
SOLA FIDE

Volume 15

Number 2

Flowers!

“Tulips form a genus of spring-blooming perennial herbaceous bulbiferous geophytes (having bulbs as storage organs); the flowers are usually large, showy and brightly colored, generally red, pink, yellow, or white (usually in warm colors).” This is the wikipedia definition of the flower Tulip. However, I am not much of a flower person, so I neither fully understand the technical terms used in the definition nor do I care to know them. Yet, there is a TULIP in historical christianity I do care much about.

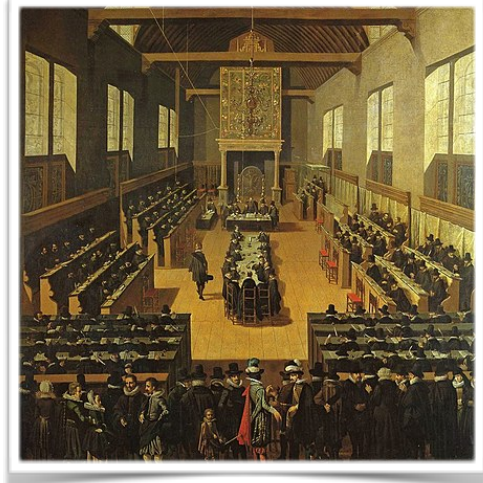


In Protestant Reformed Christian faith, TULIP holds deep theological points in different aspects of God’s redemptive plan. In this short essay, I would like to introduce (or a review for those who are already well-informed) a general understanding of the TULIP.

Some Background

In early 17th century (1610 to be exact), five articles of theological propositions were promoted by the Arminians in opposition to the Dutch Reform Church (“Arminians” here does not refer to the people from the country of Armenia - i.e. Armenians; rather, it refers to the followers of Jacobus Arminius 1560-1609). The specific followers of Jacobus Arminius who promoted the five articles of theological propositions are called “Remonstrants” because they were “remonstrating” or “protesting” against various protestant reformed doctrines. These theological propositions were controversial and caused much divisions in the Church of Netherlands; hence, a synod was convened at Dort - i.e. “Synod of Dort” (“synod” is a meeting held by the clergies to decide on doctrinal issues; “Dort” is a shorten word for Dordrecht, which is a city in western Netherlands). The purpose of the Synod was to carefully examine and to decide whether the 5 theological propositions promoted by the Remonstrants are consistent with the teachings of the Scripture. Synod of Dort convened from November 13 of 1618 to May 9 of 1619. The Synod brought in various people to examine the matter - 39 pastors, 18 ruling elders from the Belgic Churches, 5 professors from the University of Holland, 19 delegates from the Reformed churches in

Germany and Switzerland, and 5 professors and bishops from Great Britain (along with 14 prominent Remonstrant ministers and theologians). The Synod held 154 formal sessions and many side-conferences during its 6-month duration. The end result was that the Synod voted and unanimously rejected the 5 articles of Remonstrants as heresy because it failed to correspond to the teachings of the Scripture. In the context of rejecting the 5 articles, the Synod responded to each of the 5 articles, with 5 points of its own, which came to be known as the Five Points of Calvinism. Therefore, it should be noted that the Five Points of Calvinism is not all there is to Calvinism but 5 specific counter points to the 5 articles of Remonstrants.



The Content

The Five Points of Calvinism from the Synod of Dort came to be also known as the T.U.L.I.P. because the first letter of each point adds up to form the word “TULIP.” So what does each point say?

Total Depravity: The doctrine of “Total Depravity” holds that the original sin affects and infects every aspect of the person, such as that of heart, mind, body, will, spirit and etc. - i.e. each person is born as a sinner rather than sin to become a sinner.

Unconditional Election: The doctrine of “Unconditional Election” holds that God’s decision to save sinners solely depends upon God’s sovereign decision rather than any human conditions (e.g. good works or foreseen future possibility).

Limited Atonement: The doctrine of “Limited Atonement” holds that God saves His people (only the sheep) through the Christ’s death on the cross rather than the entire world.

Irresistible Grace: The doctrine of “Irresistible Grace” holds that God’s grace to save the sinners is so powerful that it can and will change the sinner’s resisting heart to respond to the message of the cross.

Perseverance of the Saints: The doctrine of “Perseverance of the Saints” holds that a genuinely saved believer cannot lose his or her salvation since salvation is God’s work from start to finish.

I have known many people who articulated themselves as 3-point to 5-point Calvinists. So I ask you; how many of these points do you correspond to? There are so many aspects to each of the point mentioned - it is not possible to explain all of the different aspects and answer all the objections in this short essay. So I challenge you to read upon these points and find out more!!

-PJH-