from ancient times. This is why the Catholic Church takes sin and confession so seriously. It is also why I tremble for you in your rejection of the whole of Scripture and the teaching of the Church.

Of course, many Fundamentalists will turn right to Romans 8 and remind us that nothing can separate us from the love of God. St. Paul writes, “*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom 8:38-39). But all we see here are manifestations of the physical creation, including extremes of time and space. No “creature” or physical thing!

Do you find, anywhere in this list things like disobedience, sin, apathy, murder, adultery, complacency, unbelief or denial? Of course not! But most people using this verse never notice that. Why didn't Paul add sin to his list of things that cannot separate us from Christ, if *nothing* can separate a believer from God or disturb their certainty of salvation? Far from being a verse that supports Eternal Security (see Endnote 6), this passage

exposes the lie of Eternal Security as understood by the Fundamentalist. It does no good for Stanley or others to run to 1 John 5:13 either, for there can be no absolute assurance there either, at least not in the Fundamentalist way of interpreting it. John gives you a lot of criteria in his epistle, tough criteria, to use as a measuring stick to determine if you have a moral certainty of salvation (For 1 Jn 5:13, see Endnote 7).

Can our name be blotted out of the book of Life? What does John say later in Revelation? *'For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**'* (Rev 22:18, 19). Ouch! In other words, if one takes away from this prophecy, God will remove him

out of His Book of Life! But what if the man had already prayed the "sinners' prayer"? Why didn't Stanley bring this element into his sermon? John isn't even speaking of those who *copy* or *print* the book, but to those who *hear* the book! Is Charles Stanley teaching from the book of Revelation as God requires? Is he adding to it, taking away from it, or neglecting to teach it in its fullness? Or is he merely misrepresenting the teaching of the book?

Can one's name be blotted from the book of Life? Take a look at most Fundamentalist commentaries and see how much this verse bothers them - and rightfully so, for it exposes their weakness and unbiblical teachings. Revelation 3:5, far from proving Stanley's point, clearly exposes Stanley's flaws.

One Evangelical commentary however, the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* doesn't beat around the bush but says, "*Verses 18-19 are a strong warning against any who would tamper with the contents of 'this book' (Rev), either textually or in its moral and theological teaching. So severe is the danger he is warning against that John says that those who teach contrary to the message of Revelation will not only forfeit any right to salvation in the Holy City but will have visited on them the divine judgments (plagues) inflicted on the beast worshipers.*"

From my perspective Charles Stanley is tampering with the moral and theological teaching of the Revelation. What do you think friend? Are you going along with him in his error by "hearing" the prophecy wrong?

**Fourth Phrase to Analyze: "I will confess him before My Father and His angels."**

One must overcome before Jesus will confess Him before His Father. Is there anything that will jeopardize Jesus confessing us before his Father? "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*" (Mat 10:32-33). Don't be misled thinking that this applies only to nonbelievers. Jesus is quite clear that he expects obedience, loyalty and righteousness, even to death - not just a mental assent or a sinner's prayer. Read the warning Jesus gave to Peter and the

other disciples in Matthew 18:21-35 (you could hardly put them in the category of “unsaved”):

*“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*

*28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.*

*31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?*

***34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”***

Remember, these are the words of the second Person of the Trinity, who knows what goes on behind the veil of time! I don’t see Jesus saying, “*As long as you pray the sinners prayer you’ll be saved with all sins forgiven, past, present and future. Don’t worry, I know you are corrupt, but I will overlook it - just believe*”. As Evangelicals we have been misled and sold a bill of goods. I didn’t know any better, you don’t know any better, because we were sheltered from the history of the Church and locked into the Fundamentalist tradition, and we felt very comfortable resting with the “cheap grace” of the truncated gospel. I would not want to be the teachers of this cheap gospel, especially in light of Revelation 22:18, 19. Nor would I want to be their followers.

### **The Great White Throne Judgment**

Stanley says those who pray the sinner’s prayer have no concern for this great judgment for they will avoid it. Oh yeah? Who is it that is judged at the Great White Throne Judgment - only unbelievers? Stanley takes the position that it is only for those involved in the second resurrection. Those in the first resurrection are all those who “believe in Christ” and they are immune from the judgment of death. But who is it that is part of the first resurrection? All believers? No! Martyrs! Read this:

*“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand year” (Rev 20:4-6).*

Why do you think it was so “easy” for Christians in the early centuries (e. g. Ignatius of Antioch in 106 AD) to give themselves so willingly to martyrdom? (Endnote 8). They saw it as the quickest “way to God,” a way that conferred special honor, which is clearly justified in John’s prophecy. That’s what this passage in Revelation says. It is NOT referring to all Christians. Who is then left to take part in the “second” resurrection? Everyone else, and everyone else will be judged based on their works as John makes abundantly clear by emphasizing it TWICE within two verses.

Look in your set of paperback *Tyndale Commentaries* that I helped you get and read pages 240-241. He disagrees with Stanley, as do most commentators and scholars (as did all of Christendom for 1500 years). Your commentary will read, *“The dead stood before the throne, small and great. None was excepted. Books were opened. John does not say what books they were, but the context indicates that they were books in which were recorded the deeds of all men. . . . Some have said that only the wicked are in mind here, . . . we must set ourselves against such absurdities: ‘Death’ is the common fate of men, Christian and pagan together: and ‘Hades’ is their common destination, until the Judgment day brings release’ . . . He is affirming strongly that all the dead, wherever they are, are included in the judgment. And he repeats that all were judged according to their works.”* **You friend, will not be excluded from this judgement!**

And the amount of faith or trust you had at conversion, or have now, will not be the matter adjudicated. Everywhere in the New Testament where the judgment is discussed, *works* are the criteria for judgment (Endnote 9). The author of the Commentary we just read, Leon Morris, goes on to say, *“John proceeds to inform us that the dead were judged according to what was written, according to their works. It is common New Testament teaching that judgment is on the basis of works.”*

Where does Stanley come up with his stuff? I’ll tell you. He gets it from unfounded, novel, Americanized, Fundamentalist tradition which never existed before the last few hundred years. The whole *Rapture* idea came from a “prophetic word” during an ecstatic trance from a woman in Scotland in the mid 1800’s. It was picked up by J. N. D. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren, and popularized in America through the Scofield Reference Bible. Why did the Holy Spirit hide this truth from the apostles and all believers for 1900 years? The sorry thing is, it is a false doctrine and is going to be deadly for a lot of people, especially those who have been warned and will have no excuse.

It would be easy to take his sermon sentence by sentence, and show you step by step all of his errors: historical and biblical, as well as to show you how sloppy his thinking is in these matters. He and I agree on many things (Trinity, deity of Christ, authority and infallibility of Scripture, etc.) but on these crucial issues of salvation and authority we sharply disagree.

In this letter we only looked at one verse referred to by Stanley, one that he buzzed by so fast no one would take the time to analyze it and test the teaching. As Evangelicals we were/are so acclimated to the jargon that it buzzes right into our mind with hardly a question. But, I suggest to you, rather I implore you, to *begin* questioning your Fundamentalist, American beliefs. Just like others in our past have sounded “right” only to be found poorly informed, so it is with this kind of preaching.

We have struggled through false teaching in the past before I became Catholic (Blessed by God forever!) and I consider it my duty to you as my friend to warn you once again.

I know I may get obnoxious about this at times, and very persistent about these matters, but they are eternal issue and should be given the utmost attention and severe consideration. If I saw a wolf sneaking up behind you I would be uncharitable, to say the least, if I spoke softly to you and lacked persistence. I love you very much and hope you take letters like this in the spirit in which they are written.

In the Lamb,

Steve

\*\*\*\*\*

Endnotes:

1. The following is a sample “sinner’s prayer”, one that I learned as I prayed at my mother’s side at four years old. I still remember it. You will find this prayer in “Gospel Tracts”, the type that are passed out at train stations and on street corners. “Dear Lord Jesus, I have sinned and therefore deserve eternal death. You died in my place and carried my sins. I accept your pardon for my sins, since you died as my substitute. I believe in you and your atoning death and accept your substitutionary death for my eternal salvation. I believe that I now have been given the gift of eternal life and I am eternally secure.”

One reader objected that Pastor Stanley would not pray such a simple prayer. I am not sure of that, for I lived in this tradition for my whole life. But to be fair, I will add Pastor Stanley’s suggested “Sinner’s Prayer”, a little more elaborate but essentially the same thing. This was in the “In Touch Magazine” dated November 1999 and this is the the prayer Pastor Stanley provides: “Heavenly Father, I have sinned against You. I confess that I have disobeyed You and sought to live my life independent of You. I want this to change. Please forgive my sins. I believe Jesus Christ died on the Cross for me,

and I accept His death as full payment for my sin. Right now, I accept Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as my personal Savior. I submit my life you You, Lord, and only desire to follow You. As the Holy Spirit enables me, I will walk obediently and uprightly before You. Amen”. Let me add that this is a great prayer, it should be prayed, but to think that praying this prayer will get us to heaven apart from the Sacraments, obedience and a life of holiness is a lie and will eventually, I am afraid, lead many “secure people” to hell.

2. His closing prayer and affirmation that those who had prayed along with him were now eternally saved and would absolutely spend eternity in heaven confirm my understanding of his teaching. Where is baptism? Why does he discard *every* teaching of the early Church on salvation and hold to his recent truncated version?

3. Lehman Strauss in his *The Book of Revelation*, “*The overcomer here is he who has been born again. . . . From the very moment of our conversion we were overcomers.*” This is not at all honest with the text. If he is right, do we know for sure we are overcomers? Have we overcome sin, the world and Satan? Do we know that before our life is ended? What if one completely succumbs to these evil influences and sin *after* they were born again? Do we cop out by saying, “Salvation must not have ‘taken’ in that person even though they prayed the sinner’s prayer and showed great signs of true conversion”? It has happened - “backsliding” you know - many times, even to people you know well.

4. According to *Strong’s Greek Dictionary* “overcome” means: 1) to conquer; 1a) to carry off the victory, come off victorious; 1a1) of Christ, victorious; over all His foes; 1a2) of Christians, that hold fast their faith even unto death; against the power of their foes, and temptations and; persecutions. Let me ask you: Does all this take place by the simple act of the sinner’s prayer? or, is something required of us, something like overcoming?

5. In Greece and Rome every city had a citizen’s registry to keep track of who was a citizen of each city. If one committed a crime or some other unacceptable action, their name was blotted from the city register. The word means to “oil and rub” which is what they would do. If it was written in wax, they would smudge the name out. If it were written on parchment, they would oil it to dissolve the ink and rub out the name. When John wrote this to his ad 90 listeners, they knew exactly what he was talking about. The citizens of God’s kingdom, like the citizens of the Roman or Greek cities, were citizens as long as they lived in obedience to the code of conduct.

6. Where do you find the words “Eternal Security” in the Bible? Those words are never used in Scripture. It was created to label the innovative and recent teaching developed after the Reformation. Why can’t you find the title or the teaching in the first and second century?

7. (From *Crossing the Tiber*) “I want to raise a question in regards to the great proof text 1 John 5:13 where John begins the Epilogue to his first epistle. It is often used as a

verification that one 'knows' for sure they have eternal life. It is often asked of Catholics, 'Do you know you are going to heaven, are you positive of eternal life?' To which the Catholic usually stumbles around and looks foolish as the great proof text is clearly read. I would make two points: first, 1 John 5:13 begins the epilogue to the epistle and the intent of John's letter was primarily to defend the true Faith against the heresies of the Gnostics who said one needed special knowledge (implying a knowledge the Christians did not have) to have eternal life. John is refuting the Gnostics and comforting the Christians that they did have the true knowledge and the true knowledge was the true and only way to eternal life. *It was not meant as a proof text between those who hold eternal security and those who deny it. It had a higher purpose which had little to do with the question of eternal security or absolute knowledge and confidence of eternal life.* This is born out in the second point I would like to make and that is the verse, as the epilogue, may very well be a summary of the preceding document. It should be noted that the conditional word 'if' is used 21 times in the preceding text and could very well be saying, 'If you understand and abide by the conditions of this letter, if you love one another, if you avoid sin, if you believe in the Son, etc. etc., you may know that you have eternal life. It is probably meant to be a Moral Certainty of which the preceding pages gives you a yardstick to measure yourself by. John Stott says in his commentary *The Epistles of John*, 'They (the recipients of John's letter) had been unsettled by the false teachers and become unsure of their spiritual state. Throughout the epistle John has been giving them criteria (doctrinal, moral, social) by which to test themselves and others. His purpose was to establish their assurance.' But at the same time, could they securely rest in their absolute assurance of salvation if their lives were not living up to the 'criteria' John gave them? One should be cautious in reading too much into a text without understanding its context, and the rest of Christian teaching.

9. *"Yes, I shall never again have such an opportunity of winning my way to God, nor can you, if you remain quiet, ever have your name inscribed on a more glorious achievement. For, if you quietly ignore me, I am the word of God; but if you fall in love with my human nature, I shall, on the contrary, be a mere sound. Grant me no more than that you let my blood be spilled in sacrifice to God, while yet there is an altar ready. You should form a choir of love and sing a song to the Father through Jesus Christ, because God has graciously summoned the bishop of Syria to come from the rising of the sun to the setting. How glorious to be a setting sun--away from the world, on to God! May I rise in His presence! . . . I am writing to all the Churches and state emphatically to all that I die willingly for God, provided you do not interfere. I beg you, do not show me unseasonable kindness. Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, which are the means of my making my way to God. God's wheat I am, and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground that I may prove Christ's pure bread. Better still, coax the wild beasts to become my tomb and to leave no part of my person behind: once I have fallen asleep, I do not wish to be a burden to anyone. Then only shall I be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ when the world will not see even my body. Petition Christ in my behalf that through these instruments I may prove God's sacrifice"* (Letter to the Romans, written by Ignatius of Antioch in 106 AD. He was fed to the lions and died a martyr).

10. Compare this with the words of Jesus: “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:28-29).