

THE DAISY THAT POSED AS A TULIP

This is a tale full of charade and chicanery. It is the story of the daisy that posed as a tulip. One might be inclined to conclude that a daisy that posed as a tulip would by definition be a poesy, but despite the fact that this daisy engaged in much posing and posturing, it remains a dusey of a disingenuous daisy. Though some have suspected that the daisy was actually a dandelion (a pernicious weed by human reasoning) posing as a daisy, such duplicitous deceit is beyond the pale of this inquiry, and we shall concentrate our attention on how it is that the apparent daisy posed as a tulip.

Now, our study does not actually pertain to flowering botanicals. This is a theological study that is precipitated by the fact that a particular theological perspective (identified as Calvinism) has portrayed its distinctive epistemological tenets in the acrostic form of the word “TULIP.” From the Council of Dort (1619) onwards the theological followers of the reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564) have often formulated their position in five (5) points, and the petals of the Calvinistic “TULIP” are traditionally represented as:

T otal depravity
U nconditional election
L imited atonement
I rresistible grace
P erseverance of the saints

The underlying presuppositional root and stem of this system of thought is that God is absolutely “sovereign” in His control of the created order that He has created. Such “sovereignty” does not allow for any freedom of the human creature which would allow man’s responsibility for freedom of choice to provide a condition or contingency on God’s “sovereign” action. There is obviously a legitimacy in the concern to safeguard the recognition that the divine actions of the Creator God are not dependent upon the actions of the creature, man, in which case man would be in control of God based on a humanistic premise of the autonomous “sovereignty” of humanity. The problem with the traditional Calvinistic perspective is that they have often so emphasized the “sovereignty” of God to the extent that they have denied the responsibility (response-ability) of man in their “TULIP” theology.

Calvinists have sometimes caricatured Arminian theology, based on the teaching of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), as represented by a “daisy” rather than a “tulip”. Their intent in so representing Arminianism as a “daisy” theology has been to imply that Arminian theology has no security in the “sovereign” action of God’s love, so the adherents of Arminian theology are insecurely picking the petals off of the daisy one at a time, saying, “He loves me. He loves me not,” never finding assurance of God’s action or of a relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Let it be noted that flower aficionados and theologians are notorious for their misrepresentation of varieties other than their own!

Dare we suggest, in light of that, that the proponents of “TULIP” theology (the Calvinists) are actually proponents of a “DAISY” theology that has always tried to project itself as a “TULIP” theology? Carefully observe that the five points of Calvinistic theology are more adequately represented in the acrostic form of the word “DAISY”:

D epraved inability of human function
A rbitrary selection of the divinely favored
I nequitable limitation of Christ's redemption
S ystemic coercion of the predetermined
Y oked confinement of Christian believers

This is the "DAISY" that often poses as a "TULIP," and the basis of the title of this article.

It is hereby proposed that there is a more legitimate "TULIP" theology that maintains the balanced symmetry of a Biblical perspective of the relationship between God and man, recognizing both the autonomous sovereignty of God and the receptive responsibility of man. Such theological understanding might be formulated in this "TULIP" form:

T otality of mankind are spiritually depraved in their fallen spiritual condition as a consequence of Adam's sin.
U nrequited action of God's grace has acted to redeem and restore mankind through Jesus Christ without express or implied contingency of such divine action.
L imitlessness of God's redemptive and restorative action in Jesus Christ makes His work universally available and applicable to all mankind.
I ndividual response of receptivity of faith allows God's grace action to be personally efficacious in the new spiritual creation of the Christian.
P reservation of the Christian in this relationship is divinely enacted in accord with the perseverance of faithful receptivity of God's grace action in a dynamic continuum unto eternity.

It would not be difficult to conclude that theologians who ponder such leaves of thought are but "blooming idiots" or "petal pushers" who fallaciously perceive that ultimate meaning is to be found in such "flower power." Though precision of theological explanation is indeed a worthy calling, the need of the hour, for both theologians and Christians in general, is to "wake up and smell the roses" – to allow God by His grace to manifest the "fragrance of the knowledge of Christ in every place" (II Cor. 2:14). That "fragrance" will be evidenced in "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and godly control of the self" (Gal. 5:22,23).

Instead of dissecting the petals of the DAISY or the TULIP, perhaps there is a greater need to "consider the lilies, how they neither toil nor spin" (Matt. 6:28), but are receptive to and rely upon the provision of God's grace.