

# The Glory of God – And The Church

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## I.—The Church is Never the Work of Man.

It is sad but true that the error of Arminianism is rampant in the Church of today. This heresy is a denial of the sovereignty and glory of God in respect to the origin, the realization and preservation of the Church. It teaches that the origin, the realization and preservation of the Church does not lie in the will of God, but in the will of man. Not God determines who shall be saved, but the puny will of man. According to this God dishonoring heresy, not the will of God is sovereign, but the will of man. God wills that all men shall be saved, but that there are but few saved is not because there are but few that are chosen, but because there are but few that are so good that they will let God save them. This pernicious doctrine would have us believe that there was a possibility that all men could have been, and still could be, saved if they only would. Just a few weeks ago I heard an Arminian propose a plan whereby all men living today could be saved within a few weeks, if only every Christian would gain one convert an hour for Christ, and if every convert in turn would do the same. Logically it also follows that there was a possibility that no one would be saved, and that all the work of God in Christ would have been in vain. God really depends upon man's zeal and man's efforts in the realization of His Church. And do not be deceived! These Arminians also speak of election, but according to them God elected those who believe. God's choice was dependent on man's choice. Hence Arminianism is man centered. Man's freedom must be maintained even at the expense of God's sovereignty. The salvation of man, rather than the glory of God is for them the matter of supreme importance.

QUESTIONS: In which way does Arminianism deny the total depravity of man? Is it also a denial of Christ's atonement upon the cross? Is the first point of 1924, which teaches a general well-meaning offer of salvation, Arminianism? Which truth affords the greatest comfort to a Christian, the truth of God's sovereign grace, or the doctrine of freewill?

## II.—The Church is the Work of God.

The idea of the Church is eternally in the mind and will of God. In His eternal counsel He conceived the Church of which Christ is the head, and the believers the members of His body. (Eph. 1:3, 4, 11 and 12.) Hence the Church is not a mere society, to which you can add or detract without marring the whole, but she is a living organism, a body that grows and develops from an inner principle. And the life-giving principle whereby the Church exists and grows is the life of the risen and glorified Redeemer. He it is who from the beginning of the world unto the end gathers, protects and preserves unto Himself a Church chosen unto everlasting life. (Held. Cat., Lord's Day 21). Therefore the Church is not a mere multitude of individuals, but a finished whole, in which every member has his God-given place. Thus the Church as the body of Christ is complete, and in its completion it is a unity, of which not one member can be missed without marring the whole, and to which not one member can be added. I Cor. 12:12-27. Scripture also presents the Church as a temple or a building of which the members are living stones. I Peter 2:5; I Cor 3:16, or as a city which is builded compact together. Psalm 122:3. Then the Church is regarded from the viewpoint of its being a well-designed structure, of which God himself is the divine architect. As such only the elect belong to the Church. It is God who determines how many should be members of the Church, and also the place that each member shall have in the Church. No architect leaves it up to the brick or building material to determine the size and shape

of the building, much less the supreme Architect. God did not leave it up to man to determine the number of members in your body or mine, or the place and function of each individual member, thus also He did not leave it up to the puny freewill of man to determine the number or place of the members of the body of our blessed Redeemer, which is the Church. It is of the Church that the Lord says in the prophecy of Isaiah, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise". Isaiah 43:21. This scriptural view of the Church which ascribes all glory to God, implies not only election but also reprobation, but always in such a way that reprobation is subservient to election. Indeed reprobation must serve to reveal God's justice and wrath in the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, Rom. 9:22, but no less to serve the elect. Even as chaff must serve in the development and growth of the wheat, so also the power of darkness and the wicked are subservient to the realization of the Church. Reprobation is as it were the scaffolding which God uses in the building of His Church, which is the temple of God.

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