

Free Will? Liberal Christianity. Punished for Sins We Commit After We Become Christians? Tertullian and the Montanists

by Karl Kemp; March, 2015

All quotations were taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition, unless otherwise noted. Sometimes I make comments in the middle of quotations using brackets [] or [[]] to make them more obvious. I am using straight quotation marks ("), hyphens (-) instead of dashes, no footnotes, and a few other things like this because some of the internet sites where I post these articles require it. Cf., e.g., means "compare, for example."

This article started with what happened in a class I was teaching. I started the class by asking the question, "Do we have free will?" I mentioned that this is a very important question when it comes to the interpretation of Scripture and that this is one of the topics where we desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. All of the people in the class said they believe in free will. That didn't surprise me. We should believe in free will, but we need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches here. We must put all the emphasis on what the Bible teaches.

((For the record, I didn't find any places where the New Testament (NASB) uses the words "free will" in any relevant sense or "freedom of the will," or any places where it speaks of our choosing salvation. The NASB does use the words "free will" in Philemon 1:14, but in that context Paul wasn't saying anything about salvation. He was just telling Philemon that he wanted him to WILLINGLY, not under compulsion, answer his request and not hold anything against Onesimus. The Greek Dictionary in the back of the UBS Greek New Testament gives "willing" as the meaning for the Greek adjective used here ("hekousios, a, on"). The KJV translated "willingly"; the NKJV and Amplified Bible translated "voluntary." Philemon 1:14 is the only verse in the New Testament that uses this adjective.

There aren't any places in the New Testament that speak of our choosing salvation. (In one sense we do choose salvation, but much more must be said.) The New Testament does, however, speak often of God's choosing us (cf., e.g., John 15:16; Rom. 11:5; 1 Cor. 1:27, 28; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:9; and 5:13), but it also makes it clear that we must repent and submit (by faith) to His call to salvation in the gospel and cooperate with His saving, sanctifying grace on a continuous basis. God takes the initiative (sending His Son to die for us; sending the gospel to us, one way or another; drawing; convicting; revealing; etc.), but we must respond (by faith) to His saving grace in Christ.)

I went on to say that since mankind is fallen and in spiritual death there is substantial bondage of the will. We are, therefore, dependent on God's enabling grace to become believers, and after we become born-again believers we are dependent on the enabling grace of God to think right in our hearts and live in the righteousness and holiness of

God with the victory over sin. I was surprised when there wasn't unanimous agreement with what I said. For one thing, Calvinists and Arminians, though they disagree on some of the details, agree that we are dependent on the grace of God to become Christians and to live as Christians.

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, high creations of God, and given authority on the earth, but they were dependent on God too. We were created to be dependent on God. Being dependent on God is a good thing (but pride doesn't like it) since He is totally good and infinitely powerful and competent in every way. There is a very big difference between God (the Creator) and us (the created), and there still will be a very big difference (but less of a difference) between God (very much including God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) and us after we are glorified and begin to reign with Him. He is deity; we aren't and never will be. Adam and Eve (and the same truth applies to us, their offspring, and to the angels) were not created to be independent of God. Even before the fall Adam and Eve could not function as they were created to function apart from their right relationship with God and (to mention one super-important thing) the spiritual life that He made available to them on a continuous basis. After we are glorified we still will not be able to function as we should independent of God and the things He makes available to us (by His grace). God is the only source for spiritual life, physical life, truth, real love, righteousness, holiness, divine order, etc. We are, and we always will be, dependent on God and His grace. That's one reason we worship Him, and we always will.

SOME PASSAGES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT DEMONSTRATE THAT WE COULD NOT BECOME TRUE CHRISTIANS APART FROM THE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST. (This is of crucial significance since our faith must be based on God and what His Word teaches): See what Jesus said in JOHN 6:44, for example, **"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."** ((God draws, reveals, convicts, limits what the devil can do against us, etc., but that is quite different than His giving us saving faith. God doesn't give us saving faith. We must begin to respond to and cooperate with His grace, and we must continue to cooperate with His grace with faith to the end of the race. Our sovereign God has set up new-covenant salvation in a way that requires our serious input from the beginning to the end. We must continually respond to and cooperate with His saving, sanctifying grace in Christ through faith, but this does not detract from the fact that we are 100 percent dependent on the grace of God for our salvation and we must give Him all the glory for our salvation forever. (See my "A Paper on Faith" on my internet site [Google to Karl Kemp Teaching].))) LUKE 10:21, 22, **"At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, 'I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent [to those who are proud, not humble, and who won't accept the idea that they need to be saved, etc.] and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well pleasing in Your sight. (22) All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is but the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."** (Also see Matt. 11:25-27.) JOHN 6:65, **"And He [Jesus] was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you that no one can**

come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." ACTS 16:14, "**A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple, a worshipper of God** [a Gentile who was attracted to the God of Israel (the God of creation; the God of the Bible) but who had not become a convert to Judaism.], **was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.**" It is also true, according to the New Testament, and important for us to know, that Christ died for all, and all are called to repent and submit to God the Father, His Son, and the gospel of new-covenant salvation (cf., e.g., Acts 17:30, 31; 1 Tim. 2:1-7; and 1 John 2:2). We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! We cannot dismiss or explain away the passages that don't fit our theological viewpoints, but this is often done by Christians; we need to modify what we believe if it doesn't line up with the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

THE NEW TESTAMENT ALSO EMPHASIZES THAT WE ARE DEPENDENT ON THE SAVING, SANCTIFYING GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST TO THINK RIGHT AND LIVE IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS OF GOD WITH THE VICTORY OVER SIN. (Calvinists and Arminians agree with this point, but the Arminians typically put more emphasis on the call, enablement, and requirement for Christians to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God with the victory over sin. Holiness churches typically are Arminian, and they typically follow the teachings of John Wesley): See, for example, JOHN 15:5 ("**I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing**"); EPHESIANS 2:8-10 (((This passage deals with our becoming Christians and living as Christians.), "**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that** [[better, "**and this,**" which refers back to our salvation, not back to the word faith. The NASB has a note in the margin, "I.e. that salvation"; for one thing the word "faith" is feminine in the Greek and the word "this" is neuter; Paul would typically have used a feminine "this" if it referred back to the word "faith." I'll quote the Amplified Bible on this verse: "For it is by free grace (God's unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment *and* made partakers of Christ's salvation) through your faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves - not of your own doing, it came not through your own striving - but it is the gift of God."]) **not of yourselves** [not "out of/from (Greek preposition "ek") you (plural you)"], **it is the work of God** [more literally, "out of/from God is the gift (of salvation)"]; **(9) not of** ["out of/from" (ek)] **works** [works we have done apart from the grace of God in Christ], **so that no one may boast** [We cannot boast in ourselves for receiving a gift that was infinitely costly to God.], **(10) for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works** ["Works" of righteousness are required, works that the grace of God enables us to do.], **which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them** [God calls, enables, and requires us to walk in them, but He certainly doesn't force us to walk in them]. (These verses are discussed in my "A Paper on Faith," for one place.)); ROMANS 8:1-14; GALATIANS 5:16-25 (((These super-important passages from Romans and Galatians are discussed in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin" and my e-book, "Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin." Both books are available at amazon.com. A large number of other passages from the New Testament, and some from the Old Testament, could be listed here too.) For one thing, the Holy Spirit, who comes to dwell in all born-again Christians through the grace of

God in Christ (Rom. 8:9), enables us to think right in our hearts and to live right. (On thinking right by the Spirit, see, for example, Rom. 8:5-8 and Eph. 4:23 with the translation that the apostle Paul intended for Eph. 4:23, "be renewed by the Spirit [the Holy Spirit] in your mind [or, "in your thinking/way of thinking"; Greek noun "nous"]." The apostle had just said in Eph. 4:17 that a big part of the problem was that non-Christian Gentiles walk "in the futility [or vanity, emptiness] of their mind [or, thinking/way of thinking (Greek "nous)]." If you think wrong in your heart, you will live wrong. Thinking right in your heart includes loving and being submitted to the God of creation, the God of the Bible, the God of salvation, the God who will judge all people.

All the "fruit of the Spirit" that the apostle Paul mentioned in Gal. 5:22, 23 (the fruit that is manifested in the hearts and lives of true Christians that is produced by the indwelling Spirit of God as we walk by the Spirit) is one more confirmation that the godly lives of Christians come by God's grace. Everything the Spirit does in us and through us comes by the saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ. The New Testament makes it clear that we will not think right in our hearts, walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, manifest the fruit of the Spirit, etc. if we don't cooperate with the saving, sanctifying grace of God through faith, based on what the New Testament teaches, on a continuous basis.)); PHILIPPIANS 2:12b, 13 is a very important passage for this study: **"work out your salvation with fear and trembling, (13) for it is God who is at work in you, both TO WILL [my emphasis] and TO WORK [my emphasis] for His good pleasure."** The idea isn't that we are passive and God wills for us, but that He enables us to will that which is right as we walk in accordance with His Word by grace through faith. This obviously doesn't mean that we will automatically always will what is right or do what is right; we must always cooperate with God's grace through faith. We are called to walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis and not sin (cf. Gal. 5:16), but that doesn't mean that all Christians walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis. We sign a contract when we become Christians, agreeing (for one thing) to always walk by the Holy Spirit, but that doesn't mean that all Christians walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis. A walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, with the victory over all sin, is far from being automatic. We must make it a top priority to aim at this target (by grace through faith)!

As I Mentioned, I Was Quite Surprised When There Wasn't Unanimous Agreement (in the class I was teaching) To What I Said Regarding Our Dependence On The Enabling Grace Of God In Christ To Become Christians And To Live As Christians. Some people have more bondage to sin than others, but all of us are dependent on the enabling grace of God for salvation from the beginning to the end. Satan, the evil angels, and the large number of demons work on a consistent basis, to the extent that God permits, trying to keep non Christians from God and the truth, and in bondage to sin and darkness, and trying to get true Christians separated from the truth, righteousness, and holiness that they do have.

We are dependent on the enabling, saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ to live in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God after we become born-again Christians because the flesh (the old man who wants to continue in sin) exists, along with the

demons and the world whose god is the devil. The NIV often translates the "flesh" as the "sinful nature."

I'll include two relevant excerpts from the notes in the "Fire Bible: Global Study Edition" (© Copyright 2009 by Life Publishing International; published by Hendrickson; the notes and articles in this study Bible were written by Donald C. Stamps [now deceased], who was an Arminian; the NIV is used in this Bible). I picked this reference because several people in the class I was teaching use and respect this study Bible. These excerpts say exactly what I said about these two serious limitations to our will being (fully) free.

I'll quote two paragraphs from the note under "God's Grace" on page 2100, "God gives a degree of grace as a gift (1 Cor. 1:4) to unbelievers (i.e., those who do not yet know or have not accepted Christ) so that they may be able to respond to his message and mercy and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 2:8-9; Tit 2:11; 3:4)." And "God gives grace to believers (i.e., those who choose [see the preceding sentence] to accept and follow Christ) so they can be 'set free from sin' (Rom 6:20, 22), 'to will and to act according to his good purpose' (Phil 2:13; cf. Tit 2:11-12; see Matt 7:21, [see] note on obedience as a gift of God's grace [My second excerpt will be taken from the "note" referred to here). God's grace also helps believers to pray (Zech 12:10), to grow in their relationship with Christ (2 Pet 3:11), and to communicate the message about Christ to others (Acts 4:33; 11:23) [and to do the other things that God requires us to do]."

This second excerpt is on pages 1692, 1693, under the words, "Does The Will Of My Father" of Matt. 7:21. I'm not quoting the entire note. "The obedience to God's will demanded by Christ is an ongoing condition for salvation; it does not save us, but is a response and a result of true salvation. Yet, it is still God's power and grace (i.e., undeserved favor, love and help) that enables us to live by his standards. ... Because of the gift of God's power and grace [His power is included in the grace He makes available to us] we are capable of doing God's will and living right as we follow Christ with all our heart (Eph. 2:5). ... God always gives us the strength and ability to obey him and overcome sin. ... Yet God's gift of grace...does not cancel the need for action on our part [for our faith which cooperates with God's grace and we obey God; God's grace is not irresistible]. ... We are always free to reject God's grace...." We are free to reject God's grace (He doesn't force us to cooperate with His grace), but we are not free to walk in His righteousness and holiness on a continuous basis apart from His grace.

As I Mentioned, Calvinists And Arminians Agree That We Are Dependent On The Enabling Grace Of God To Become Christians And To Live As Christians. (I'm speaking of Calvinists and Arminians who believe the Bible is the Word of God and the truth; which includes believing that we are totally dependent on the Sacrifice of Christ Jesus; that we must be born again; that we are dependent on the grace of God to be saved, which includes all the work of the Holy Spirit; and that God must be given all the glory for our salvation forever, etc. Those who don't respect the Bible as the Word of God (that came as revelation from Him through His chosen spokesmen) but believe it is packed with error (which is typical for liberal Christians, some more than others) are liable to believe almost anything and reject almost any foundational doctrine of

Christianity, including such foundational truths as the virgin birth, the atoning death and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the existence of angels and demons, and the reality of miracles.

(((This double parenthesis that briefly discusses liberal Christianity goes on for nine paragraphs.) All evangelicals need to be aware of this super-serious problem. Many readers will be shocked to learn how far liberal Christianity deviates from the foundational teachings of the Bible, which follows their lack of respect for the truthfulness of the Bible. One reason this is important for us to understand is that liberal Christianity is very influential in many parts of the world, including large numbers of universities, seminaries, and denominations, and they communicate their ideas throughout the world to all who will listen. We need to be careful who we listen to. Some are more extreme than others, extreme looking at it from an evangelical Christian point of view. (Two primary characteristics of evangelicals are that we believe the Bible is the Word of God and that we must be born again.) I'm not an expert on liberal Christianity, but this topic was discussed quite a bit in the conservative, evangelical seminary I attended back in the late 60s and early 70s (Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis).

I remember reading the viewpoint of Rudolf Bultmann (AD1884-1976) in the library at seminary back about 1970 ("Kerygma and Myth; A Theological Debate," first published in 1953); it was hard for me to believe. He was a German Lutheran (much liberal theology got its start in Germany more than a hundred years before Bultmann); he was highly respected by many liberal Christians in his day; many considered him to be the king of the Christian theologians. I had some firsthand experience with this fact about 1970 when I took a class at Concordia Theological Seminary (Missouri Synod Lutheran) in St. Louis. (It was the only class I took there. It was convenient for me to take a class in beginning Hebrew there.) At the time I took that class there was a crisis taking place at the seminary between the conservative Christians and the liberal Christians (I didn't know about the crisis taking place when I signed up for the class), which led to a split with the conservative minority gaining control and the liberals (the majority of the teachers and students) leaving to start their own seminary (Seminex) not long after I took that class. That description is oversimplified. For one thing, I don't believe it would be fair to say that all those who left would be classified as liberal Christians, or to say they didn't have any legitimate complaints. Anyway, the reason I mentioned this is because I was able to see firsthand that many of the liberal Christians there boasted of Bultmann, and I heard the expression there that he was the king of the Christian theologians. While I was there I had the opportunity to go to the chapel service once. It was interesting. The speaker, a professor who had a lot of authority at the seminary and who was one of the minority conservative Christians there, preached on the reality of the devil. It was clear that he was preaching about the reality of the devil because he realized that large numbers of the faculty and students didn't believe in the devil. That is a widespread viewpoint among liberal Christians. You cannot have much (if any) respect for the Bible and believe the things that liberal Christians believe. Some are more liberal than others.

Bultmann held a viewpoint that would have been more extreme than some liberal Christians, and he was more honest than most to openly say what he believed (liberal pastors, for example, realized that many of the people in liberal churches were not ready to hear pastors deny the virgin birth, miracles, angels, etc.), but he was just part of a movement that had been going on for more than a hundred years. Bultmann stated in his book that I mentioned that modern man, with our modern, enlightened and scientific viewpoints, can no longer believe in angels and demons, miracles, the virgin birth, the atoning death, or the bodily resurrection of Jesus. (However, those things are at the very heart of what biblical Christianity is all about.) Those things (and he listed quite a few other things) are myths (things that are not literally true), which we must remove by demythologizing the Bible. I'll give another example of supposed myth from page 4 of Bultmann's book: "We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:15ff)."

I'll quote a few sentences from the one and one-half page article, "What is liberal Christian theology?" from the internet site gotquestions.org. "In liberal Christian teaching, which is not Christian at all, man's reason is stressed and is treated as final authority [not the Bible]. Liberal Christians try to reconcile Christianity with secular science and modern thinking. In doing so, they treat science as all-knowing and the Bible as fable-laden and false. ... Whether a person is saved from sin and its penalty in hell is no longer the issue; the main thing is how man treats his fellow man. 'Love' of our fellow man becomes the defining issue." And we are supposed to learn from the liberal theologians and the world (not from the Bible) what love means, where love means, for example, that you don't tell anybody that what they are doing is sinful. That would be intolerant and not loving from their point of view, but that isn't real love; ultimately it hurts the people they are "loving," because sin is real and we are all going to stand before God to be judged at the end of this age.

I'll briefly list some of the things that this article states about key viewpoints of liberal Christianity (I'll add a few details to what this article says): hell isn't real; the Bible isn't inspired; the virgin birth didn't happen; there was no bodily resurrection of Christ; there were no "supernatural" miracles; no atoning death (a loving God wouldn't send people to such a place as hell); "most of the human authors of the Bible are not who they are traditionally believed to be, For instance they believe Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible [far from it]"; Daniel did not write the book of Daniel and the "prophecies" in the book of Daniel do not include any actual, true prophecy from God (there is a widespread viewpoint among liberal Christians that the Bible does not include any actual, true prophecy from God); the Gospels were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; the apostle Paul did not write many of the epistles attributed to him; etc.; the Holy Spirit doesn't exist and there is no new birth; King David did not exist; etc.; I trust you can see that we have a very serious problem here.

I'll also quote several sentences from the eight-page article, "Liberal Christianity," in Wikipedia (on the internet). I won't include the endnotes. "Liberal Christianity, also known as liberal theology, is an umbrella term covering diverse philosophically and biblically informed religious movements and ideas within Christianity from the late 18th

century onward. ... 'liberalism' from the start embraced the methodologies of Enlightenment science as the basis for interpreting the Bible, life, faith and theology. [The Enlightenment, according to "Webster's New World Dictionary," is "a mainly 18th century European philosophical movement characterized by a reliance on reason and experience rather than dogma and tradition and by an emphasis on humanitarian political goals and social progress." We do need to abandon dogmas and traditions that are wrong, and there are many of them.]

The word 'liberal' in liberal Christianity originally denoted a characteristic willingness to interpret scripture according to modern philosophic perspectives (hence the parallel term modernism) and modern scientific assumptions, while attempting to achieve the Enlightenment ideal of objective point of view, without preconceived notions of the authority of scripture or the correctness of Church dogma. Importance was laid upon 'scientific' interpretation of the text.... Eventually, liberalism abandoned objectivity as a goal, as modern philosophy came to be dominated by philosophic perspectivism and moral relativism [for example, sometimes adultery is good; there are no moral absolutes]. ...

[I'll quote part of the first paragraph under the heading "Liberal Christian exegesis," which continues for a page and a half.] ... The style of Scriptural hermeneutics (interpretation of the Bible) within liberal theology is often characterized as non-propositional. This means that the Bible is not considered a collection of factual statements, but instead an anthology that documents the human author's beliefs and feelings about God *at the time of its writing* - within a historical or cultural context. Thus, liberal Christian theologians do not claim to discover truth propositions [revealed by God] but rather create religious models and concepts that reflect the class, gender, social, and political contexts from which they emerge. ... Thus most liberal Christians do not regard the Bible as inerrant [far from it], but believe Scripture to be 'inspired' in the same way a poem is said to be 'inspired' and passed down by humans.

[I'll quote two last sentences from this article.] Liberal Christianity in America has experienced a decline in membership of 70% - from 40% of the American Christian population to 12% - between 1930 and 2010. Conversely, the evangelical denominations have grown greatly in size, and the Catholic Church has seen more modest gains." (This is the end of the nine paragraph rather brief, but quite important, discussion of liberal Christianity.))

BRIEF DISCUSSION OF AUGUSTINE AND THE CALVINISTS AND ARMINIANS.

Augustine, who was followed to a significant extent by the Calvinists on this topic, said that when it comes to salvation free will is irrelevant. Augustine (AD354-430), in his later viewpoint, wrongly said that we are so fallen that we have no capacity to cooperate with God's saving grace or to have faith (he said that we have free will, but that we are free only to sin), and so God chooses (elects) some people and (irresistibly) works faith in them. Augustine overstated the effects of the fall. (Pelagius, his opponent, seriously understated the effects of the fall.) Augustine also wrongly included the idea that if we contributed anything to our salvation (including beginning to cooperate with God's grace

or to have faith) it would detract from the fact that we are saved by grace. However, the fact that we must cooperate with the saving grace of God in Christ and submit to the gospel by faith does not conflict with the fact that we are saved 100 percent by grace: See Rom. 4:16, for example: "For this reason [since we could not be saved by the Law], *it is by faith*, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace...." Everything that we receive by faith comes entirely by grace; we do not earn/merit salvation in any of its aspects by faith. That which is freely given (a gift) is no less freely given because it must be received. A drowning man cannot boast in himself for taking hold of a life preserver.

Augustine included the idea in his later viewpoint that since our salvation is all of God there is no way that the elect could fail to become Christians. The "I" of the Calvinistic TULIP stands for "Irresistible Grace," which means that the ones God has chosen (elected) are not able to resist His saving grace. The "U" of the Calvinistic TULIP stands for "Unconditional Election," which means that God's choice of one and not another has nothing to do with differences between people because all are "Totally Depraved," the "T" of the TULIP," which includes the idea that we are all total zeros when it comes to being able to cooperate with God's grace or to have faith. The "P" of the Calvinistic TULIP stands for the "Perseverance of the Saints," which means that the saints (the elect) will persevere and be saved when the end comes. That doctrine of Augustine is the source for the widespread doctrine that true Christians cannot lose their salvation. I have an excerpt in my paper "Once Saved, Always Saved?" from a Calvinist scholar who states that the doctrine that we cannot lose our salvation "was first explicitly taught by Augustine." The early Christian Fathers believed that we can lose our salvation. It is true that mankind has fallen to such an extent that we are dependent on the grace of God to be saved, but I don't believe the Bible backs up the idea that we are so fallen that we cannot begin to cooperate with God's grace or have faith. The "L" of the Calvinistic TULIP stands for "Limited Atonement," which means that Christ didn't die for all people, just for the elect. (Some Calvinists - four point Calvinists - reject the "L.") Although some passages fit the "L" idea OK, I believe Acts 17:30, 31; 1 Tim. 2:3-6; and 1 John 2:2 suffice to refute that idea. I don't agree with any of the letters of the TULIP.

I Love The Calvinists, and I know that large numbers of them are making it a high priority to live for God in His truth, righteousness, and holiness. I was saved through Calvinists and grounded in the faith through Calvinists, and I graduated from a Calvinistic seminary with an MA in Biblical Studies. However, after I began to study these things (for the most part before I started going to seminary in 1969), it became clear to me that though Calvinists have so many things right, they are wrong (they miss the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches) in the places where they followed Augustine's later viewpoint. I have discussed these things in papers on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching): Especially see my "A Paper on Faith"; "Once Saved, Always Saved?"; and "Romans Chapters 9-11" (Augustine and the Calvinists lean heavily on some verses from these chapters in Romans). I also recommend my foundational paper, "The Christian, the Law, and Legalism."

I never did accept the "T" "U" "L" or the "I" of the Calvinistic TULIP (I was never seriously confronted with the need to believe in them; most of the Calvinists I have

known didn't put much emphasis on them, if any, but I realize that some Calvinists do emphasize them, including some seminary professors), but I totally accepted the "P" (once saved, always saved) the first year or two after I became a born-again Christian. Every Christian I knew for quite a long time believed that doctrine. It took me a while, and it was difficult, but when I began to seriously study what the New Testament teaches on this topic I had to change. (See my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?") We need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on this topic, as on every topic, but this is a very important topic that can significantly affect the way we think and live. I put a priority on trying to give the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on this topic in that paper; I'm not trying to win an argument; I'm trying to please God and be a blessing to the Body of Christ.

Most of the Calvinists I have known were not abusing the doctrine once saved, always saved. For example, they wouldn't tell a "Christian" who was accepting unbiblical teachings and/or yielding to living in sin that all is well and there is no need to be overly concerned because we know that you cannot lose your salvation. They would call for repentance, and they often say that those Christians who abandon the truth or persist in obvious sin must have never become true Christians. (I believe the New Testament makes it clear that born-again Christians can lose their salvation. See my "Once Saved, Always Saved?") However, many Christians are abusing the doctrine in our day: Some Christian leaders even go to the extreme of teaching that those who have become Christians cannot lose their salvation even if they stop having faith in Christ, or no matter what sins they are living in. (I give a significant example of a very prominent Christian leader who teaches this in my "Once Saved, Always Saved?")

God certainly doesn't want any true Christians to fall away, quite the opposite, and He warns us and provides the grace for us to stay faithful, and He won't let us be tempted beyond what we are able (1 Cor. 10:13), but I believe the New Testament makes it quite clear that we can fall away. (God's will isn't always done. For one thing, He doesn't will the sin of Christians, but He, in His sovereignty, leaves much room for us to sin; He lets us be tested.) Similarly, God doesn't just give us faith to become Christians or compel us to become Christians (see my "A Paper on Faith"). God must receive all the glory for our salvation since we are saved by grace, but we must cooperate with His grace before we become Christians, and we must cooperate with His grace by faith on a continuous basis (in accordance with His Word) after we become Christians.

I Love The Arminians Too, and I know that large numbers of them are making it a high priority to live for God in His truth, righteousness, and holiness. They are named after Jacobus Arminius (AD1560-1609). Arminius was a Calvinist (named after John Calvin, AD1509-1564), but he began to see that some of the teaching of the Calvinists missed the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. The Arminians reject all five points of the Calvinistic TULIP. (Actually, the Calvinists came up with the TULIP in reaction to what the Arminians were teaching.) As I mentioned, I don't agree with any of the five points of the TULIP.

Speaking of the Calvinist and the Arminian teachings in general, I believe the balanced truth is between the Calvinists and Arminians, but closer to the Arminians. I don't believe the Bible answers every question or reveals exactly where the balanced truth is, but God has revealed all we need to know. One thing that Calvinists and Arminians (and other Christians) need to be aware of (and seriously deal with) is that when you are reacting against what some other Christians believe, it is very easy to go too far in the other direction. (It is also rather easy for Christians who are debating other Christians to temporarily forget that God requires us to walk in love, and especially toward other Christians; and we must go very cautious about writing off our opponents and saying that they aren't true Christians.) Heated debates tend to make both sides overstate their positions. This happens a lot throughout the Body of Christ on many different topics. Also, the Arminians went beyond what Arminius taught as some Calvinists have gone beyond what Calvin taught.

IF WE AREN'T VERY CAREFUL, TRYING TO WIN AN ARGUMENT AND TO DEFEND OUR TURF BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WILL OF GOD AND THE BALANCED TRUTH OF WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES. For one thing, it is rather easy for sincere born-again Christians to walk in the flesh (in the old man), instead of walking by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis, which we are called, enabled, and required to do (cf. Gal. 5:16). This is a very serious problem. Church history has demonstrated that it is rather easy for Christians (even sincere, true Christians) to come up with wrong interpretations of the Bible; it is rather easy to sin. I have observed over the years that many, or most, Christians are not looking for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, because, for one reason, they think they have it already.

The Arminians typically put more emphasis on the super-important topic of holiness and victory over sin than the Calvinists, and their teaching is better on this topic. For one thing, Arminius wrote a 200 page paper showing that the apostle Paul was not saying in Rom. 7:14-25 that Christians cannot have the victory over sin in this life, and he is followed by most Arminians. Arminius rightly said that Paul was speaking of a non-Christian in those verses. Most Calvinists believe that Paul was speaking as a Christian in those verses. That wrong interpretation, which did not originate with Calvinists, has done tremendous damage to Christianity.

(((This double parenthesis goes on for six paragraphs.) I discussed Romans chapter 7 in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin," and to a greater extent in my recently published e-book, "Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin," which serves as an introduction to the paperback book. Both books are available at amazon.com. And I discussed the interpretation of Romans 7 in some detail in a paper on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). It is quite significant that I have not been able to find any Christian writers until after AD 400 who understood Rom. 7:14-25 to teach that Christians cannot walk with the victory over sin. If any such writers exist they were a rare exception to the very dominant viewpoint. The early Christian writers did a much better job teaching that Christians are called, enabled, and required to walk with the victory over sin than the church of our day.

Let's briefly discuss what it involves to believe that the apostle Paul was speaking as a Christian in Rom. 7:14-25. This is a very serious matter! It is no wonder that this erroneous interpretation has done so much damage! I believe this is an impossible interpretation! I do acknowledge, however, that a large number of very sincere, born-again Christians who are making it a priority to live in accordance with God's Word have accepted that wrong interpretation. For one thing, it is difficult to not accept teachings that have been part of your denomination (movement) for hundreds of years. (Martin Luther and John Calvin, for example, both misinterpreted Rom. 7:14-25.)

The apostle Paul could not have said of himself as a Christian, "I am of flesh, sold [better, "having been sold"] into bondage to sin" (Rom. 7:14b). Paul went on to demonstrate what he meant by being a slave of sin in Rom. 7:15-24 and part of verse 25. For example, in Rom. 7:20, 21 he said: "For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. (20) But if I am doing the very thing [sin] I do not want [because I am a slave of sin, having been sold into bondage to sin], I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." Paul was speaking here, as he was in 7:14, of a person who was a slave of sin, having been sold into bondage to sin.

Being a slave of sin (having been sold into bondage to sin), by definition, is a totally different matter than a Christian falling into an occasional act of sin, for which acts they are quick to repent. You can't be a slave of sin (having been sold into bondage to sin) and be a Christian. Christians must be slaves of God and His righteousness and holiness (see Romans chapter 6, for example). I am not saying (and the New Testament doesn't teach) that if born-again Christians are not walking with the total victory over all sin that it demonstrates that they are not true Christians, but we need to be quick to repent if we should sin, and we must make it a top priority to walk with the victory over all sin by the saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ. That is the Christian ideal, and we must be aiming at that target. All sin, if it really is sin, is a serious matter.

The apostle wasn't saying in Rom. 7:20 that the person he was speaking of (a person under the Mosaic Law [see Rom. 7:14a, 16]; not a Christian) wasn't guilty for sinning, but HE WAS EMPHASIZING THE PITIFUL STATE OF BEING A SLAVE OF SIN. Throughout Romans chapter 6 the apostle spoke of the fact that we were slaves of sin but now we have been set free from being slaves of sin; now we are slaves of God and His righteousness. PAUL'S WHOLE PURPOSE IN ROM. 7:14-25 WAS TO EMPHASIZE THAT ALL MANKIND (INCLUDING THOSE UNDER THE LAW) NEED TO BECOME CHRISTIANS SO WE CAN BE SET FREE FROM BEING SLAVES OF SIN (and demons). He emphasized that point repeatedly throughout Romans chapters 6 and 8, the chapters right before and right after Rom. 7:14-25, and even in Rom. 7:5, 6, and we very often find this teaching throughout the New Testament.

It is true that mankind has been sold into spiritual death and into slavery to sin through Adam's transgression, which Paul had just dealt with in Rom. 5:12-21, but a big part of the gospel that the apostle Paul proclaimed is the fact that born-again Christians have been set free from this spiritual death and being slaves of sin and demons (see Rom. 8:2 for example). There is no way that the person spoken of in Rom. 7:14 and the

verses that follow could be a Christian without totally contradicting what the apostle said in Romans chapters 6 and 8 and 7:5, 6, and many other passages throughout his writings and the other writers of the New Testament. (This is the end of the six paragraph double parenthesis.)) Also, as I indicated above, the Arminians (rightly, from my point of view) understand that the New Testament shows (in many passages; Matt. 25:1-10; Rom. 11:17-24; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-3; and Revelation chapters 2 and 3, for example) that born-again Christians can fall away. (See my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?")

There are very large numbers of very sincere Christians who are Calvinists, and the Arminians need to hear some of the things that Calvinists are teaching, things that are clearly included in the Bible. Like I said, I believe the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches will be found between the Calvinists and the Arminians, but closer to the Arminians. For one thing, I believe that many Christians will agree that some of the best Bible commentaries have been written by Calvinists, and Calvinists rightly put a strong emphasis on the need for us to glorify God.

Many Arminians could (should) learn from Calvinists regarding what the Bible teaches about God's foreknowing some people (not all people) with favor (cf. Rom. 8:29 [I highly recommend that you read on Rom. 8:28-30 in my paper that includes Rom. 8:16-39 that is on my internet site (for one thing, that discussion, which includes excerpts from others, aims at the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches); also see on Eph. 1:3-14, which is all one sentence in the Greek, in that same paper; and see my "Once Saved, Always saved?" especially under the heading "Origin of the Doctrine Once Saved, Always Saved."]). Regarding God's choosing (electing) some people before the foundation of the world (cf. Eph. 1:4 [also see 1:5]; 2 Thess. 2:13) and regarding His writing their names in the book of life before the foundation of the world (cf. Rev. 17:8; 13:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; and 3:5). Regarding His calling them (the word "call" is almost always used in the New Testament of God's special calling of the ones He has chosen [cf. Rom. 8:28, 30; Acts 2:39; Rom. 1:6; 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14]). I'll quote Acts 13:48: "When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."

The Bible has quite a bit to say on this topic that we cannot dismiss and hold the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. Some Arminians try to make these verses fit their viewpoint, but in my opinion, they haven't been any more successful than the Calvinists have been when they try to explain away the many passages that demonstrate that born-again Christians can lose their salvation. We need the balanced truth between what the Calvinists and Arminians teach. Calvinists and Arminians both need to make room for the passages that don't fit their sincere - but oversimplified - viewpoints. Even if the Bible doesn't show us exactly where the balanced truth is, we know about where it is, and we can refrain from holding, and teaching, out-of-the-Biblical-balance viewpoints.

The Biblical strand of truth that emphasizes God's role in our salvation is designed to glorify God and to put the emphasis where it should be, on God: He is carrying the load

(cf. Matt. 11:28-30), but it must be understood that we must do the things that God requires of us, by His enabling, saving, sanctifying grace in Christ by faith. The apostle Paul emphasized God's role in our salvation, but he also made it clear that we are obligated to do the things that God requires of us (we must humbly repent as required, and we must appropriate and cooperate with His enabling, saving, sanctifying grace in Christ on a continuous basis by faith) to become Christians, to live as Christians, and to continue to be Christians.

The Bible shows that God is sovereign (Calvinists emphasize this point), but it also shows that in His sovereignty He has chosen to leave quite a bit of room for our role in His plan of salvation. The New Testament often and clearly warns that believers (true Christians) can become unbelievers and it mentions erasing names from the book of life for believers who won't repent where repentance is required. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. We cannot cling to the set of verses that fit our point of view and explain away, one way, or another, all the verses that don't fit. However, many Christians are doing this on a regular basis. It is easy to do.

Also, it is very important for us to understand that the New Testament makes it clear that Christ died for all and that He calls all people to repent and submit (in faith) to the gospel (cf., e.g., Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 17:30, 31; 1 Tim. 2:3-7; and 1 John 2:2) and to press on, by grace, through faith, until the end of the race (when Jesus returns or we die). Arminians emphasize these truths and the passages that teach them. We cannot dismiss the passages that speak of Christ dying for all and calling all people to repent and submit in faith to the gospel because there are verses that speak of a special call for the elect, etc. We desperately need to hold the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! I mention this point often. I believe it needs to be repeated.

For one thing, those verses that speak of a special call for the elect (and similar verses) were designed to bless those who had become believers and to glorify our sovereign God. They were not designed to show that Christ didn't die for all: I don't believe that God intended to communicate the idea to any people that they will be wasting their time if they humble themselves before Him and begin to look to Him for salvation (in accordance with His Word, by faith) with a repentant heart and then continue to press on as they cooperate with His saving grace in Christ (by faith). He sent His Son to die for all people, and He called all people to repent and submit to His plan of salvation. We cannot do any better than stay with the balanced truth of what the Bible that God gave us teaches. It tells us all that we need to know, even if it doesn't answer every question.

We must avoid building theological systems that fit our favorite passages, while ignoring other passages that are also part of God's truth. We need to submit to everything the Bible teaches, not come up with theological systems that sound good but leave out (or explain away) significant parts of what the Bible teaches.

Based on what I have observed, Calvinism rightly puts a strong emphasis on the grace of God, looking to Him, trusting Him, being secure in Him, and giving Him all the glory. Those things are all good and necessary. One practical problem, however, is that some

Calvinists think of themselves being secure when they don't have a scriptural right to feel secure. If we aren't believing the truth of God's Word and living in line with His Word by His saving grace in Christ, with a high priority, through faith, WE NEED TO REPENT, not feel secure because we believe that the New Testament teaches that we cannot lose our salvation. Such Christians need to take seriously the large number of warnings in the New Testament that we can lose our salvation, but I have observed that many Calvinists and others who believe once saved, always saved do not take the warnings seriously. Some of them, in fact, expend much effort trying to explain away the warnings. (I did some of this myself my first year or two after I became a born-again Christian.) One thing that they often say is that the warnings only apply to those "Christians" who never were born again. It is true that some "Christians" never were born again to begin with, but it is very clear that at least most of the warnings in the New Testament were addressed to born-again Christians. (See my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?") It ought not be; it is isn't God's will; but believers can become unbelievers.

If Arminians aren't careful they can put too much emphasis on what THEY have to do; for one thing, they can end up being insecure and striving in the flesh in their strong desire to live righteous and holy lives. It happens a lot. We must walk in the enabling grace of God and by the Spirit of God, but this is far from being automatic for born-again Christians! (We Christians cannot overemphasize our dependence on the grace of God and on making sure that we give Him all the glory.) And the fact that some Arminians think they often lose their salvation (which doesn't line up with the Bible) doesn't lend itself to having a secure relationship with God.

I'm thinking of an Assembly of God (Arminian) pastor (now deceased) that I used to fellowship with and I did some teaching at his church. I consider him to be one of the best friends I have ever had. I was very much impressed with him as a brother in Christ and as a very sincere Christian who walked in love and was an effective pastor who was very much centered in the Bible. (Did I ever tell him that? No.) I was shocked when he told me once that he often didn't have an assurance that he would make it to heaven. We should have that assurance. Emphasizing the grace of God and His role in our salvation lends itself to that assurance, but we must be careful we don't emphasize the grace of God in a way that leads to the idea that we can coast - we must cooperate with the grace of God on a continuous basis, by faith. For one thing, the world, the flesh (the old man that wants to continue in sin) and the devil and his multitudinous hosts are highly motivated to destroy us. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches and to appropriate and cooperate with all the grace God has made available to us!

HOW ABOUT THE VIEWPOINT OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS ON GRACE AND FREE WILL? This topic is worth considering, even though we must base our doctrines on the Bible. We can learn quite a bit from those writings. Those writers were sincere Christians who were trying to be faithful to God and His Word (the Bible), and some of them knew some of the original apostles or those who had known the apostles. We will discuss what the early Christian Fathers (limited to the ante-Nicene Fathers,

who wrote before the Council of Nicea of AD 325) said on the topic of free will and grace in the last section of this paper: They spoke a lot about free will, but they also believed that we are dependent on the enabling grace of God in Christ to become Christians and to live as Christians. One reason I'm including that section in this paper is because the idea that those Fathers taught that we can become Christians by our free will and live for God in His righteousness and holiness with the victory over sin by our free will was expressed in the class I mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

I am not an expert on the writings of those early Christian Fathers, but it is clear that they did understand our dependence on the enabling, saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ. Some Christians say that those writers did not emphasize the grace of God enough, and I agree that some of them did not emphasize the grace of God enough, but they did understand our dependence on the grace of God, as the excerpts in the last section of this paper demonstrate. (Many Christians in our day do not emphasize the grace of God enough, and many, following the lead of Augustine, overstate the grace of God by saying that our salvation depends only on the will of God, that He gives us faith and that we cannot fall away, etc. It is easy to miss the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches; and it is easy for born-again Christians to walk in the flesh instead of walking by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis, to which we are called.) The New Testament puts a very strong emphasis on our being saved through the grace of God in Christ. One place where many of the early Christian Fathers failed to understand the grace of God in Christ was when it came to dealing with sins that were committed after becoming Christians (post-baptismal sins). We will discuss this serious problem in the lengthy (twenty-seven page) section that follows:

SOME OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN FATHERS HAD A DIFFICULT TIME DEALING WITH SINS COMMITTED BY CHRISTIANS (POST-BAPTISMAL SINS), especially sins like murder, adultery/fornication, or apostasy (including during and after times of intense persecution). It is easy to criticize (and all the more so when you are not experiencing the things they were experiencing), but it seems clear that some of the early Christian Fathers sincerely, but substantially, confused the issue. Those Christians took very seriously the idea that Christians are not supposed to be sinning, and especially sins like those I mentioned, which is good and necessary, but some of them came up with some wrong ideas, ideas that are not Biblical. Every error hurts; some more than others; and some errors distort the gospel to such an extent that it cannot save. We need to be careful with God's Word and His Church.

When I started to write this paper, I didn't plan to include this section, which goes on for twenty-five pages, but the more I got into this topic I could see that it is quite relevant to understanding the gospel, with its strong emphasis on the grace of God in Christ, and the topic of righteousness, holiness, and victory over sin. I didn't make an attempt to fully discuss this topic in this section. You could easily write a book or two on this topic and get into all the details regarding how procedures varied from one church Father to another, from one location to another, and from one generation to another, or how some individual church Fathers changed their views with time. I do believe, however, that I get into more than enough details in this section of this paper to demonstrate that many of

the early Christian Fathers had a very difficult time dealing with the sins of those who had already become Christians and that some of those problems continued in Roman Catholic theology.

Some (including Tertullian, about AD160-240 [in his later writings, after he joined the Montanists], Hippolytus [AD170-236], and Novatian [died in AD 258]) argued that the Christian church didn't have the right to tell Christians who had committed sins like murder, apostasy, or adultery/fornication that they were forgiven (cf. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29). It seems clear to me that they were wrong. Also, there was widespread agreement among other Christian leaders that forgiveness for such sins could be granted, but only one time. We find that viewpoint taught in the "Shepherd of Hermas," for example, which probably was written about AD100-150.

Dealing with sin in the church can get complicated, and it is very important for us to go very slow here and do everything we can do to make sure that the will of God is done. (It is easy to come up with doctrines, ideas, and judgments that seem right from our point of view, and are widely accepted, but that God doesn't agree with. It is rather easy for born-again Christians to think in the flesh. How much more so for those "Christians" who haven't been born again by the Spirit.) The well being of the Christian church and the hearts and lives of God's people are very directly affected. It is easy to talk and make judgments, and it is easy to be wrong too.

We need to take this topic very seriously, which includes humbly and with faith looking to God for direction (He knows the hearts of all people; we don't; and He is the One who ultimately forgives or doesn't forgive), with an emphasis on being guided by the Scriptures, but the Scriptures do not answer every question. For one thing, sometimes we won't know if a person has repented. In cases like that we need to go very slow about passing judgments. In other cases, however, it is obvious (by their words and actions) that a person has not repented.

We must have discipline in the Christian church (cf., e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20). As I mentioned, God is the One who forgives, or doesn't forgive. The fact that some Christian leader tells a person they are forgiven doesn't guarantee that God forgives them. (And the fact that some Christian leader tells a person they are not forgiven doesn't guarantee that God doesn't forgive them.) What Jesus said in John 20:23 ("If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.") doesn't apply to all Christian leaders or to every judgment made by Christian leaders. For one thing, God will not (He cannot) allow into heaven those He knows to be unrepentant rebels in their hearts. They wouldn't want to be in heaven on God's terms, not that they will want the alternative.

GOD FORGIVES CHRISTIANS WHO SINCERELY REPENT, and He certainly desires the repentance of all Christians who need to repent. (God calls all people to repent and submit, in faith, to Him, His Son, and the gospel.) As I mentioned, God knows our hearts, and He knows who sincerely repents, or doesn't sincerely repent, but very often we don't know if a Christian is sincerely repenting. True repentance includes being sorry

for our sins, but it doesn't include hating ourselves or attacking ourselves in various ways, as if that helps solve the sin problem - it doesn't; sometimes demons (in the name of religion) drive Christians to hate themselves and punish themselves. We are forgiven and restored through the unearned, undeserved grace of God in Christ through faith, even as we are enabled (and required) to walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God by grace through faith.

TRUE REPENTANCE includes making things right as far as possible (including returning things that have been stolen, for example, where possible, and asking people to forgive us where this can be done in a way that doesn't make the problem worse). And true repentance requires making it a top priority to walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, with the victory over sin (all sin), through the saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ, which includes all the work of the indwelling Righteous and Holy Spirit of God. For many this will require making it a top priority to learn what the New Testament teaches on this topic: We are called, enabled, and required to walk with the victory over sin (all sin) by God's sufficient grace, but we cannot appropriate and cooperate with God's saving, sanctifying grace until we know for sure in our hearts - in faith - that this is what the New Testament teaches. And after we know for sure in our hearts that this is what the New Testament teaches, we still must walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God on a continuous basis, by grace through faith, against the opposition of the world, the flesh (the old man who wants to continue to sin), and the devil and his hosts, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD IS SUFFICIENT!

WE MUST UNDERSTAND AND PUT THE EMPHASIS ON THE FACT THAT GOD FORGIVES AND RESTORES CHRISTIANS WHO REPENT THROUGH THE SAME ATONING DEATH OF THE LAMB OF GOD THROUGH WHICH WE BECAME CHRISTIANS (1 JOHN 2:1, 2). I believe we seriously confuse the issue if we say that GOD REQUIRES CHRISTIANS TO BE CHASTENED/PUNISHED (to do penance, to suffer, to hate themselves, to torture themselves, etc.) IN ORDER TO BE RECONCILED TO HIM for their after-they-became-Christian sins (especially referring to the more serious sins) SINCE WE HAVE DISHONORED HIM AND HIS JUSTICE REQUIRES IT. This idea surfaced (and then grew) in the early Christian church. I'll include some excerpts from Tertullian (about AD160-240) as we continue. I BELIEVE THIS IDEA GIVES A VERY WRONG IMPRESSION OF GOD AND SIGNIFICANTLY DISTORTS THE GOSPEL OF HIS GRACE. It is easy to distort the gospel. It has been distorted in just about every conceivable way it is possible to distort it. Many have distorted it to such an extent that it can no longer save. We must make it a top priority to believe the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, which includes rejecting every wrong teaching or tradition that we have picked up one way or another.

I agree, of course, that it is much more serious for us to sin after we become Christians than before we became Christians because of the truth, enabling grace, etc. that God has given us. I should mention that there is a gigantic difference between being under the old covenant and under the new covenant. The incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, resurrection, ascension and present ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ has made a gigantic difference. How could these things not make a gigantic difference?

It may seem too good to be true, but THE SAVING, SANCTIFYING GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST REALLY IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, BUT IT IS TRUE - with its GRACE upon GRACE. The triune God paid an infinite price in the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God to provide this GRACE upon GRACE. The Lord Jesus Christ bore the punishment for our sins (along with the guilt), including (according to 1 John 2:1, 2) any sins we commit after we become Christians. If a Christian stole something, for example, they may go to jail, but if they have truly repented and been forgiven by God on the basis of the atoning death of the Lamb of God there is no basis for Him to punish them. I BELIEVE IT IS A VERY WRONG IDEA TO THINK THAT SINCE GOD'S HONOR HAS BEEN DEFAMED BY OUR SIN, HIS JUSTICE REQUIRES HIM TO CHASTEN/PUNISH US AFTER WE HAVE CONFESSED OUR SINS AND TRULY REPENTED. But we do have to truly repent, which includes making it a top priority to walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God (by grace through faith) on a continuous basis (which is a great privilege, not a burden [cf. 1 John 5:3]); and we must be aware of the fact that believers can become unbelievers if we start leaving room for sin. Sin (and the devil and his hosts) is a powerful destructive force. It's much safer to play with rattlesnakes than with sin.

God will exhort, warn, discipline, and even severely discipline/chasten Christians (in love) to help wake them up and motivate them to repent when it is needed ((cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 5:1-13, especially verse 5; 11:29-32 [1 Corinthians chapter 11 is discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site]; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; Heb. 12:3-17 [This passage includes the idea of God's disciplining/chastening Christians, as required, that we may repent and "share His holiness" and righteousness (12:10,11, and 14)]).). However, God's disciplining His children to motivate, etc. them to repent is something very different than His requiring them to suffer, etc. after they have repented because His honor has been defamed through their sin and His justice requires that they be punished. (I'll demonstrate as we continue with this topic that some clearly speak of our being chastened/punished after repenting and being forgiven because God's justice requires it.) In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus called large numbers of born-again Christians to repent or forfeit their salvation. However, there was no suggestion that He would punish them if they repented. (God knows our hearts. He knows if we truly repent, or not.) That is an idea foreign to me and to evangelicals in general. (Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are discussed in a paper on my internet site, and see my paper, "Once Saved, Always Saved?" [Google to Karl Kemp Teaching].)

We must understand that the fact that Christians are in trials (hard places) doesn't demonstrate that they are being chastened by God, although sometimes that is the case (see the preceding paragraph). The most faithful Christians (including the apostle Paul for example) frequently were in difficult trials (cf., e.g., Acts 14:21, 22; Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 4:7-18; 11:22-33). We are involved in warfare, whether we like it or not, and God clearly will let us be tempted and tested, but He always provides the grace for us to stay faithful as we make Him the top priority in our hearts and lives (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

I'LL INCLUDE SEVERAL EXCERPTS FROM TERTULLIAN'S "ON REPENTANCE," chapters 5-12, written about AD 203, where he included the idea that Christians must be chastened, suffer, do penance, etc. for having offended the honor of God (by sinning against Him; that is, by sinning against Him after they became Christians; he was dealing with sins like murder, adultery/fornication, and apostasy); Vol. 3 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers" by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson [Eerdmans, 1986 reprint], pages 660-666. ((Tertullian wrote this when he was a Roman Catholic, before he had become a Montanist. These chapters by Tertullian include, for one thing, the things that must accompany the second (and supposed only other) repentance available to Christians who sinned (the first repentance took place when they became Christians). He made it very clear in this writing that Christians should not sin after they become Christians; there is no excuse; but he does speak of the fact that "that most stubborn foe (of ours) never gives his malice leisure; indeed, he is most savage when he fully feels that a man is *freed from his clutches*;..." (page 662). After Tertullian joined the Montanists he denied this second repentance. I'll say a lot about the Montanists as we continue with this paper)):

"You have offended [God], but can still be reconciled. You have One whom you may satisfy, and Him willing" [footnote: "to accept the satisfaction"] (chapter 7, page 663).

"... ..by repentance [which here includes the chastening, suffering, doing penance, etc.; and these things often continued for lengthy periods] God is appeased. And thus "exomologesis" [this Greek word refers to the chastening, suffering, doing penance, etc. required (according to Tertullian and very many others in his day) to make things right with God] is a discipline for a man's prostration and humiliation, enjoining a demeanor calculated to move mercy. With regard to the very dress and food, it commands (the penitent) to lie in sackcloth and ashes, to cover his body in mourning, to lay his spirit low in sorrows, TO EXCHANGE FOR SEVERE TREATMENT THE SINS WHICH HE HAS COMMITTED [my emphasis], moreover, to know no food and drink but such as is plain, - not for the stomach's sake, to wit, but the souls; for the most part, however, to feed prayers on fastings, to groan, to weep and make outcries unto the Lord your God; to bow before the feet of the presbyters, and kneel to God's dear ones [referring to the leaders of the church]; to enjoin on all the brethren to be ambassadors to bear his deprecatory supplication (before God). All this 'exomologesis' (does), that it may enhance repentance; may honour God by its fear of the (incurred) danger; may, by itself pronouncing against the sinner, stand in the stead of God's indignation, and by temporal mortification (I will not say frustrate, but) expunge eternal punishment. [In other words, it was either do these things or suffer "eternal punishment" in hell.] Therefore while it abases the man, it raises him; while it covers him with squalor, it renders him more clean; while it accuses, it excuses; while it condemns, it absolves. The less quarter ["mercy"] you give yourself, the more (believe me) will God give you" (chapter 9, page 664).

"Yet most men either shun this work ["exomologesis"], as being a public exposure of themselves, or else defer it day to day. I presume (as being) more mindful of modesty than of salvation.... It is intolerable, forsooth, to modesty to make satisfaction to the

offended Lord [by this second repentance, which includes the "exomologesis"; Tertullian uses a lot of sarcasm!] to be restored to its forfeited salvation! ... Is it better to be damned in secret than absolved in public? *But you say* 'It is a miserable thing thus to come to "exomologesis" ': yes for evil [having done evil] does bring a misery; but where repentance is to be made, the misery ceases, because it has turned into something salutary. Miserable it is to be cut and cauterized, and racked with the pungency of some (medicinal) powder: still, the things which heal by unpleasant means do, by the benefit of the cure, excuse their own offensiveness, and make present injury bearable for the sake of the advantage to supervene" (chapter 10, pages 664, 665). "...to make satisfaction for injury or insult to the offended Lord!" (chapter 10, page 664).

"What if, besides the shame [that came with "exomologesis"] which they make the most account of, *men* dread likewise the bodily inconvenience; in that, unwashen, sordidly attired, estranged from gladness, they must spend their time in the roughness of sackcloth, and the horridness of ashes, and the sunkennes of face caused by fasting? Is it then becoming for us to supplicate for our sins in scarlet and purple?let him say, I have sinned against God and am in peril of eternally perishing: and so now I am drooping, and wasting and TORTURING MYSELF, THAT I MAY RECONCILE GOD TO MYSELF, WHOM BY SINNING I HAVE OFFENDED [my emphasis]. ..." (chapter 11, page 665).

"If you shrink back from 'exomologesis,' consider in your heart the hell, which 'exomologesis' will extinguish for you; and imagine first the magnitude of the penalty [hell], that you may not hesitate about the adoption of the remedy. ... Therefore, since you know that after the first bulwarks of the Lord's baptism there still remains for you, in 'exomologesis' a second reserve of aid against hell, why do you desert your own salvation? Why are you tardy to approach what you know heals you? ..." (chapter 12, page 665).

I don't know all the details, but based on what little I have read on this topic, this intense public "exomologesis" did not continue; it disappeared for several reasons in the 300s. However, the idea that Christians who sin have offended the honor of God and His justice requires that they must make satisfaction through penance (which includes "temporary punishment" and other such expressions) did not disappear. Some of the excerpts that follow in this paper will demonstrate this point.

I read some thousand pages of Tertullian when I was in seminary (about 1970) for a paper on apologetics, and I was impressed with much that he said, but this is one place where he seriously confused the issue. He communicated the idea that we can in part pay off the debt we owe to God for sinning against Him after we became Christians. To the extent we could pay off the debt by suffering or anything else, we wouldn't be saved by grace. Tertullian was a lawyer, and it seems that his idea of justice among men intruded itself here. As I mentioned, some early Christian Fathers had a very difficult time dealing with post-baptismal sins like apostasy. However, WE MUST PUT ALL THE EMPHASIS ON THE FACT THAT OUR BEING FORGIVEN AND RESTORED IF WE SIN AFTER WE BECOME CHRISTIANS COMES TO US THROUGH THE ALL-

IMPORTANT ATONING WORK OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH, WHEN (IF) WE REPENT (not at all through our being chastened, suffering for sins that the Lord Jesus has borne for us). Some never do repent. As I mentioned, God knows if we repent.

I'll Quote A Small Part Of What Philip Schaff Said Under "Church Discipline" dealing with the time period AD100-311 in his "History of the Christian Church," Vol. 2 (Eerdmans, original copyright 1910 by Charles Scribner's Sons), page 189. "... Tertullian conceived the entire church penance as a 'satisfaction' paid to God. This view could easily obscure to a dangerous degree the all-sufficient merit of Christ, and lead to that self-righteousness against which the Reformation raised so loud a voice." It would be self-righteousness to the extent we earned, deserved, merited it through things WE have done. We do have to repent by grace through faith, but that has nothing to do with earning, deserving, or meriting God's forgiveness and restoration. We are simply (humbly, thankfully, and by faith) receiving God's forgiveness and restoration that have already been paid for at an infinite price (1 John 2:1, 2).

I'll quote part of what Justo L. Gonzales said under the heading "The Development of Private Penance" in his book, "A History of Christian Thought," Vol. 2 (Abingdon Press, 1971), pages 135, 136. "In the first volume of this 'History,' we repeatedly saw that post-baptismal sins posed a serious problem to the nascent church. What was to be done about them? ... [They couldn't be baptized again. Some postponed baptism so they wouldn't sin after being baptized, but that clearly isn't a biblical idea. The primary answer they came up with] to cleanse post-baptismal sins was through repentance and penance [which, for sins like apostasy, included "exomologesis"]. This was the origin of the penitential system of the Church.

Although during the patristic [referring to the Fathers of the early Christian church (the first few centuries)] period there were several debates as to which sins could be forgiven and how [He has a footnote referring to Vol. 1 of his History: pages 236-238, 241.], there were two points of general agreement: penance was to be public, and it was not to be repeated [that is, they could only repent once for serious sins]. By the fourth century [the 300s], there also was a general agreement that all sins could be forgiven through penance. [He has a footnote: "Council of Nicea, canon 13."]

Penance was public...in the sense that the sinner was publically excommunicated [which is a big deal] and [eventually] publically reconciled with the church.the sinner then became a penitent, wearing a distinctive garb and sitting in a special section in church. When he was reconciled - usually after a long period of penance... - he knew that if ever he would sin again, he could not have recourse to a second penance. Naturally, this rigor applied only to grave sins. The believer could be cleansed from minor sins through the practice of daily penance - fasting, praying, and helping the needy.

... [Some postponed using this one repentance until later in life, or on the deathbed.] Another development was that seclusion in a monastery became acceptable as an act of penance...."

Some eventually came up with the idea of purgatory for those Christians who didn't do sufficient penance (receiving temporal [not eternal] punishment [eternal punishment means hell]). It was clearly taught by Augustine (AD354-430), but as we will discuss, although Tertullian (AD160-240) taught some things that helped prepare the way for purgatory, he (based on what I have read) did not teach purgatory. Much later the ideas of penance, merit (and treasury of merit), and purgatory led to the idea of indulgences. (I'll comment further on purgatory and indulgences as we continue.) Protestants typically reject all of these ideas in that none of them are taught in the New Testament (the few verses that are used to try to substantiate these ideas are quite insufficient) and go against things that are said in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul (in Phil. 1:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:1-10) shows that for true Christians to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (cf., e.g., Luke 23:43 [Jesus said to the repentant man on the cross next to Him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise"]). When the believers from Old Testament days died they went to the righteous compartment in Hades/Sheol, sometimes called Paradise or Abraham's Bosom (cf. Luke 16:19-31). (See under Eph. 4:8, and see under the heading "A Discussion on the Meaning of the Word 'Hades' in Acts 2:27, 31; the Meaning of 'Paradise' in Luke 23:43; and the Meaning of 'Abraham's Bosom' in Luke 16:22" on page 41 of my paper that includes Ephesians chapter 4 on my internet site [Google to Karl Kemp Teaching]). After His resurrection (after He had overthrown spiritual death, physical death, sin, and Satan through His atoning death), Jesus took those believers to heaven (cf. Heb. 11:39, 40; 12:22, 23 [These verses are discussed in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin," for one place.]). True Christians are literally united with the Lord Jesus Christ (in a very real sense we have already been raised up with Him [cf., e.g., Rom. 6:3-11; Eph. 2:5; Col. 3:1-11]), and we (as long as we continue to be true Christians) are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of life. We are not about to go to Hades/Sheol, which is part of the kingdom of death, if we die before the Lord Jesus returns. Those who disagree (it seems to me) do so because they haven't seen the full glory of the GRACE upon GRACE incorporated in new-covenant salvation, which includes the problem of thinking that Christians must be punished for sins they commit after confessing those sins and repenting, which we discuss in this paper.

I am not making an attempt in this paper to fully discuss what Roman Catholics have taught and now teach on this topic; I mostly just want to demonstrate that the idea has continued in Roman Catholic theology that after Christians have repented and been forgiven (forgiven in the sense they will ultimately make it to heaven) there remains a debt that must be paid, one way or another, in this life or in purgatory. (Roman Catholics believe that it is only Christians who will ultimately make it to heaven that will be in purgatory.)

I'll quote several sentences from the article "The Sacrament of Penance," under the sub-heading "Satisfaction" in the "Catholic Encyclopedia" on the internet: "As stated above, the absolution given by the priest to a penitent who confesses his sins with the proper disposition remits both the guilt and the eternal punishment (of mortal sin). THERE REMAINS, HOWEVER, SOME INDEBTEDNESS TO DIVINE JUSTICE WHICH MUST BE CANCELLED HERE OR HEREAFTER [my emphasis] (see Purgatory). In order to have it cancelled here, the penitent receives from his confessor what is usually called his 'penance'.... ... In theological language, THIS PENANCE IS CALLED SATISFACTION [my emphasis] and is defined, in the words of St. Thomas [Aquinas]: 'THE PAYMENT OF THE TEMPORARY PUNISHMENT DUE ON ACCOUNT OF THE OFFENSE COMMITTED AGAINST GOD BY SIN.... IT IS AN ACT OF JUSTICE WHEREBY THE INJURY DONE TO THE HONOUR OF GOD IS REQUIRED, SO FAR AT LEAST AS THE SINNER IS ABLE TO MAKE REPARATION [my emphasis]...; it is also a preventive remedy, inasmuch as it is meant to hinder the further commission of sin.

I'll quote a few sentences from the six-page article on purgatory in the "New Catholic Encyclopedia," Vol. 10 [McGraw-Hill, 1967], pages 1034-1039. "According to the teaching of the Church, the state, place, or condition in the next world, which will continue to the last judgment, where the souls of those who die in the state of grace, but not yet free from all imperfection, MAKE EXPIATION FOR [atone for] UNFORGIVEN VENIAL SINS OR THE TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT [the temporal punishment that must be borne by the sinner] DUE TO VENIAL AND MORTAL SINS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORGIVEN [my emphasis; these sins were clearly not "forgiven" in a full sense with this point of view] and, by so doing, are purified before they enter heaven.

Although the doctrine of purgatory is not explicitly stated in the Bible, belief in its existence is intimately related to the Biblical doctrines of divine judgment [see JUDGMENT, DIVINE (IN THE BIBLE) (their capitalization here and in the next bracket)], the forgiveness of sins [see FORGIVENESS OF SINS (IN THE BIBLE)], the mercy of God, and THE TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT DUE TO SIN [my emphasis]. ..." (page 1034). As I mentioned, Protestants don't believe in purgatory, because it isn't taught in the Bible and it doesn't fit what the Bible does say.

I'll quote a little from what this article says under "In Theology." "The Church also teaches that the punishment due to sin, whether mortal or venial, is not always and necessarily forgiven along with the guilt of sin; HENCE THE PUNISHMENT IS TO BE PAID BY THE SINNER EITHER IN THIS LIFE OR IN THE NEXT BEFORE HE CAN ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN [my emphasis] (Denz 1580, 1712). ... [The following excerpt is under a further sub-heading, "Magisterial Statements"] ...the Council of Trent reiterated the revealed character of the existence of purgatory against the reformers who had denied that there was any basis for it in Sacred Scripture (Denz 1580, 1820). Since there is no solemn statement of the Church about the existence of the guilt of venial sin in purgatory, THE ONLY THING CERTAIN IS THAT AT LEAST THE PUNISHMENT DUE TO FORGIVEN SIN IS EXACTED FROM THE SOUL [my emphasis]. ..." (page 1035).

I'll quote one sentence from the ten pages that Charles Hodge has in "Arguments Against the Doctrine [of purgatory]" in Vol. 3 of his "Systematic Theology" [Eerdmans, 1986 reprint, written in 1871-1873], page 757. "... There is nothing more absolutely incompatible with the nature of the Gospel than the idea that man can 'satisfy divine justice' for his sins." The God-man, who didn't have any sin, satisfied divine justice for all who submit (on a continuous basis, on God's terms) to the gospel of new-covenant salvation.

I'll quote part of what the Complete and Updated "Catechism of the Catholic Church" ([Doubleday, 1995], pages 411-412) says under "Indulgences." Under the subheading "What is an indulgence?" it says, " 'An indulgence is a remission before God of the TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT DUE TO SINS WHOSE GUILT HAS ALREADY BEEN FORGIVEN [my emphasis], which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints [treasury of merit].' ([footnote] Paul VI, apostolic constitution, "Indulgentiarum doctrina," Norm 1.)

'An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT DUE TO SIN [my emphasis].' ([footnote] "Indulgentiarum doctrina," Norm 2; cf. Norm 3. *CIC, can. 944.) The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead.*'

[And I'll quote part of what is said under the sub-heading "The punishments of sin."]every sin, even venial [contrasted with mortal sins], entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which may be purified here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT' OF SIN [my emphasis]. ...

The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT OF SIN REMAINS [my emphasis]. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds, and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept THIS TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT OF SIN [my emphasis] as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the 'old man' and to put on the 'new man' ([footnote] Eph. 4:22, 24.)." In Eph. 4:22, 24 the apostle Paul was speaking of the fact that Christians are called, enabled, and required - in the Christian ideal - to NOW once for all and completely put off sin and put on the righteousness of God (by grace through faith) and sin no more. Ephesians chapter 4 is discussed verse-by-verse in a paper on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching).

I should mention that although punishment for sin (or a substitute for punishment for sin) is emphasized with the idea of penance, whether before the Christian dies or in purgatory after death, the purifying of the sinner is often mentioned too.

I'll quote several sentences from "Penance, Sacramental" in the "New Catholic Encyclopedia," Volume 10 (McGraw-Hill, 1967), pages 83, 84. (The payment required is milder here than in most of the articles in this paper dealing with this topic.):

"Satisfaction in general is satisfaction for injury inflicted [on God and His honor]; as a part of the Sacrament **IT IS COMPENSATION FOR TEMPORAL PUNISHMENT DUE TO SIN** [my emphasis], since eternal punishment is compensated for by the merits of Christ in virtue of the Redemption and is remitted by absolution. **SACRAMENTAL SATISFACTION HAS ITS FOUNDATION IN THE DOCTRINE THAT, AFTER SIN ITSELF IS FORGIVEN, FURTHER REPARATION IS REQUIRED** [my emphasis] for the removal of certain of the effects of sin that may remain. [Other articles in this paper from Roman Catholic encyclopedias and catechisms speak of the fact that God's justice requires the "payment of temporal punishment," or the equivalent, not "compensation for temporal punishment" for sin, in that injury has been done to the honor of God.] This is effected by penitential works freely performed in a spirit of genuine contrition. These works are a reminder that sin is the greatest of evils and deserving of punishment [Sin is deserving of punishment, which the Lamb of God bore for us.]; they promote vigilance against future relapses to which there is a tendency from evil habit; and lastly they make man conformable to Christ who suffered for sin.

Satisfaction can be achieved by works that honor God, whom sin has offended, and by the avoidance of future sins. Hence prayer and other acts of worship are eminently suitable as reparation. Acts of mortification such as fasting, are salutary for a penitent guilty of sins of the flesh; alms and works of mercy are appropriately imposed for sins of avarice and contempt of neighbor."

A powerful example that demonstrates how far into serious error such practices as indulgences can lead is provided by John Tetzel, a Dominican monk, who was appointed by Pope Leo X (AD1475-1521) to go throughout Germany collecting offerings to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. I don't believe any Roman Catholics will try to defend what happened there.

In seminary I had heard one of the key sentences that Tetzel used in his appeal to offer indulgences from the pope for those who would make offerings, but I hadn't read the entire appeal until the past week. It is shocking! It is no wonder that Martin Luther objected so strongly. This precipitated the Protestant reformation. I'll quote an abbreviated version of Tetzel's typical appeal. (I'm taking this quotation from the article "Purgatory, Indulgences, the Treasury of Merits and the Gospel of Jesus Christ" on the internet, posted by John Samson in 2013, at reformationtheology.com. This article doesn't give the source for the excerpt from Tetzel, but there is another article on the internet, "Johann Tetzel - Grace for Sale through Indulgences," at aloha.net, that gives a longer version of a typical Tetzel sermon where he is selling indulgences, and that article lists the book from which that excerpt was taken.):

"By Luther's time, the early 16th century, indulgences had become one of the most lucrative money raising schemes within the Roman Church. It was on the basis of the sales of indulgences that St. Peter's Basilica was built in Rome.

... When John Tetzel, a Dominican monk, came into Germany selling indulgences, he so incensed Martin Luther, a devout Roman Catholic monk [and professor of theology], that Luther lifted his voice in protest. When Tetzel would enter a town, he would erect a cross bearing the Pope's own insignia, enter into the pulpit, and begin to harangue the congregation concerning indulgences. Here is a portion of the speech he would customarily make:

'Indulgences are the most precious and sublime of God's gifts. The cross (pointing to the emblem) has as much efficacy as the cross of Jesus Christ. Draw near and I will give you letters duly sealed by which even the sins which you shall hereafter desire to commit shall all be forgiven. I would not exchange my privileges for those of St. Peter. I have saved more souls with my indulgences than he has with his servants. There is no sin so great that indulgences cannot remit. And even if one should, which is doubtless impossible, ravish (rape) the holy Virgin, Mother of God, let him pay, only let him pay well for an indulgence, and all shall be forgiven him! Ye priests, ye nobles, ye wives, ye maidens, and you young men, hearken to your departed parents and friends who cry to you from the bottomless depths. "We are enduring a horrible torment," they scream, "a small alms from you would deliver us. You can give it now if you will." Thus they cry to you from purgatory. The very moment that the money clinks against the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory [I had heard the statement, "When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."] and flies free to heaven. Now just pay off, O senseless people! Almost like the beasts who do not comprehend the grace so richly offered. This day heaven is on all sides of you. Do you refuse to enter? When do you intend to come in? This day you may redeem many souls.' " Surely all the people who took him seriously, and I assume large numbers of the people did take him seriously (for one thing, he had been sent by the pope), would have given everything they possibly could give, including some people borrowing everything they could possibly borrow.

I'll quote part of what the "Catholic Encyclopedia" (on the internet) says under the sub-heading "Purgatorial fire" in the article on purgatory. "At the Council of Florence [which started in 1431], Bessarion argued against the existence of real purgatorial fire, and the Greeks were assured that the Roman Church had never issued any dogmatic decree on this subject. In the West the belief in the existence of real fire is common.

Augustine...speaks on the pain which purgatorial fire causes as more severe than anything a man can suffer in this life.... Gregory the Great [who was the pope from AD590-604 is highly respected by Roman Catholics; many consider him one of the four great doctors of their church, along with Augustine, Jerome, and Thomas Aquinas] speaks of those who after this life 'WILL EXPIATE [atone for, suffer for] THEIR FAULTS BY PURGATORIAL FLAMES [my emphasis],' and he adds 'that the pain be more intolerable than anyone can suffer in this life'...."

I was involved in a leadership role in the Roman Catholic charismatic renewal (especially in the late 60s and early 70s), and I saw much Bible-centered Christian reality. I got to know hundreds of Roman Catholics (including priests and nuns) whose hearts were wide open to the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit to live for God in His truth, righteousness, and holiness. At least in those early days of the Catholic charismatic renewal, controversial Roman Catholic teachings/traditions were for the most part excluded, but I did come across some liberal Christian teachings on occasion (Very often these were things they had learned from liberal Protestant scholars, which they shouldn't have learned.) I never was a Roman Catholic, but many of my friends were, and I went to St. Louis University, a Roman Catholic (Jesuit) university. A Roman Catholic friend of mine in Cincinnati (where I grew up) wanted to go to St. Louis University to study engineering and I went with him. I received BS and MS degrees in engineering there.

The ante-Nicene Fathers did not teach purgatory, but some things that some of them taught helped set the stage for purgatory. I have commented on this topic, and I'll say more as we continue. I'll quote a small part of what Philip Schaff says on this topic (Vol. 2 of his "History of the Christian Church" [Eerdmans 1973 reprint of the 1910 edition], page 605): "... ...there is, after all, a considerable difference [between the ante-Nicene (before AD 325) teaching]" and "the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, which afterwards came to prevail in the West through the great weight of St. Augustin and Pope Gregory I. The ante-Nicene idea of the middle state of the pious [the state between death and the resurrection, which Schaff had been discussing for several pages] excludes, or at all events ignores, the idea of penal suffering, which is an essential part of the Catholic conception of purgatory. [The ante-Nicene idea of the middle state of the pious] represents the condition of the pious as one of comparative happiness, inferior only to the perfect happiness after the resurrection. ... Yet alongside with this prevailing belief, there are traces of the purgatorial idea of suffering the temporal consequences of sin, and a painful struggle after holiness." I'll demonstrate before we finish that Tertullian made several comments that include the idea of (at least some) Christians paying a recompense for sin in the intermediate state (after death and before the resurrection).

Some of the ante-Nicene Fathers taught that Christians go to Abraham's bosom, or the equivalent, at death, instead of heaven. I haven't fully researched this topic, but I have verified that the three writers I'll list here did teach that error: Irenaeus, about AD130-200 ("Irenaeus Against Heresies," Vol. 1, chapter 31, pages 560, 561 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers"). Bercot (in his "Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs") dated this writing about AD 180. I haven't found any evidence that Irenaeus taught that there would be any punishment for true Christians after death.; Tertullian, about AD160-230 (see below), and Hippolytus, about AD170-236 (see the next paragraph in this paper). I believe true Christians go to heaven at death. It is true, however, that it won't be heaven in the full and final sense until we are resurrected and glorified when the Lord Jesus returns.

I'll quote part of what Hippolytus said regarding the state of the righteous dead; it is all quite positive, even though he didn't believe that they go to heaven at death ("Against Plato, on the Cause of the Universe," Vol. 5 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," pages 221, 222; Bercot dated this writing about AD 205): "...but the righteous...are brought to a locality full of light. And there the righteous from the beginning [including those of Old Testament days] dwell...enjoying always the contemplation of the blessings which are in their view, and delighting themselves with the expectation of others ever new, and deeming those ever better than these. And that place brings no toils to them. There, there is neither fierce heat, nor cold, nor thorn; but the face of the fathers and the righteous is seen to be always smiling, as they wait for the rest and eternal revival in heaven which succeed this location. And we call it by the name 'Abraham's bosom.' "

As I mentioned, Tertullian didn't teach purgatory, but his teaching helped prepare the way for that doctrine. For one thing, as we have discussed, even in the days before he became a Montanist he emphasized the point that Christians who commit sins like apostasy must be severely punished ("exomologesis") before they can be reconciled to God and the church because they have offended the honor of God. He also denied that true Christians (except for the martyrs) go to heaven at death; and, although he spoke of the blessed state of the righteous in Abraham's bosom (I'll give an example in the next paragraph), he also spoke (after he became a Montanist) of SOME COMPENSATORY DISCIPLINE/REPARATION for Christians, as required, after death. (See chapters 35 and 58 [it takes both chapters to get the full picture] in his "A Treatise on the Soul," Vol. 3 of "Ante-Nicene Fathers," pages 216, 234, 235; Bercot dated this writing about AD 210.) It is significant that Tertullian mentioned (on page 235) that "this point the Paraclete [the Holy Spirit] has also pressed home on our attention in most frequent admonitions...." The "admonitions" undoubtedly dealt with the need for the Montanists (and all Christians) to make it a top priority to stay away from all sin, which in itself would be good. However, I don't believe that there were any genuine manifestations of the Spirit that spoke of compensatory discipline/reparation for the sin of true Christians in Hades after death. I have to assume that that idea (that supposed revelation from God, that admixture of error) came from the flesh or demons.

Tertullian said that Christians do not go to heaven at death, but to Abraham's bosom (cf. Luke 16:19-31): "Although [Abraham's bosom] is not in heaven, it is...appointed to afford an interval of rest to the souls of the righteous until the consummation of all things shall complete the resurrection of all men with the 'full recompense of their reward' " ("Tertullian Against Marcion," Vol. 2, chapter 34, page 406 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers." Bercot dated this writing about AD 207).

The Montanists, including Tertullian, prided themselves on their spiritual gifts, very much including revelation/prophecy. I'll cite a reference later to document the important point that Tertullian either did not know about (or rejected without mentioning that he rejected) some of the earlier erroneous prophecies of Montanus and the two prophetesses (including their teaching that New Jerusalem was going to come down to Pepuza, not Jerusalem, in the very near future, not at the end of the millennium).

It is clear that Tertullian was influenced by the Montanists regarding the need for Christians to keep a lot of strict rules regarding things like extensive fasting, not trying to escape martyrdom (in fact they taught that martyrs go straight to heaven, unlike the rest of the Christians), no second marriages, virgins had to be veiled (with a prophecy even giving some details about the veil), etc. The Montanists, very much including Tertullian, judged and insulted the other Christians for not being spiritual, not having the charismatic gifts, and for not being as strict as they were.

The Montanists had many things right. I assume that God considers many of them to be true Christians. Most agree that Tertullian was a true Christian, but he didn't join the Montanists until some fifty years after that movement started with Montanus, and he didn't hold to some of their obvious errors. It is good to be as generous as we can be in judging others (cf., e.g., Matt. 7:2; many Christians find it very easy to write off other Christians as being non-Christians based on their particular tests for genuineness; as a young Christian I did a lot of this), but it is clear, for one thing, that Montanus and the two prophetesses (Maximilla and Priscilla) gave some revelations/prophecies that did not come from God. I have to assume that some of those revelations/prophecies came from demons. I believe that demons have been active and influential in the affairs of many Christians (some of them genuine Christians), including influencing what they believe, as active and influential as they could be. The victory over demons and the devil's kingdom of darkness isn't automatic. We must understand their tactics, walk by the Spirit in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, by grace through faith, and resist them in the name of Jesus.

Sincere Christians, very much including in our day, can be deceived through demonic influences, including demonic revelations/prophetic utterances. I believe that demons have often introduced false teachings into segments of the Body of Christ and that much of that deception has taken place through hidden influences, not through obvious revelations or prophecies. Demons can definitely influence Christians who don't believe in revelations/prophecies. These things ought not be, of course, and we (not God) are responsible for allowing these things to happen. It is hard to believe, for an illustration, how many of the "prophets" in Old Testament days were false prophets.

I believe the charismatic gifts are for today and that we need them. For one thing we need the gifts of the Spirit in our warfare against Satan and his kingdom. I don't know of any passages in the New Testament that teach that they were to be withdrawn this side of glory. ((1 Corinthians 13:10 certainly doesn't teach that. ("The perfect" of 1 Cor. 13:10 refers to the perfection of the age to come, after we are glorified. Then, as 1 Cor. 13:12 says, we will see God "face to face" and we will "know fully just as [we] also have been fully known [by Him].") 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 are discussed verse-by-verse on my internet site.)) And I don't believe we have the authority to delete the charismatic gifts or to say that we don't need them in our day - God set them in the church. However, I have been disappointed with much that I have seen the last forty-five years that is called "revelation" and "prophecy" and other charismatic gifts. I believe I have seen quite a bit of admixture of the flesh and, much worse, I believe that there has been quite a bit of demonic input to some revelations and prophesying and other charismatic

gifts. Typically the Christians or pseudo-Christians don't realize that they are yielding to demonic spirits. They are sure it is God.

Quite often new and or wrong interpretations of the Bible come with revelations and prophesying that didn't come from God; pride is part of the problem, but sincere, humble Christians can be deceived too. We desperately need to be humble, teachable, and aware of the dangers when we move in the realm of the supernatural, very much including spiritual gifts. For one thing, we must understand that the devil is active in the supernatural realm and has counterfeits for the charismatic gifts. Many Christians make the mistake of thinking that all the supernatural things that take place among Christians are necessarily all of God. We are not automatically protected. Of course we can tell the difference between God's supernatural manifestations and those that come from the devil (to say otherwise would be to insult God; He loves us), but it isn't always obvious, quite the contrary. (We need all the grace that God makes available to us.) Like I said, we must be humble, teachable, careful, and aware of the serious dangers in receiving revelations and prophecies and test all things against the Bible. I should also mention that the foundational doctrines that we need have already been given to us in the Bible. Those foundational doctrines are not subject to change, but the Bible doesn't answer every question or take the place of God interacting with His people, directing us, correcting us, protecting us, providing for us, healing us, etc.

I want to understand Montanism, and we will be discussing Montanism in this paper, including many excerpts that deal with this topic. I have already mentioned the errors of the Montanists that I am concerned with in this paper. The thing that made these beliefs/teachings all the more serious was the fact they were being presented as beliefs/teachings that all Christians must accept because they all (supposedly) came by revelation from God. I'll quote a sentence from the article on Montanism in the "New Catholic Encyclopedia," "The claim that the utterances of the new prophets add to or supersede the revelation delivered to the Apostles and handed down in the apostolic churches remained a basic point at issue between Montanists and Catholics."

I appreciate the zeal of the Montanists, but zeal doesn't always work for good, and it can do a lot of damage if it is not accompanied, by faith, with the balanced truth of what God's Word teaches and with humbly walking by the Spirit of God on a continuous basis in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God. I have already mentioned that I have to assume there was some demonic input among the Montanists. (One primary tactic of demons is to try to keep Christians from the truth of God's Word; another tactic is to push Christians to extreme views and excesses, and they are experts at appealing to the pride of Christians; we all have the potential to be motivated by pride and to have wrong ideas like "God will not let me be deceived; I am automatically protected.") I believe we need to see that there has been a lot of demonic input throughout much of the history of the Christian church, and it is still happening, and at an accelerated rate, in these last days. If we are not aware of this very serious problem, we are all the more liable to be hurt by it. It seems that most Christians (at least in our part of the world) don't have much insight regarding how active demons have been and are (especially in these end times) in their warfare against Christians, very much including trying to

influence what we believe, including misinterpretations of the Bible, in trying to keep us in sin, and in trying to keep true Christians separated from one another. God's saving, sanctifying, protective grace is available to us, but we are not automatically protected.

Apparently there was a rather strong component of genuine Christianity with the Montanists (and especially when you leave out some of their erroneous revelations/prophecies like Tertullian did). Whether God considered them true Christians, or not, we need to be careful that we do not repeat their errors. It seems clear to me that much of the Christianity of our day has quite a bit of admixture of error, very much including errors dealing with the end times; we clearly have a problem with sin. Errors amplify the sin problem.

All of us need to stay humble before God (I'm emphasizing this point) and ask Him to show us any errors in what we believe or how we are living, with a heart open to what He would show us. (In general, God isn't going to show people things when He knows that they will not rightly respond.) For one thing, everybody can't be right when they are holding doctrines that differ. Based on what I have observed, most Christians assume that they have everything right, and they are not, therefore, open to being corrected. This is a serious problem!

Demons can be subtle, clever, and persistent, and they have a lot to gain by introducing erroneous ideas among true Christians and/or to keep us from walking in the righteousness and holiness of God. It is easy to accept doctrines of demons if we are not grounded in what the Bible teaches, and this is a serious problem in our day. ((As I mentioned, I am not suggesting that all errors come through demonic activity [humans, including born-again Christians can come up with sin and errors on their own], but demons are very often directly involved, and I am confident that they are doing a lot more than most Christians think they are. I believe most Christians would be totally shocked to learn how often Christians have received revelations/prophecies (and other supernatural things) from demons throughout the history of the church, and they are extremely active in these end times, as Jesus warned us they would be.)) For one thing, as I mentioned, demons know how to flatter and appeal to pride, and they often back up their revelations with supernatural "confirmations." If we aren't humble and careful, we can be deceived, and we must be very careful to put all the emphasis on the Bible, while avoiding new and unusual interpretations of the Bible. Many "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1) have come to (and through) Christians who don't believe in spiritual gifts like prophecy.

Notice that the "doctrines of demons" that the apostle Paul specifically mentioned in 1 Tim. 4:1-5 didn't deal with gigantic theological errors ("men who forbid marriage *and* *advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth"), but every error hurts, and some "doctrines of demons" are far more serious, including some of the errors taught by the Montanists. Of course it never is the will of God for His people to be deceived through demonic revelations (or any other way), but we must stay humble (because pride is such a problem; pride with unbelief is at the root of the sin problem, and it isn't always easy to

recognize when we are being motivated by pride) and cooperate with God's protective, saving, sanctifying grace through faith on a continuous basis. The victory over sin and demons (and the world, and the old man that wants to continue to sin) is far from being automatic.

God can accept with favor when Christians do things (in an attempt to please Him) that they are not required to do, but it clearly doesn't work for good when we accept "doctrines of demons" or if we judge other Christians for not doing these things (cf., e.g., Rom. 14:1-13) while dogmatically stating that God has commanded all Christians to accept our interpretations of the Bible or the revelations we have received; or we start thinking that God owes us something because of our works. Demons often take things that are good but push them to excesses which do not work for good (listening to, or receiving anything, from demons, will never work for good), and the more we miss the Biblical balance, the more we are open to further deception. For one thing, there is a big difference between Christians choosing a path of self denial that they believe will enable them to walk closer to God and do more for Him and their setting rules that all Christians are supposedly required to follow.

The devil does some of his most successful work through getting Christians to accept his "revelations, prophecies, teachings" as coming from God. Even in the days of the twelve apostles, they had problems with false prophecies and other doctrines of demons (cf. 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:19-22; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 2:14-28). Many Christians haven't been careful in this area; it could never happen to them, they think. For one thing, demons have the ability to give us thoughts (ideas), thoughts (ideas) that we must reject. We must be aware of the fact that many things that are supernatural do not come from God, and many things that come from the evil one are very carefully packaged in an attempt to deceive (including demonic healings and other supernatural "help"). Also, the spokesmen the devil chooses typically come across as believable (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

I'll quote quite a few excerpts from chapter 10, which deals with Montanism, of Vol. 2 of Philip Schaff's "History of Christian Doctrine" (Eerdman's reprint; originally published in 1910; in the public domain), and I'll supplement these excerpts with excerpts from other scholars. It is difficult to get the balanced truth regarding Montanism; for one thing, much of the information dealing with Montanism that is available came from those who opposed them. ((I'll quote part of a footnote from Stanley M. Burgess ("The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity" [Hendrikson, 1984], page 55; Burgess comes from an Assembly of God background; his parents were missionaries and he taught for many years at an Assembly of God [Pentecostal] college): "Montanism and his movement are known to us almost exclusively through the fragments of anti-Montanist writings and a few of the sayings of Montanus and his earliest followers recorded by polemicists [a person skilled in the practice of disputation or controversy] within the Catholic Church. The only Montanist writer of significance of whom we are aware was Tertullian, who believed that the Montanist movement was the completion and perfection of early prophecy and revelation. Because all of the sources are slanted in one direction or the other, the scholar must weigh each carefully in attempting to understand and evaluate the

movement and its teaching on the Holy Spirit. ... M.F.G. Parmientier, "Montanisme" ... (1978): pages 310-317, has shown that historic Montanism often is looked upon with great respect by Charismatic writers, without giving adequate attention to the teachings and place in the early Church." The fact that the Montanists manifested spiritual gifts doesn't suffice to demonstrate that they were solid Christians, and all the more so, when it is clear that some of their prophecies were false.) Schaff seems to be more objective regarding Montanism than some scholars I have read on this topic. It is significant that Tertullian, who is typically regarded as one who became, and continued to be, a true Christian, became a Montanist, and most agree that the Montanists were mostly solid regarding foundational Christian doctrines.

"All the ascetic, rigoristic, and chiliastic [believing in a literal millennial reign after the Lord Jesus returns at the end of this age] elements of the ancient church combined in Montanism. ... Montanism was not, originally, a departure from the faith [but some serious errors dealing with the end times were there from the beginning it seems and a claim to be the center of God's genuine work in the world in those supposed very last days before the Lord would return], but a morbid overstraining of the practical morality and discipline of the early church. It was an excessive supernaturalism [We should be walking by the Spirit in all of the supernaturalism that God makes available, but we must make sure it is God's supernaturalism and that we walk in line with God's Word on a continuous basis, by grace through faith] and puritanism [We are required to walk in all of the puritanism (truth, righteousness, and holiness) that God has called us to] against Gnostic and Catholic laxity. It is the first example of an earnest and well-meaning, but gloomy and fanatical hyper-Christianity, which, like all hyper-spiritualism is apt to end in the flesh.

... Montanus considered himself the inspired organ of the promised Paraclete or Advocate, the Helper and Comforter [the Holy Spirit] in these last times of distress. ... Connected with him were two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maxmilla, who left their husbands. During the bloody persecutions...which raged in Asia Minor [where Montanism was centered; Phrygia was part of Asia Minor] and caused the death of Polycarp (AD 155), all three went forth as prophets and reformers of the Christian life, and proclaimed the near approach of the age of the Holy Spirit and of the millennial reign in Pepuza, a small village in Phrygia, upon which new Jerusalem was to come down. [This "prophecy" regarding Pepuza was clearly wrong, including the idea that the Lord was coming very very soon. The idea that new Jerusalem was going to come down at the beginning of the millennium instead of the end of the millennium was clearly wrong too.] ... They called themselves 'spiritual' Christians...in distinction from the psychic or carnal Christians.... [Some Montanists might have been more spiritual than many of the Christians who didn't belong to their movement, but it clearly isn't true that they were led by the Spirit in everything they said and did, and it wasn't true that all their opponents, of which there were many, were unspiritual. We all have the potential to look at things in a way that makes us look good; we have to be very careful we aren't motivated by pride (and as I mentioned demons are experts at appealing to pride).] ..." (pages 417-419).

"In doctrine, Montanism agreed in all essential points with the Catholic Church, and held very firmly to the traditional rule of faith. [footnote: "This was acknowledged by its opponents."] Tertullian was thoroughly orthodox according to the standard of his age.its errors consist in a morbid exaggeration of Christian ideas and demands. Tertullian says, that the administration of the Paraclete consists only in the reform of discipline, in deeper understanding of the Scriptures, and in effort after higher perfection; that it has the same faith, the same God, the same Christ, and the same sacrament with the Catholics. ... [[We cannot ignore the serious errors that came with their prophecies or their claims to be the center of what God was doing on the earth. I'll include an excerpt from the "New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religions" under "Montanus, Montanism" on the internet: "Though primarily a phenomenon of the Church of Asia Minor, Montanism spread to the West with a suppression of its ecstatic features and emphasis on its ethical requirements. ... But the great Montanist of the West was Tertullian. Led on by his moral earnestness, and predisposed against any conformity with the world, Tertullian saw in the new prophecy the divine seal of his endeavors.and in his 'De ecsasi,' he definitely defended the Montanistic revelations... [I have been able to confirm this to some extent, but as I mentioned, he didn't teach that the Lord Jesus and new Jerusalem were coming to Pepuza, and there were other things he didn't teach. I'll say a little more on this point below].]" From our present perspective it is obvious that some of their end time prophecies were wrong, and I believe it is equally clear that their revelations regarding those sins that cannot be forgiven and the idea that Christians must be punished for their post-baptismal sins, including compensatory reparations after death for some Christians were wrong too. (As we have discussed, the Montanists were not alone in some of these ideas.)]]

... This is the first instance of a theory of development which assumes an advance beyond the New Testament and the Christianity of the apostles [It is extremely dangerous to go beyond the New Testament and the Christianity of the apostles.] ... Tertullian, however, was by no means rationalistic in his view. On the contrary, he demanded for all new revelations the closest agreement with the traditional faith of the church.... Nevertheless he gave the revelations of the Phrygian prophets on matters of practice an importance which interfered with the sufficiency of the Scriptures. ...

Montanism...sought a...continuance of the MIRACULOUS GIFTS [his emphasis] of the apostolic church, which gradually disappeared as Christianity became settled in humanity.... ..Montanistic prophecy related to the approaching heavy judgments of God, the persecutions, the millennium, fasting, and other ascetic exercises, which were to be enforced as laws of the church.

The Catholic church did not deny, in theory, the continuance of prophecy and the other miraculous gifts [and some prophecy and other gifts of the Spirit were manifested], but was disposed [with exceptions] to derive the Montanistic revelations from satanic inspiration [Schaff has a footnote which I won't include], and mistrusted them all the more for their proceeding not from the regular clergy, but in great part from unauthorized laymen and fanatical women.

... [The Montanists] put a great gulf between the true spiritual Christians [themselves] and the merely psychical [soulish]; and this induced spiritual pride and false pietism. ...

Another of the essential and prominent traits of Montanism was a visionary millenarianism, founded indeed on the Apocalypse [the book of Revelation] and on the apostolic expectation of the speedy return of Christ, but giving it extravagant weight.... The Montanists...held fast to the speedy return of Christ in glory, all the more as this hope [in large numbers of other Christians] began to give way to the feeling of a long settlement of the church on earth, and to a corresponding zeal for a compact, solid, episcopal organization [organized under bishops]. ... They lived under a vivid impression of the great final catastrophe, and looked therefore with contempt upon the present order of things, and directed all their desires to the second advent of Christ. Maximilla [one of the two original prophetesses] says. 'After me there is no more prophecy, but only the end of the world.' [[I'll quote two sentences from the article on "Montanus, Montanism" in the "New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religions": "The new prophecy [Montanism] claimed the right, in view of the approaching end of all things, to regulate life in the Church. ... The entire purpose, in fact, of the new prophecy was preparation for the approaching end, and expectation of this great event should determine the entire life of the Christian."]]

The failure of these predictions weakened, of course, all the other pretensions of the system. [It is surprising though how such errors can be minimized or explained away by those who have espoused them, including in our day.] ...

Finally, the Montanistic sect was characterized by fanatical severity in asceticism and church discipline. ... Tertullian makes the restoration of a rigorous discipline the chief office of the new prophecy.

... Montanism turned with horror from all the enjoyments of life, and held even art to be incompatible with Christian soberness and humility. It forbade women all ornamental clothing, and required virgins to be veiled. It courted the blood-baptism of martyrdom, and condemned concealment or flight in persecution as a denial of Christ. It multiplied fasts and other ascetic exercises, and carried them to extreme severity.... It prohibited second marriage as adultery, for laity as well as clergy, and inclined even to regard a single marriage as a mere concession on the part of God to sensuous infirmity of man. ... Tertullian held all mortal sins (of which he numbers seven), committed after baptism, to be unpardonable, at least in this world, and a church, which showed such laxity toward gross offenders, as the Roman church at that time did, according to the corroborating testimony of Hippolytus, he called them worse than a 'den of thieves,' even a 'spelunca moechorum de fornicatorum [cave of adulterers and fornicators].' [The Montanists clearly went too far here.]

The Catholic church...opened the door likewise to excessive ascetic rigor, but only as an exception to the rule; while the Montanists pressed their rigoristic demands as binding upon all. ..." (pages 421-426).

I'll quote several sentences from the article on "Montanus and Montanism" at earlychurch.org.uk on the internet. "About the middle of the second century...Montanus appeared as a new prophet in Phrygia...and found many adherents.... Under him, also, prophetesses appeared - Priscilla and Maximilla. Prophecy was, indeed, the most prominent feature of the new movement. Ecstatic visions, announcing the approach of the second advent of Christ, and the establishment of the heavenly Jerusalem at Pepuza in Phrygia, and inculcating the severest asceticism and most rigorous penitential discipline, were set forth as divine revelations.... In spite of the sensation it created and the discussion it caused, the movement remained for a long time within the pale of the Church; but as it grew in strength, penetrating from Asia Minor into Thrace, it naturally roused a stronger opposition, and, in several places, synods were convened against it. Some persons considered it to have been caused by a demon...."

Condemned in Rome and in its native country, Montanism found a new home in North Africa, and its most prominent representative in Tertullian. He adopted all their views [This statement must be qualified, as we have discussed.], and further developed them. The speedy advent of Christ, and the establishment of the millennium...are the fundamental ideas of his theology."

I'll include a short excerpt from the four-page article on "Tertullian" in the "New Catholic Encyclopedia" (page 1019). "Outstanding 3^d-century theologian and ecclesiastical writer.... Converted to Christianity (about AD 195) As early as 206 his teaching began to reflect Montanistic ideas, and about 212 or 213 he broke with the Church and joined forces with Montanism in Africa, becoming the leader of a party subsequently known as Tertullianists. He was certainly married; whether he was a priest is still a matter of dispute."

I'll quote several sentences from Stanley M. Burgess ("The Spirit and Church: Antiquity" [Hendrickson, 1984], page 51): "... What was new and particularly galling about the Montanists [to the Catholics] was that their rigorous asceticism grew out of a series of prophecies which they considered to be a final divine revelation of truth to mankind, superseding even the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. This apocalyptic asceticism, coupled with a strong sense of exclusiveness (only the 'church of the Spirit' could forgive sins, not the 'church which consists of a number of bishops' [Burgess has a footnote which I won't quote]), and a propensity to attack without mercy the traditionalism and growing secularism in the mainline Church, proved a challenge too great to tolerate."

David W. Bercot in his "A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs" (Hendrickson, 1998) has four pages under the heading "Montanists." The sub-headings are 1. The Nature of Montanism and its teachings, and 2. Examples of Montanistic teachings from Tertullian: A. New revelations from the Paraclete [Holy Spirit]; B. Christians should not flee from persecution; C. No second marriages; D. No forgiveness for post-baptismal sins.

I'll include several excerpts from passages that Bercot included, but I'll take them from the "Ante-Nicene Fathers" 10 volume set, and I won't limit my excerpts to the excerpts

Bercot included. This first excerpt is taken from "Tertullian Against Marcion," Vol. 3, book 3, chapter 25, pages 342-343. Bercot dated this writing about AD 207. Tertullian believed in a literal millennium, which was the dominant viewpoint with the ante-Nicene Fathers (and I believe is the correct viewpoint), but as this excerpt shows, he significantly confused the issue, and this confusion undoubtedly came, to some significant extent, from Montanistic prophecies.

(((This double parenthesis goes on for two paragraphs.) I learned some important information which I hadn't picked up before (but I have mentioned previously to some extent in this paper), from the article on "Montanism" in the "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" edited by James Hastings, published 1908-1927, that is available on the internet. There were significant differences between the teachings of Tertullian and the teachings of Montanus and the two prophetesses. (The article mentions that "...Maximilla, the last of the original trio, died in 179-180...." A few paragraphs back I included an excerpt that said that Tertullian's teachings began to reflect Montanistic influence as early as 206.) This article mentions, for example, that Tertullian "never mentions Pepuza" and he believed that Christ (and new Jerusalem) will come to Jerusalem, not Pepuza. The article assumes that Tertullian was substantially limited in his knowledge of some of what they taught. We also have to consider the very real possibility that he rejected some things they taught (especially prophecies that had already been proved wrong before he joined the Montanists) without mentioning that he was rejecting them. It was some 2,500 miles from the middle of Asia Minor to Carthage if you took the Roman roads. (This is a rough estimate taken from a map on the internet.) If you went mostly by ship it was some 1,000 miles. If you walked 40 miles a day, it would take you some 62 days to get to Carthage from the middle of Asia Minor.

One reason this excerpt from Tertullian is important to this paper is that Tertullian speaks of the saints being resurrected at different times within the thousand years, dependent on "their deserts." (This viewpoint probably came in large part, if not totally, from Montanistic influence, which we have discussed to some extent. I believe the New Testament shows that ALL true Christians who will have died before the Lord Jesus returns will be resurrected and glorified when He returns.) And he teaches that new Jerusalem will come down at the beginning of the millennium ((The Montanistic prophecies clearly taught, and made a big deal of the fact, that NEW JERUSALEM WILL COME DOWN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MILLENNIUM, at Pepuza, and they invited their followers to move to Pepuza to await the very soon return of the Lord Jesus. I believe Revelation chapters 20 and 21 show that new Jerusalem will come down to the fully glorified new earth right AFTER the millennium and the great white throne judgment at the end of the millennium. Irenaeus rightly taught that new Jerusalem will come down to the new earth after the millennial kingdom and the great white throne judgment at the end of the millennium ("Irenaeus Against Heresies" in Vol. 1 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers" set, chapter 35, pages 565, 566; the article on Irenaeus in Wikipedia dates this writing about AD 180.])) Now I'll quote from Tertullian:

"...for this reason, that our inquiry relates to what is promised in heaven, not on earth. But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth [referring to the

millennial kingdom], although before heaven [(before heaven in the full and final sense, after the millennium); Tertullian believes that we (the Christians) will participate in this (millennial, but for us also heavenly) kingdom after we are resurrected and glorified; he doesn't mention here the believers who will still be alive when Christ returns (he was dealing in context with the resurrection of the body), but in "On the Resurrection of the Flesh," chapters 41, 42, page 575 of Vol. 3 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," he shows that he understands that the living saints will be glorified at the same time as the resurrection and glorification of the saints who will have died before that time. However, he confuses the issue to some extent by mentioning "an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to joining the rising saints...." I don't believe the New Testament teaches that the living saints will have to die in order to be glorified.]], only in another state of existence [including dwelling in new Jerusalem, which is a heavenly city on the earth at Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom, according to him]; inasmuch as it [this heavenly kingdom on the earth] will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, 'let down from heaven [However, Rev. 21:2 prophesies of new Jerusalem coming down after the thousand years, not at the beginning of the thousand years; that's quite a difference.],' which the apostle also calls 'our mother from above'; and while declaring that our citizenship is in heaven, he predicates of it that it is really a city in heaven. [Tertullian is saying, if I understand him, that during the millennial kingdom we will be living in heaven in the sense that we will be living in "a city in heaven" that will be located on the earth during the millennial kingdom.] ... And the word of the new prophecy which is a part of our belief [Montanism], attests how it foretold that there would be for a sign a picture of this very city exhibited to view previous to its manifestation. This prophecy, indeed has been very lately fulfilled.... [A footnote mentions that Tertullian "is the only author who mentions this prodigy (extraordinary event)."] For it is evident from the testimony of even heathen witnesses, that in Judea there was suspended in the sky a city early every morning for forty days. As the day advanced, the entire figure of its walls would wane gradually, and sometimes it would vanish instantly. We say that this city has been provided by God for receiving the saints on their resurrection, and refreshing them with the abundance of all really spiritual blessings, as a recompense for those [things] which in the world we have either despised or lost; since it is both just and God-worthy that His servants should have their joy in the place [on the earth, but in the "city of heaven" that comes down to the earth at the beginning of the millennium, according to Tertullian] where they have also suffered affliction for His name's sake. ... After its thousand years are over [at the end of the millennium], within which period [the millennium] is completed the resurrection of the saints, WHO RISE SOONER OR LATER ACCORDING TO THEIR JUST DESERTS [my emphasis; discussed above], there will ensue the destruction of the world and the conflagration of all things at the judgment [at the end of the millennium]: we shall then [when we are resurrected and glorified, starting at the time the Lord Jesus returns and the millennium begins] be changed in a moment into the substance of angels, even by the investiture of an incorruptible nature, and so be removed to that kingdom in heaven [Tertullian was referring to new Jerusalem here, which he called "a city in heaven" earlier in this excerpt. He taught that the city will come down at Jerusalem at the beginning of the millennial kingdom; the early Montanist

prophets said it will come down at Pepuza in Asia Minor.] of which we have now been treating...."

I'll quote a few sentences from what Tertullian said about the form of prophesying of the Montanists. ((He said this to defend the type of prophesying (some use the word "ecstatic") that took place among the Montanists, which some used to try prove that their prophesying wasn't of God. The Montanists thought their form of prophesying proved that their prophecies were of God, without any input from the person prophesying ("Tertullian against Marcion," book 4, chapter 22, Vol. 3 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," page 383; Bercot dated this writing about AD 207.))): "For when a man is rapt in the Spirit, especially when he beholds the glory of God, or when God speaks through him, he necessarily loses his sensation, because he is overshadowed by the power of God, - a point concerning which there is a question between us and the carnally minded [the opponents of the Montanists]."

The critics of the Montanists rejected the form of the prophesying of Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla, but that doesn't prove that the form was out of order. I'll include a sentence from the "New Catholic Encyclopedia." "[Montanus] and his followers, notably the women Priscilla (or Prisca) and Maximilla, were seized by religious raptures, and in the course of ecstasy, spoke in strange tongues [some accused them of babbling, but the tongues could have been a genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit] and uttered prophecies that the sectaries [the Montanists] regarded as oracles of the Holy Spirit." The Bible makes it clear that sometimes prophesying includes going into trances, etc. I don't know enough about what happened to have much of an opinion (sometimes critics are right; sometimes they are wrong), but it is clear that some of their "prophecies" did not come from God, which is a very serious problem. I don't believe this proves that they weren't Christians in the opinion of God (which is the only opinion that really matters when the end comes; we ought to go slow about dogmatically stating that particular "Christians" are of the devil and headed for hell), or that they didn't have some genuine gifts of God, but this kind of thing causes serious problems (sometimes very serious problems) and it is difficult to have confidence in any of their prophecies or in their ministries, and we always need to be aware of the fact that demons are very active in giving revelations/prophecies and that some "Christians" are not true Christians, even if they think they are.

Based on what I have observed, it is rather easy for those prophesying to let their own ideas intrude into the "prophecies" (It so often happens that the prophecies in particular movements, churches, etc. just happen to support and "confirm" what they believe and are doing in those movements, etc.); I believe this happens a lot in our day, and the potential to be deceived by demon spirits is always there. If we aren't aware of these problems, looking to God for His discernment and guidance, and being very careful to check everything against the Bible, we could rather easily be deceived. Many say that Montanus had been a pagan priest before he was converted and that he had not been converted long before he began to prophesy. For one thing, being a new convert makes a person more susceptible to pride (cf. 1 Tim. 2:6), but all of us are susceptible to pride.

I'll include a short excerpt where Tertullian quoted from Priscilla ("On the Resurrection of the Flesh," chapter 11, Vol. 3 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," page 552; Bercot dates this writing about AD 210): "It is a shrewd saying which the Paraclete [the Holy Spirit] utters concerning these persons [the Gnostics, who denied the resurrection of the body] by the mouth of the prophetess Prisca: 'They are carnal, and yet they hate the flesh.' " They are "carnal" in that they live for the flesh, which includes the idea (as Tertullian mentioned in the previous sentence) that they do not discipline the flesh. They "hate the flesh" in that they deny the resurrection of the body. Also, the Gnostics believed that physical matter is evil.

I'll include an excerpt from Tertullian where he speaks of spiritual gifts ("A Treatise on the Soul," Vol. 3 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," page 188; Bercot dates this writing about AD 207): "... We have amongst us a sister whose lot it has been to be favoured with sundry gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church: she converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord; she both sees and hears mysterious communications; some men's hearts she understands, and to those who are in need she distributes remedies. [This sounds good, and I assume that at least much of this was revelation from God, but we must be aware that demons can do these things too for the devil's evil purposes, and some "prophecies" come from, or have an admixture of, the flesh.] Whether it be in the reading of Scripture, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions. ... After the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred service, she is in a regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in vision (for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed). [This is good and necessary, but this doesn't in itself guarantee that the revelations (or all of the revelations) were from God.]the apostle most assuredly foretold that there were to be 'spiritual gifts' in the church [the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians chapters 12-14, for example)]."

I'll include a few sentences from Tertullian's "On Fasting: In Opposition to the Psychics [unspiritual, soulish, carnal Christians]," chapter 1, Vol. 4 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," page 102; Bercot dated this writing about AD 213. ((Tertullian is defending the Montanists against the charge of heresy and pseudo-prophecy and a "(sentence of) anathema." Here he is referring to their being charged with the novelty of excessive fasting, but he makes it clear in this chapter that the charges against them were not limited to the topic of fasting. We do need to be very careful about setting up extreme rules for fasting, or anything else, that all Christians are supposedly required (before God) to obey, and we need to be careful of judging other Christians to be psychics (unspiritual, soulish, carnal). We also need to be very careful about calling other Christians heretics and pronouncing anathema against them, or, as it has happened on many occasions in the history of the Christian church, killing them for God.)): "It is these [the psychics (unspiritual, soulish, carnal Christians)] which raise controversy with the Paraclete [Holy Spirit]; it is on this account that the New Prophecies are rejected]: not that Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla preach another God, nor that they disjoin

Jesus Christ (from God [apparently referring to the heretical viewpoint of some that Jesus wasn't deity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit], nor that they overturn any particular rule of faith or hope, but that they plainly teach more frequent fasting than marrying. [The Montanists rejected second marriages.]"

I'll include one last excerpt from Tertullian ("On the Resurrection of the Flesh," chapter 63, Vol. 3 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," page 594; Bercot dated this writing about AD 210): "...since, however, these heresies [In this context Tertullian was dealing with the denial of the resurrection of the body, but what he says here would cover most heresies.] would be unable to put on a bold front without some countenance from the Scriptures, it therefore is plain enough that the ancient Holy Writ has furnished them with sundry materials for their evil doctrine, which very materials indeed (so distorted) are refutable from the same Scriptures. [Heretics (including many heretics who don't claim to be Christians) typically cite verses that supposedly confirm their heresies, but when those verses are read in context and rightly interpreted and when everything else the Bible says on that topic is brought into the picture, always looking for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, the heresies are shown to be heresies.] It was fit and proper, therefore, that the Holy Ghost should no longer withhold the effusions of His gracious light upon these inspired writings, in order that they might be able to disseminate the seeds of truth with no admixture of heretical subtleties, and pluck out from it their tares. He has accordingly now dispersed all the perplexities of the past, and their self chosen allegories and parables, by the open and perspicuous explanation of the entire mystery, through the new prophecy [Montanism], which descends in copious streams from the Paraclete."

We need to put a priority on looking to God for the correct interpretation of the Bible, especially when dealing with difficult passages, and I believe this is one of the primary things the Holy Spirit is here to do, while using all the tools that are available to us, including considering earlier interpretations of those passages. However, some Christians who think they are accurately hearing from God are not accurately hearing from Him, at least not on a consistent basis. It seems clear to me that Tertullian had a lot right, but that some of the revelation/prophecies that he and his community received were not from God. Some revelations come from God; some have an admixture of the flesh; some are from the camp of the devil. I am convinced we can accurately hear from God, but we must be extremely humble, careful, realizing the potential to be deceived one way or another. To the extent we are not Bible-centered and walking in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, which includes walking by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis, we do not have a solid foundation to come to an understanding of the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

After the somewhat brief, but very important, tangent where we considered (for the primary topic) the difficulty that some of the early Christian Fathers (and those who followed their lead) had in dealing with the sins (especially sins like murder, apostasy, including during and after times of intense persecution, and adultery/fornication) of those who had become Christians, with some emphasis on Tertullian and the

Montanists, WE ARE NOW BACK TO THE TOPIC OF WHAT THE EARLY CHRISTIAN FATHERS TAUGHT ABOUT FREE WILL AND GRACE. It is true that those early Christian Fathers often spoke of free will, but we need to understand what they typically meant, and what they did not mean, by free will. In this first section, I'll include quite a few excerpts from those writers who believed in, and often mentioned, free will to demonstrate that they understood that we are dependent on the enabling grace of God in Christ to become Christians and to live as Christians.

When the early Fathers (all before Augustine) spoke of free will they were not disputing the fact that we need God's grace to be saved and to live for God, doing His will and resisting sin. They understood that we are dependent on God's grace, but they also understood that our salvation will not be accomplished without our doing the things that God requires of us. God takes the initiative in our salvation, and He must receive all the glory. We don't ever have to worry that we might give God too much glory. However, we rob Him of glory when we don't believe His Word and live in agreement with His Word in His righteousness and holiness, with the victory over sin, by His grace through faith.

We need to understand that those early Fathers were emphasizing free will in a world (in a context) where the idea of free will was being denied on a very large scale, as we will discuss as we continue, but (as I mentioned) they understood that we could not become Christians or live as Christians apart from the enabling grace of God in Christ. I would appreciate it if they had emphasized our continual need for God's grace more, and some of them made statements that made it sound like we can do what must be done by our free will. I don't believe, however, that they were intending to deny our continual need for the grace of God in Christ. In the twenty-seven page section we just finished it is clear that although they understood their need for the grace of God to become Christians and to live as Christians, many of them were far from having an adequate appreciation of God's grace when it came to dealing with sins that were committed after they became Christians (post-baptismal sins).

For one very important thing, we must understand that those early Christian Fathers had to dispute the widely accepted worldview of their day of fatalism, which denied free will. If a widely accepted worldview of our day denied free will, we would have to emphasize free will more. We will discuss these things as we continue, including giving some excerpts from those Fathers which demonstrate that their opponents were denying free will.

The writing of the early Fathers can be helpful (there are places where those writings are very helpful, very much including the fact that they had a better understanding of the sanctifying power of the gospel, which enables, and requires, believers to walk in the righteousness of God with the victory over sin than most Christians do in our day, and they made it clear that they believed that believers can become unbelievers and lose their salvation), but we must understand that those writings are far from being on same level with the Bible; they are not, nor did they claim to be, the inspired "Word of God." The Protestant reformers were right with their insistence on "Sola Scriptura": "The Scriptures (the Bible) alone." Traditions of men can be, and all too often are, wrong.

We must base what we believe on the Bible. How desperately we need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! It isn't difficult to find passages in the early Christian writings that are wrong, even though those men were quite sincere and committed to the truth of God's Word, and quite a few died as martyrs. (To die as a martyr doesn't prove that a person is a true Christian.) When it comes to what they taught about our need for grace to be saved and that God requires us to respond to and cooperate with His grace on a continuous basis they were mostly right, but (like I mentioned) it would have been better if they had emphasized grace more, and some of their statements about free will, taken by themselves, could rather easily be misunderstood to think they were saying that we can become Christians and live as Christians by our free will.

I'm Taking These First Excerpts, Which Demonstrate That These Early Christian Writers Believed That WE COULD NOT BECOME CHRISTIANS OR LIVE AS CHRISTIANS APART FROM THE ENABLING, SAVING, SANCTIFYING GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST, from "A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs" by David W. Bercot, editor (Hendrickson Publishers, 1998). Bercot took these excerpts from "The Ante-Nicene Fathers" (editors: Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; 1885-1887; 10 volumes [Hendrickson Publishers, 1994]). Bercot mentions that he modified some of the excerpts to make them easier to read while attempting to not change the meaning. "Ante Nicene" means before the Council of Nicea that took place in AD 325, where they (for one thing) refuted the Arian heresy that denied the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and spoke of Him as a created being. Bercot uses E to indicate an Eastern writer and W for a Western writer. I have the 10 volume "Ante-Nicene Fathers" set and have used it quite a bit, but it saved me quite a bit of time to take these excerpts from Bercot's Dictionary.

These first three quotations come from IRENAEUS (about AD130-200), who is one of the most respected of the early Christian Fathers. He had learned from Polycarp who knew the apostle John. Irenaeus believed in and spoke of free will, but as this quotation shows, he also believed that we are dependent on the enabling grace of God to become Christians and to live as Christians.

"The Lord himself, who is Emmanuel from the virgin, is the sign of our salvation. It was the Lord Himself who saved them. For they could not be saved by their own instrumentality. Therefore, when Paul explains human infirmity, he says, 'For I know that there dwells in my flesh no good thing' [Rom. 7:18]. [[Irenaeus rightly understood that the apostle Paul was not speaking of/as a Christian in Rom. 7:14-25. He was speaking of fallen mankind being in spiritual death and bondage to sin, with the people of Israel being in the spotlight; they were the ones who had been given God's Law. By definition, those who are in spiritual death and bondage to sin have significant bondage of the will. Spiritual death is not complete during this age; it will be complete with the second death of Rev. 20:14, 15. However, mankind is not so fallen that we cannot cooperate with God's grace through faith; fallen mankind is not totally possessed by sin and the god of this world with his evil angels and demons. Irenaeus clearly believed that we have some freedom of our will and that it is totally necessary for us to do the things God requires of us as we respond to His grace to be saved (by grace).]] He [Paul] thus shows that the

'good thing' of our salvation is not from us, but from God. And again: 'Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?' [Rom. 7:24].... Here we see that we must be saved by the help of God, not by ourselves. IRENAEUS, ["Irenaeus Against Heresies"] (about AD 180, East/West), 1.450" ["1.450" means volume 1 of the "Ante-Nicene Fathers," page 450; page 576 of Bercot's Dictionary].

In the early Christian writings, and in the Bible, and other writings, including some early Jewish writings, you cannot be too quick to jump to conclusions based on one passage, or even several passages. It has been clear to me for a long time, and I have been saying for a long time, that we must hold the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. How desperately we need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! This same truth holds for writing in our day, but in our day there typically is more emphasis on trying to present the balanced truth in a passage, with scientific accuracy, instead of presenting part of the truth that still needs to be balanced out with other statements.

Not recognizing that the Bible has some passages that are written this way leads to much of the disagreement between true Christians. Very often we are clinging to a passage (or several passages) and think the case is closed, and we close our minds, not realizing that we may not be clinging to the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. I'm not an expert on ancient writing, but I have seen examples (in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in other ancient Jewish writings) of out-of-balance statements that would give you the mistaken idea that they believed that everything depends on God and that man doesn't really have a role when it comes to salvation, for example. But as you keep reading you find that they also believed that we do have a definite role to play (by the will and plan of our sovereign God).

"No man can know God without both the goodwill of the Father and the agency of the Son. IRENAEUS ["Irenaeus Against Heresies"] (about AD 180 E/W), 1.470" [page 574].

"No one, indeed, while placed out of reach of the Lord's benefits, has power to procure for himself the means of salvation. So the more we receive His grace, the more we should love Him. IRENAEUS ["Irenaeus Against Heresies"] (about AD 180, E/W), 1.478" [page 576].

"What, moreover, *does* God will, but that we should walk according to His discipline? We make petition, then, that He supply us with the substance of His will and the capacity to do it - so that we may be saved both in the heavens and on earth. For the sum of His will is the salvation of those whom He has adopted. TERTULLIAN ["On Prayer"] (about AD 198, W), 3.682" [page 577]. Tertullian believed we have some freedom of the will, but also that we are dependent on the grace of God to know His will and to be able to do His will. The way those early Christian writers used the words "free will" they were compatible with our need for God's enabling grace on a continuous basis to become Christians and to live as Christians.

"Being convinced at that time of our unworthiness of attaining life through our own works [that which we could accomplish apart from the grace of God], it is now, through

the kindness of God, graciously given to us. Accordingly, it is clear that in ourselves we were unable to enter into the kingdom of God. However, through the power of God, we can be made able. LETTER [from Mathetes] TO DIOGNETUS (about AD125-200), 1.28" [page 575].

"When the Word of God says, 'No man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son of God will reveal Him [Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22],' he declares that no one can know God except by the help of divine grace coming from above, with a certain divine inspiration. Indeed, it is reasonable to suppose that the knowledge of God is above human nature. This is the reason for the many errors into which men have fallen in their views of God. [Our knowledge of God], then, is through the goodness and love of God to mankind and by a marvelous exercise of divine grace. ORIGEN ["Origen Against Celsus"] (about AD 248, E), 4.629" [page 578]. Origen believed in free will, but as this quotation shows he also believed that our salvation is dependent on the grace of God in Christ.

"To those whose heart He saw would become pure and obedient to Him, He gave power to repent with the whole heart. But to those whose deceit and wickedness He perceived, and seeing that they intended to repent hypocritically, He did not grant repentance [lest they should again profane His name]. [Hermas was speaking of Christians repenting who had fallen into serious sin.] HERMAS (about AD 150, W) 2.41" [page 294].

" 'Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watches in vain.' This is not said to persuade us against building. Nor does it teach us not to keep watch in order to guard the city of our soul. Rather, it shows that what is built without God (and therefore does not receive His protection) is built in vain.... If we were to say that such a building is not the work of the builder, but of God...we would be correct. Yet, it is understood that something had also been done by human means. Nevertheless, the benefit is gratefully referred to God, who brought it to pass. The human desire is not sufficient to attain the end. Likewise, the running of those who (as it were) athletes does not enable them to gain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. For these things are accomplished only with the assistance of God. Therefore, it is appropriately said that 'it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy [Rom. 9:16].' ORIGEN ["Origen De Principiis"] (about AD 225, E) 4.322" [page 295].

(I am taking this excerpt directly from the "Ante-Nicene Fathers.") "... There are therefore manifest reasons for holding the opinion, that as in good things the human will is of itself weak to accomplish any good (for it is by divine help that it is brought to perfection in everything); so also in things of an opposite nature we receive certain initial elements, and, as it were, seeds of sins, from those things which we use agreeably to nature; but when we have indulged them beyond what is proper, and have not resisted the first movements to intemperance, then the hostile power, seizing the occasion of this first transgression, incites and presses us hard in every way, seeking to extend our sins over a wider field, and furnishing us human beings with occasions and beginning of

sins, which these hostile powers spread far and wide, and, if possible, beyond all limits. ... I think from this, that those opposing powers, i.e., those demons, having gained a lodgment in their minds which has been already laid open to them by intemperance, have taken complete possession of their sensitive nature, especially when no feeling of the glory of virtue has aroused them to resistance." [Those ancient writers were much more aware of the activities of demons than most Christians in our day, at least in our part of the world. We cannot walk in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God without waging warfare against the world, the flesh (the old man who wants to continue in sin) and the devil and his evil angels (one-third of all the angels) and very large number of demons. Tertullian spoke often of dealing with demons, including our authority over them.] ORIGEN ("Origen De Principiis," 4.330).

"It is advantageous to each one for him to perceive his own particular nature [including the limits of his free will] and the grace of God. For he who does not perceive his own weakness and the divine favor...not having tested himself, not having condemned himself, will imagine that the benefit conferred upon him by the grace of heaven is his own doing. And this imagination also produces vanity, which will be the cause of his downfall.... They have been revealed to babes - to those who after childhood have come to better things. These are those who remember that it is not so much from their own effort as by the unspeakable goodness [of God] that they have reached the greatest possible extent of blessedness. ORIGEN ["Origen De Principiis"] (about AD 225, E), 4.313" [page 578].

"The strength of our will is not sufficient to procure the perfectly pure heart. For we need God to create it. He, therefore, who prays as he should, offers this petition to God: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.' ORIGEN ["Origen Against Celsus"] (about AD 248, E), 4.624" [page 578].

"...the Father of those who believe - of those who, being sanctified by Him, and restored by the nativity [birth] of spiritual grace, have begun to be sons of God. ... We pray that this sanctification may abide in us; and because our Lord and Judge warns the man who was healed and quickened [made alive] by Him to sin no more - lest a worse thing happen to him. So we make this supplication in our constant prayers...that the sanctification and quickening [being made alive] that is received from the grace of God may be preserved by His protection [by the grace of God]. CYPRIAN ["Treatises of Cyprian"] (about AD 250, W), 5.450" [page 589].

THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THOSE EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS SPOKE OF FREE WILL. I have already demonstrated that they agreed that our salvation is dependent on the enabling, saving grace of God in Christ to become Christians and to think and live as Christians. The pagan world ((including many of the religions, very much including Gnosticism (which was a powerful opponent of true Christianity for a long time; the Gnostics spoke of Jesus, used parts of the Bible, practiced water baptism, etc., but they denied that sin is the problem and rejected the atoning blood of Jesus and had many other super-serious problems; those Fathers had to deal with Gnosticism on a much more serious level than the writers of the New Testament did); the occult (including

astrology); and many of the philosophies)) in which these writers lived and wrote was given over in large measure to fatalism, which, by definition, denies the Biblical teaching of free will (limited free will after the fall). Another of the religions of those ancient days that denied free will was Manichaeism; Augustine followed that religion before he became a Christian.

The First Few Sections Of The Article On "Fatalism" In The "Catholic Encyclopedia" (on the internet) Give Some Insight Regarding The Widespread Fatalism That The Early Christian Writers Had To Contend With. I'll just quote two sentences from the paragraph titled "Fatalism and Christianity": "The pagan view of an eternal, inevitable force coercing and controlling all action, whether human or divine, found itself in conflict with the conception of a free, personal, infinite God. Consequently several of the early Christian writers were concerned to oppose and refute the theory of fate." (The writers of the New Testament didn't spend hardly any time directly opposing this viewpoint, but they certainly rejected this viewpoint. They spent much of their time laying the foundation for new-covenant salvation and its relationship with the Old Testament and Judaism.) It is important to understand that when those early Christian writers spoke of free will they were reacting against the widespread viewpoint of fatalism; they were not denying our dependence on the enabling grace of God to become Christians and to live as Christians. The New Testament is quite clear on these points (as I demonstrated above). As I mentioned, I am not suggesting that the early Christian writers always emphasized grace enough, and especially when it came to dealing with the sin of Christians.

I'll Quote A Little From The Two-Page Article On "Fate and Fatalism" In The "New Catholic Encyclopedia" (McGraw-Hill, 1967), pages 850-852. The subheadings in this article are "Fate, Fortune, Chance, and Destiny"; "Mythological Fatalism"; "Astrological Fatalism"; "Philosophical Fatalism"; "Pagan and Christian Opposition to Fatalism"; and "Theological Fatalism." I'll just quote two sentences from under "Pagan and Christian Opposition to Fatalism." "The various treatises on fate by Christian writers (Origen, Minucius Felix, Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom, among others) all exhibited the same hostile attitude. They attacked fatalism to defend not only the rights of man [[I assume the author of this article (G. Faggin) was referring to facts like we were created in the image of God. We were not created to be in bondage to Satan, sin, or fate. We are called to repent (repentance is something we do in response to God's call to repent; we could not repent in an adequate way apart from the grace of God), etc. The fall of man made a very significant difference in man (spiritual death is a very significant thing); however, Gen. 9:6 (in a context after the fall) shows how wrong it is for man to kill man, in that we have been created in the image of God.]] but, above all, the Christian concept of a personal God [God is sovereign, not fate]." The early Christian writers found it necessary to emphasize free will because of the widespread acceptance of fatalism (which denied free will and the God who created us with free will) by so much of the world in which they lived and ministered. Those writers were not denying our need for the enabling grace of God by their emphasis on free will. As I mentioned, I'm not saying that every one of those writers had an adequate balance when it came to grace and free will, but they were not excluding our need for the enabling grace of God

to become Christians and to live as Christians when they spoke of free will. Christians then and now have the capacity of say things that are out of the Biblical balance, or totally wrong.

I'll Include A Paragraph From The Article "Free Will and Grace" In The "New Catholic Encyclopedia," pages 93, 94, Under The Heading "Sovereignty of Grace." "Catholic belief in the sovereignty of grace holds that no free act leading to salvation can be performed unless it is initiated, sustained, and brought to completion by the merciful gift or grace of God. To deny this is to destroy the whole meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (see, e.g., John 6:44; 15:5; Phil. 2:13; 2 Cor. 3:5; Rom. 11:6), as the Church affirmed in its vigorous reaction to Pelagianism (...), It even accepted with approval the judgment of the author of the *Indiculus* that the Pelagians are 'very impious defenders of free will' (...)" [page 93].

I'll quote a paragraph from David W. Bercot, who is the editor of "A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs," which I quoted from earlier in this paper and will quote from later in this paper ("Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up" 3rd edition [Scroll Publishing, 1999], page 71) where he quotes from Methodius, who was one of the early Christian writers who spoke of free will (It is one of many excerpts that demonstrate that those early writers spoke of free will in a context where free will was being denied because of the widespread worldview of fatalism): "Methodius, a Christian martyr who lived near the end of the third century, wrote... 'Those [pagans] who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God Himself, making Him out to be the cause and author of human evils' ('The Banquet of the Ten Virgins' discourse 8, chapter 16)." (Methodius was strong on righteousness and victory over sin. I quoted from him on that topic in my paper on the interpretation of Romans chapter 7 that is on my internet site.)

I'll also quote two sentences from "Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up" on page 141. After mentioning that the early Christian writers believed in free will, Bercot says: "However, at the same time, they recognized that we all stand in need of God's grace - both His saving grace and His empowering grace. Without grace there can be no salvation."

Now I'll Include Some Excerpts From "A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs" (see above) Where Those Writers Spoke Of Free Will In Contexts Where They Were Refuting Fatalism. They were not speaking of free will to deny that we need the enabling grace of God to become Christians or to live as Christians.

I'll quote a small part of what Origen said in reaction to the teaching of some Gnostics (who believed in fatalism and had so many other things wrong, and were powerful opponents of true Christianity) that, because of our ruined natures, salvation must be purely a matter of grace, eliminating free will. In a context like that you can see why those Fathers would emphasize free will. "...if it is [all] God's doing...it would be altogether an act of divine grace. This...annihilates free will.the Word of God promises to take away wickedness...from those who come to Him. But not if they are

unwilling to come. It is only if they submit themselves to the Physician of the sick. ORIGEN ["Origen Against Celsus"] (about AD 225, E) 4.431" [page 290]. Origen was not arguing that we can be saved by free will apart from the grace of God, but that free will (cooperating with God's grace) plays a necessary role in our salvation.

" 'I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants anything, nor he that waters, but God, who gives the increase [1 Cor. 3:6, 7].' Now we would not correctly assert that the production of full crops was the work of the farmer, or of him that watered, rather it is the work of God. Likewise, our perfection is not brought about as if we ourselves did nothing. Yet it is not completed by us. Rather God produces the greater part of it.... In the matter of our salvation, what is done by God is infinitely greater than what is done by ourselves. For that reason, I think, it is said that 'it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God, who shows mercy [Rom. 9:16].' For if that statement means what they [the Gnostics] imagine it means [fatalism, not free will]...then the commandments are unnecessary. Furthermore, it would be in vain that Paul himself blames some persons for having fallen away and praises others for having remained upright. It was in vain that he enacted laws for the churches.... However, it was not in vain that Paul gave such advice, censuring some and approving others. ORIGEN ["Origen De Principiis"] (about AD 225, E), 4.322, 323" [page 295]. Origen's opponents were the Gnostics, who rejected free will. . Origen clearly shows that, in spite of our free will (which he believed in), we are totally dependent on the grace of God, who "produces the greater part," and He must receive all the glory for our salvation.

Clement of Alexandria ("Who Is the Rich Man that Shall Be Saved") shows part of what the early Christian writers meant by free will with the words, "For God does not compel. (about AD 195, E) 2.593" [page 577].

May the will of God be fully accomplished and His people be edified through this paper!

© Copyright by Karl Kemp