

Calvinism in the Early Church by the Early Church Fathers

([from A Puritan's Mind Website](#))

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Barnabas (A.D. 70): “Learn: before we believed in God, the habitation of our heart was corrupt and weak.”

Ignatius (A.D. 110): “They that are carnal cannot do the things that are spiritual...Nor can the unbelievers do the things of belief.”

Justin Martyr (A.D. 150): “Mankind by Adam fell under death, and the deception of the serpent; we are born sinners...No good thing dwells in us...For neither by nature, nor by human understanding is it possible for me to acquire the knowledge of things so great and so divine, but by the energy of the Divine Spirit...Of ourselves it is impossible to enter the kingdom of God...He has convicted us of the impossibility of our nature to obtain life...Free will has destroyed us; we who were free are become slaves and for our sin are sold...Being pressed down by our sins, we cannot move upward toward God; we are like birds who have wings, but are unable to fly.”

Clement Of Alexandria (A.D. 190): “The soul cannot rise nor fly, nor be lifted up above the things that are on high, without special grace.”

Origen: “Our free will...or human nature is not sufficient to seek God in any manner.”

Eusebius (A.D. 330): “The liberty of our will in choosing things that are good is destroyed.”

Augustine (A.D. 370): “If, therefore, they are servants of sin ([2 Cor. 3:17](#)), why do they boast of free will?...O, man! Learn from the precept what you ought to do; learn from correction, that it is your own fault you have not the power...Let human effort, which perished by Adam, here be silent, and let the grace of God reign by Jesus Christ...What God promises, we ourselves do not through free will of human nature, but He Himself does by grace within us...Men labor to find in our own will something that is our own, and not God's; how can they find it, I know not.”

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Clement Of Rome (A.D. 69): “Let us therefore approach Him in holiness of soul, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him, with love towards our gentle and compassionate Father because He made us an elect portion unto Himself...Seeing then that we are the special elect portion of a Holy God, let us do all things that pertain unto holiness...There was given a declaration of blessedness upon them that have been elected by God through Jesus Christ our Lord...Jesus Christ is the hope of the elect...”

Barnabas (A.D. 70): “We are elected to hope, committed by God unto faith, appointed to salvation.”

Ignatius: “To the predestined ones before all ages, that is, before the world began, united and elect in a true passion, by the eternal will of the Father...”

Justin Martyr: “In all these discourses I have brought all my proofs out of your own holy and prophetic writings, hoping that some of you may be found of the elect number which through the grace that comes from the Lord of Sabaoth, is left or reserved [set apart] for everlasting salvation.”

Irenaeus (A.D. 198): “God hath completed the number which He before determined with Himself, all those who are written, or ordained unto eternal life...Being predestined indeed according to the love of the Father that we would belong to Him forever.”

Clement Of Alexandria (A.D. 190): “Through faith the elect of God are saved. The generation of those who seek God is the elect nation, not [an earthly] place, but the congregation of the elect, which I call the Church...If every person had known the truth, they would all have leaped into the way, and there would have been no election...You are those who are chosen from among men and as those who are predestined from among men, and in His own time called, faithful, and elect, those who before the foundation of the world are known intimately by God unto faith; that is, are appointed by Him to faith, grow beyond babyhood.”

Cyprian (A.D. 250): “This is therefore the predestination which we faithfully and humbly preach.”

Ambrose Of Milan (A.D. 380): “In predestination the Church of God has always existed.”

Augustine (A.D. 380): “Here certainly, there is no place for the vain argument of those who defend the foreknowledge of God against the grace of God, and accordingly maintain that we were elected before the foundation of the world because God foreknew that we would be good, not that He Himself would make us good. This is not the language of Him who said, ‘You did not choose Me, but I chose you’ ([John 15:16](#)).”

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Barnabas (A.D. 70): “[Christ speaking] I see that I shall thus offer My flesh for the sins of the new people.”

Justin Martyr (A.D. 150): “He endured the sufferings for those men whose souls are [actually] purified from all iniquity...As Jacob served Laban for the cattle that were spotted, and of carious forms, so Christ served even to the cross for men of every kind, of many and various shapes, procuring them by His blood and the mystery of the cross.”

Irenaeus (A.D. 180): “He came to save all, all, I say, who through Him are born again unto God, infants, and little ones, and children, and young men, and old men...Jesus is the Savior of them that believe; but the Lord of them that believe not. Wherefore, Christ is introduced in the gospel weary...promising to give His life a ransom, in the room of, many.”

Tertullian (A.D. 200): “Christ died for the salvation of His people...for the church.”

Cyprian (A.D. 250): “All the sheep which Christ hath sought up by His blood and sufferings are saved...Whosoever shall be found in the blood, and with the mark of Christ shall only escape...He redeemed the believers with the price of His own blood...Let him be afraid to die who is not reckoned to have any part in the cross and sufferings of Christ.”

Lactantius (A.D. 320): “He was to suffer and be slain for the salvation of many people...who having suffered death for us, hath made us heirs of the everlasting kingdom, having abdicated and disinherited the people of the Jews...He stretched out His hands in the passion and measured the world, that He might at the very time show that a large people, gathered out of all languages and tribes, should come under His wings, and receive the most great and sublime sign.”

Eusebius (A.D. 330): “To what ‘us’ does he refer, unless to them that believe in Him? For to them that do not believe in Him, He is the author of their fire and burning. The cause of Christ’s coming is the redemption of those that were to be saved by Him.”

Julius (A.D. 350): “The Son of God, by the pouring out of His precious blood, redeemed His set apart ones; they are delivered by the blood of Christ.”

Hilarion (A.D. 363): “He shall remain in the sight of God forever, having already taken all whom He hath redeemed to be kings of heaven, and co-heirs of eternity, delivering them as the kingdom of God to the Father.”

Ambrose (A.D. 380): “Before the foundation of the world, it was God’s will that Christ should suffer for our salvation...Can He damn thee, whom He hath redeemed from death, for whom He offered Himself, whose life He knows is the reward of His own death?”

Pacian (A.D. 380): “Much more, He will not allow him that is redeemed to be destroyed, nor will He cast away those whom He has redeemed with a great price.”

Epiphanius (A.D. 390): “If you are redeemed...If therefore ye are bought with blood, thou are not the number of them who were bought with blood, O Manes, because thou deniest the blood...He gave His life for His own sheep.”

Jerome (A.D. 390): “Christ is sacrificed for the salvation of believers...Not all are redeemed, for not all shall be saved, but the remnant...All those who are redeemed and delivered by Thy blood return to Zion, which Thou hast prepared for Thyself by Thine own blood...Christ came to redeem Zion with His blood. But lest we should think that all are Zion or every one is Zion is truly redeemed of the Lord, who are redeemed by the blood of Christ from the Church...He did not give His life for every man, but for many, that is, for those who would believe.”

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Barnabas (A.D. 70): “God gives repentance to us, introducing us into the incorruptible temple.”

Ignatius: “Pray for them, if so by they may repent, which is very difficult; but Jesus Christ, our true life, has the power of this.”

Justin Martyr (A.D. 150): “Having sometime before convinced us of the impossibility of our nature to obtain life, hath now shown us the Savior, who is able to save them which otherwise were impossible to be saved...Free will has destroyed us; we are sold into sin.”

Irenaeus (A.D. 180): “Not of ourselves, but of God, is the blessing of our salvation...Man, who was before led captive, is taken out of the power of the possessor, according to the mercy of God the Father, and restoring it, gives salvation to it by the Word; that is, by Christ; that many may experimentally learn that not of himself, but by the gift of God, he receives immortality.”

Tertullian (A.D. 200): “Do you think, O men, that we should ever have been able to have understood these things in the Scriptures unless by the will of Him that wills all things, we had received grace to understand them?...But by this it is plain, that [faith] is not given to thee by God, because thou dost not ascribe it to Him alone.”

Cyprian (A.D. 250): “Whatsoever is grateful is to be ascribed not to man’s power, but to God’s gift. It is God’s, I say, all is God’s that we can do. Yea, that in nothing must we glory, since nothing is ours.”

Arnobius (A.D. 303): “You place the salvation of your souls in yourselves, and trust that you may be made gods by your inward endeavor, yet it is not our own power to reach things above.”

Lactantius (A.D. 320): “The victory lies in the will of God, not in thine own. To overcome is not in our power.”

Athanasius (A.D. 350): “To believe is not ours, or in our power, but the Spirit’s who is in us, and abides in us.”

Jerome (A.D. 390): “This is the chief righteousness of man, to reckon that whatsoever power he can have, is not his own, but the Lord’s who gives it...See how great is the help of God, and how frail the condition of man that we cannot by any means fulfill this, that we repent, unless the Lord first convert us...When [Jesus] says, ‘No man can come to Me,’ He breaks the proud liberty of free will; for man can desire nothing, and in vain he endeavors...Where is the proud boasting of free will?...We pray in vain if it is in our own will. Why should men pray for that from the Lord which they have in the power of their own free will?”

Augustine (A.D. 370): “Faith itself is to be attributed to God...Faith is made a gift. These men, however, attribute faith to free will, so grace is rendered to faith not as a gratuitous gift, but as a debt...They must cease from saying this.”

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Clement Of Rome (A.D. 69): “It is the will of God that all whom He loves should partake of repentance, and so not perish with the unbelieving and impenitent. He has established it by His almighty will. But if any of those whom God wills should partake of the grace of repentance, should afterwards perish, where is His almighty will? And how is this matter settled and established by such a will of His?”

Clement Of Alexandria (A.D. 190): “Such a soul [of a Christian] shall never at any time be separated from God...Faith, I say, is something divine, which cannot be pulled asunder by any other worldly friendship, nor be dissolved by present fear.”

Tertullian: “God forbid that we should believe that the soul of any saint should be drawn out by the devil...For what is of God is never extinguished.”

Augustine: “Of these believers no one perishes, because they were all elected. And they were elected because they were called according to the purpose—the purpose, however, not their own, but God’s...Obedience then is God’s gift...To this, indeed, we are not able to deny, that perseverance in good, progressing even to the end, is also a great gift of God.”