

A MUTANT TULIP

In the theological flower garden of the Christian faith, numerous species of divergent ideological flowers have sprouted and bloomed. Renowned theological horticulturalists have tended this garden over the centuries, and have found it necessary to periodically identify certain theological variations as deviant and heretical weeds that require excommunicative extraction from the garden of Christian theology. Some of the previous obnoxious mutations that were found detrimental and purged were Docetism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Eutychianism, and Arianism, to name just a few.

Certain genetic aberrations in the flowers of Christian theology involve such subtle alterations that they are not quickly identified. An Augustinian strain, for example, appeared in the fourth and fifth centuries, positing the sovereign imposition of God's action within the universe He created, while allowing for no human ability to respond. This innovation came to full bloom in the Calvinistic TULIP theology, as self-defined at the Council of Dort in 1619. The acrostic petals of the Calvinist TULIP are identified as:

Total depravity
Unconditional election
Limited atonement
Irresistible grace
Perseverance of the saints

This TULIP theology has overtaken large portions of the theological flower garden today. The proponents of this position believe that their ideas should be the only type of flower in the garden, and they advocate an exclusivism that allows for no other acceptable variation.

The particular concern of this article is to warn of an extremely pernicious and noxious mutation of the TULIP theology that has taken root in some corners of the garden. Adapting to the contemporary new age philosophy of the day, this TULIP variation has a fragrance that many unsuspecting floral observers find appealing. The altered leaves of this TULIP can be identified as:

Total identification
Unconditional manifestation
Limited participation
Inevitable divine expression
Perfection of the saints

It is important to take the time to peruse the various striations of these petals so observers can identify and avoid this mutant flower.

Total identification – The individual Christian is regarded as totally united with God to the extent that he is completely drawn into His deity. Spiritual union is pushed to an essential equivalence of being. Arguing that Jesus said, “you are gods” (John 10:34), the teachers of this mutant TULIP theology advocate a “replaced life” wherein one’s humanity is replaced by God’s deity. Allowing for no “separated concept” that distinguishes between Christ and the Christian, they insist that “you cannot separate me from He.” “I am not; only He is as me.” “As He is, so

am I.” “He is us, and we are He.” This total identification with God creates an organic union of consubstantial coalescence with deity.

Unconditional manifestation – Regarding themselves as God-expressers that cannot do anything other than express God, they believe that whatever they do is God in action. “I do what I will, for what I will is what He wills.” “Any choice I make is His choice, for my decisions are His decisions.” “What I do is what He does.” This action is unconditioned by any human responsibility, for “God doesn’t mean for man to have faith,” but merely to be the God-expressers that they are. They do indicate, however, that the Christian can “speak a word of faith,” whereby he speaks things into being as a co-creator and co-god.

Limited participation – Although they believe in the limitless potential of man, affirming that all human beings are “spirit-persons” in whom the “light of God” universally dwells, they nevertheless espouse an exclusivistic participation in the deeper spiritual realities. Claiming an advanced spiritual consciousness as those who “see” spiritual things and have become “knowers,” they regard themselves as having arrived at a superior third stage of “fatherhood” (cf. I John 2:13,14) wherein they can reproduce God in others. Those who do not use the acceptable vocabulary terms of their brand of spirituality are looked down on condescendingly as not having full knowledge and consciousness.

Inevitable divine expression – “Spirit is the only reality,” they assert, and Christians have become joined and united in that Spirit reality. “God is in everything.” “God is all and in all.” “God only exists – in and as all things.” Denying that they believe in pantheism, they instead admit that they teach panentheism and monism. Since everything is inevitably a divine expression, that which does not “appear” like God is regarded as an “illusion” on the part of those who are not “seeing through” to God in everything. Temptation and sin are illusory unrealities that are really just “the negative backside of God.” Believing that “sin is nothing,” and that Christians cannot sin, these adherents often flaunt their liberty as antinomian God-expressers.

Perfection of the saints – In their alleged essential oneness with God, they assert their perfection and righteousness, saying, “I am as righteous as God Himself.” Theirs is a spiritualized perfectionism, differentiated from the classical perfectionism of those in the Holiness Movement who have taught a state of perfection in the “second blessing” of “entire sanctification.” These mutant TULIP advocates believe they are “fixed as God,” necessitating no process or progress in sanctification. There is no need to pray, for prayer would be akin to talking to oneself. The individualized docetism of this anthropological reductionism wherein they regard themselves as “no longer human,” allows them to advocate that they are “as perfect as God.”

Any Biblically knowledgeable Christian should be able to detect that this TULIP theology is an aberrant deviant that should not be allowed to flourish, but should be exposed and weeded out of the Christian flower garden. This particularly pernicious mutant TULIP should be regarded as a noxious weed that needs to be eradicated, lest unsuspecting Christians become intoxicated with its hallucinogenic characteristics.