

The Great Debate

Calvinism vs. Arminianism

I. The History of the Debate

- A. The Early Church Fathers
- B. Augustine vs. Pelagius
- C. The Reformers
- D. The Synod of Dort

D. The Synod of Dort

- Jacob Arminius, professor of theology, the University of Leyden in Holland (1602-1609).
 - In 1609, Arminius died.
 - In 1610, his followers drew up “five articles of faith” based on what he had taught.
- A national synod was called to meet in Dort on November 13, 1618 to examine the views of Arminius.
 - There were 84 Dutch delegates and 27 from various German states, Switzerland, England, and Scotland.
 - After 154 sessions over 7 months, the synod reached a decision.
 - They unanimously rejected Arminius’ teaching.
 - They also wrote a document that responded point by point to the five articles of Arminius—”The Five Points of Calvinism.”

E. The Chief Proponents

■ Calvinism

- Labels: Calvinism; Doctrines of Grace; Sovereign grace; Reformed
- Men: Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones.
- Denominations/Groups: Presbyterians, Baptists, Bible Churches, etc.

■ Arminianism

- Labels: Arminian; Wesleyan; semi-pelagian
- Men: Wesley
- Denominations/Groups: Methodists, Baptists, Wesleyan, Pentecostals, Church of the Nazarene, etc.

II. The Crux of the Debate

- A. Who initiates salvation in the human heart?
 - Arminianism: “Man initiates; God responds.”
 - Calvinism: “God initiates; man responds.”

II. The Crux of the Debate

- B. Who is sovereign over salvation?
 - God? Or man?
 - Has God done everything He can do to secure man's salvation and now He sits back hoping that man will choose Christ?
 - Or did God choose in eternity past who He would and does He in time, in spite of their depravity and inability, draw them to Christ?

II. The Crux of the Debate

- C. Who accomplishes regeneration?
 - Does God the Holy Spirit regenerate the sinner first, unaided by human effort or cooperation?
 - Monergism – *mono* = one; *ergon* = work; “one working.”
 - Does man have to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to accomplish regeneration?
 - Synergism – *syn* = together; *ergon* = work; “working together.”

III. The Specific Issues in the Debate

■ A. A Summary

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ T = Total Depravity | Radical Depravity |
| ■ U = Unconditional Election | Sovereign Grace |
| ■ L = Limited Atonement | Definite
Atonement |
| ■ I = Irresistible Grace | Effectual Grace |
| ■ P = Perseverance | Perseverance |

On Man's Depravity:

What was man's spiritual condition before salvation?

The following slides that have side-by-side comparisons of the Arminian and Calvinistic views of the five points are taken from *The Five Points Of Calvinism*, an excellent book by Thomas, Steele, and Quinn.

Human Ability

- Man is affected by the fall, but not helpless.
- God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe.
- Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it.
- Man's will is not enslaved to his sinful nature.
- The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish.

Total Depravity

- Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel.
- The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God.
- His heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt.
- His will is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not -- he cannot -- choose good over evil in the spiritual realm.

Human Ability

- The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe.
- Faith is man's act and precedes the new birth.
- Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

Total Depravity

- Consequently, the Spirit must make the sinner alive and give him a new nature, so he can believe.
- Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation.
- It is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.

Depravity does not mean:

- 1) People act as bad as they are by nature.
- 2) Every sinner will indulge in every form of sin.
- 3) People have no knowledge of God's law or a functioning conscience.
- 4) Sinful man doesn't admire those things that are good and virtuous.
- 5) Unbelievers don't do actions that appear to be good.
- 6) Every sinner is as depraved as he can become.

By depravity we mean...

- The corruption inherited from Adam and now inherent in every human being permeates every part of our nature, including every faculty and power of both soul and body.
- a) Universal—it affects the entire human race.
- b) Total—it affects every part of (or the totality of) every human being.

Two Lines of Evidence...

- 1) Rom. 3:9-20 – All Humanity lacks personal righteousness (3:9-20).
- 2) Scripture lays out a series of category negatives that describe man's spiritual deadness.

Unbelievers CANNOT...

- 1) Act contrary to his nature.
 - Jer. 13:23 - "Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? *Then* you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.
 - Matt. 7:18 - "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Unbelievers CANNOT...

- **2) Enter God's kingdom.**
 - John 3:3, 5 - Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ...⁵
Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Unbelievers CANNOT...

- 3) Do anything spiritually good
 - John 8:44 - "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.
 - John 15:4-5 - "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ... apart from Me you can do nothing.

Unbelievers CANNOT...

- 4) Believe or even understand the truth.
 - 1 Cor. 2:14 - A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

Unbelievers CANNOT...

- 5) Obey God.

- Rom. 8:7-8

- 6) Please God.

- Rom. 8:8 - those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Unbelievers CANNOT...

- 7) Come to Christ for salvation apart from divine intervention.
 - John 6:44 - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."

On Divine Election:

How did God choose whom to save?

Election

Conditional

Unconditional

- God chose certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world.
- He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel.
- Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do.

- God chose certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world.
- His choice was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc.
- On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected.
- Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man.

Election

Conditional

Unconditional

- The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God but resulted solely from man's will.
 - God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ.
 - The sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.
- Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ.
 - God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

What Is Election?

- Berkhof: “that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation.”
- Grudem: “an act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.”

What Is Election?

- Eternal – “that eternal act”; “before creation”
 - Eph. 1:4 - just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world
 - Rev. 17:8 - those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

What Is Election?

- Definite – “chooses a certain number of men”; “chooses some people”
 - Individuals vs. a group.
 - Some say that in election, God chose the church, but not the individuals that make it up.
 - Contra. Rom. 9 – Jacob vs. Esau.

What Is Election?

- Unconditional – “in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them”; “not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign pleasure.”

The Biblical Evidence

- Deut. 7:7-8 [Israel] - "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you.
- John 15:16 - "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain.
- 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 Biblical Evidence

- Rom. 8:29-30 - For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.
- Rom. 11:5-6 – In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to *God's* gracious choice.

The Biblical Evidence

- Rom. 11:7 – What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened.
- Eph. 1:4-5 - He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.
- 1 Th. 1:4-5 - knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

The Biblical Evidence

- 1 Th. 5:9 - God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 2 Th. 2:13 - But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- 2 Tim. 1:9 - who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

The Biblical Evidence

- 1 Pet. 1:1 - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen
- Rev. 13:7-8 - All who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.
- Rev. 17:8 - those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Conditional

- Thiessen: a “sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those whom He fore-knew would accept Him.”
- Two varieties:
 - 1) God doesn't choose you until, in time, during your life here, you believe.
 - 2) God chooses in eternity past on the basis of His foreknowledge.

Conditional

- Key arguments against:
 - Rom. 8:29 – does not teach what they claim.
 - Matt. 11:20-24
 - Luke 10:10-13
 - The arguments for unconditional election.

Unconditional

- God's choice in eternity past of certain people to be saved is based solely on His own sovereign pleasure and on no condition in the person He chooses.
- 2 Tim. 1:9 – [God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

Unconditional

■ Romans 9

- Abraham (6)
- Isaac (7-9)
- Jacob (10-12)
 - 10 – Not on the basis of heredity
 - 11 – Not on the basis of personal merit
 - 12 – Not on the basis of primogenitor (cultural custom)

On the Extent of the Atonement:

**For whom did Christ substitute
in His death?**

Atonement

Universal

Particular

- Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone.
 - Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe in Him are saved.
- Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them.
 - His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners.

Atonement

Universal

Particular

- His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins.
- Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

- Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him.
- The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation.

Mark 10:45

- “To give His life a ransom for many.”
 - 1) Necessary
 - “[He came for this purpose:] to give His life.”
 - 2) Voluntary
 - “The Son of Man came to give His life.”

Mark 10:45

- “To give His life a ransom for many.”
 - 3) Sacrificial
 - “To give His life” means to die.
 - 4) Redemptive
 - “To give His life a ransom.”

Mark 10:45

- “To give His life a ransom for many.”
 - 5) Substitutionary
 - “To give His life a ransom for many.”
 - 6) Definite
 - “To give His life a ransom for many.”

Points of Agreement between Calvinists & Arminians

- Not everyone will be saved.
- A free offer of the gospel can be made to all.
- Christ's substitutionary death is sufficient to save all men.

Three Options...

- 1) He died in the place of every sinner to provide an actual salvation for every person.
- 2) He died in the place of every sinner and provided a potential salvation for every person.
- 3) He offered His life as a ransom to the Father in exchange for the lives of a specific group of people here simply called “the many.”

Jesus Died for the Elect...

- a) There are a number of passages like this one that speak of Jesus offering Himself for a specific group.
 - Matt. 1:21 - "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
 - John 6:39 - "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."
 - John 10:11 - "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

Jesus Died for the Elect...

- John 10:15 - even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.
- John 17:9 - "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;
- Eph. 5:25 - Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
- Acts 20:28 - "shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
- 2 Cor. 5:19-21

Jesus Died for the Elect...

- **b) A definite atonement is consistent with divine election.**
 - John 17:9 - "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;
 - 2 Tim. 1:8-10

Jesus Died for the Elect...

- **c)** It is more consistent with the biblical concept of substitution.
 - Is. 53:10-11 – those whom He will justify and those whose iniquities He actually bears are the same group!
 - John 17:24 - "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me...

On God's Call:

Can the call of the Spirit be resisted?

Grace

Resistible

Effectual

-
- The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation.
 - He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation.
 - But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call.
- In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation.
 - The external call (which is made to all without distinction) can be and often is, rejected; the internal call (which is made only to the elect) always results in conversion.

Grace

Resistible

Effectual

- The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) precedes and makes possible the new birth.
- Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life.
- God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

- By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ.
- The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ.
- God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.

The Biblical Evidence

■ 1) The general call.

- Matt. 22:14 – [in the parable of the Wedding Feast, those who were called refused to come] - "many are called, but few *are* chosen."
- 2 Cor. 5:20 - we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

■ 2) The effectual call.

Westminster Conf. & Baptist Conf. of 1689

- “Those whom God has predestinated to life, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time to effectually call by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death which they are in by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.

Westminster Conf. & Baptist Conf. of 1689

- “He enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God. He takes away their heart of stone and gives to them a heart of flesh. He renews their wills, and by His almighty power, causes them to desire and pursue that which is good. He effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet in such a way that they come absolutely freely, being made willing by His grace.”

The Effectual Call

- Rom. 8:28-30
- John 6:44 - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.
- Eph. 2:1-6

On Perseverance:

**Does a regenerated person
continue in the Christian faith?**

Falling From Grace Perseverance

- Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc.
- All Arminians have not been agreed on this point.
- All who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved.
- They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.

Perseverance

- What Does it Not Mean?
 - 1) We are always kept from falling into sin.
 - 2) All who profess Christ are secure and will persevere.

Perseverance

- Berkhof: “that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion.”
- Grudem: “all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.”

Westminster

- “They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

1) The Divine Responsibility for Perseverance: Preservation

- Ps. 37:23-24 - The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.
- John 6:37-40
- John 10:28-29
- Rom. 5:8-10
- Rom. 8:30-39

1) The Divine Responsibility for Perseverance: Preservation

- Rom. 11:29 - the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.
- 1 Cor. 1:8-9 – [God] will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1) The Divine Responsibility for Perseverance: Preservation

- Eph. 1:13-14 – In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

1) The Divine Responsibility for Perseverance: Preservation

- Phil. 1:6 - *I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.
- Heb. 7:25 - He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
- 1 Pet. 1:5 – who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

2) The Human Responsibility for Perseverance: Exercising the Gift of Faith

- 1 Pet. 1:5

Problem Passages?

- 1) The Christian is secure only if he perseveres in faith to the end.
 - Matt. 24:13 – the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.
 - John 8:31 - Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;
 - John 15:6 - "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

Problem Passages?

- 1 Cor. 15:1-2 - I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
- Col. 1:22-23 - He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.
- Hebrews warning passages: Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31.

Problem Passages?

- 2) Some passages seem to imply that true Xns may desert the faith and be eternally damned.
 - Matt. 13:20-22 - "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Problem Passages?

- Matt. 24:10, 12 - "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.
- 1 Tim. 1:19 - keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.
- 1 Tim. 4:1 - the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

Problem Passages?

- 2 Tim. 4:10 - Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.
- 2 Pet. 2:20-22 - if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, *returns to wallowing in the mire.*"

The Real Problem!

- 1 John 2:19 - They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

According to Arminianism:

- Salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God and man -- man's response being the determining factor.
- God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, choose to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace.
- At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

According to Calvinism:

- Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the Triune God—the Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the gospel.
- The entire process is the work of God and is by grace alone.
- Thus *God*, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation.

Which Does Our Church Believe?

- Our Elders unanimously agree ...
 - a) That God is sovereign in salvation.
 - b) That the issue of limited atonement or definite atonement will not become a divisive issue in this church.

Helpful Resources

- *Chosen By God* – R. C. Sproul
- *The Five Points of Calvinism* – Steele, Thomas, & Quinn
- *Sinners in the Hands of a Good God* - Clotfelter
- *The Potter's Freedom* – James White
- *Debating Calvinism* – James White & Dave Hunt
- *The Doctrines of Grace* – James Montgomery Boice
- *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* – Boettner

Helpful Resources

- On Definite Atonement:
- *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her* – David Gibson
- *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* – John Owen

The Implications

- Monergistic salvation exalts God's grace (Eph. 1:5-6)
- Monergistic salvation humbles us before God (1 Cor. 1:26-29)
- Monergistic salvation exalts God's glory (1 Cor. 1:30-31)

Charles Spurgeon

“It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, that are called by nickname, *Calvinism*, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me.... Taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren; I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God’s own church.”