**THE CALVINISTIC "TULIP"**

TULIP is the acronym for the basic ideas of classical Calvinism.

(The simplistic version)

**T**-- total depravity. This doesn't mean people are as bad as they can be. It means that sin is in every part of one's being, including the mind and will, so that a man cannot save himself.

**U** -- unconditional election. God chooses to save people unconditionally; that is, they are not chosen on the basis of their own merit.

**L** -- limited atonement. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was for the purpose of saving the elect.

**I**-- irresistible grace. When God has chosen to save someone, He will.

**P**-- perseverence of the saints. Those people God chooses cannot lose their salvation; they will continue to believe. If they fall away, it will be only for a time.

(The TULIP in full bloom)

**TOTAL DEPRAVITY OR INABILITY (= "T" of TULIP)**

The first point asserts that the entire or TOTAL human being--body and soul, intellect and will, etc.--is fallen and that everyone is born spiritually dead, helpless, and passive; indeed, everyone is worse than volitionally dead or unable to desire spiritual good but is actually enslaved to sin, positively and actively hostile to the things of the Spirit (Calvinists cite, e.g., John. 1:13; 8:43, 47; 10:26; 12:37-40; 18:37; Romans. 7:18; 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians. 2:9-14).

**UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION (= "U" of TULIP)**

The second point inescapably follows from the first: since one is born totally depraved and enslaved to sin, one's ELECTION cannot be dependent or CONTINGENT on any spiritually worthy actions one commits. According to this point, God predestines or chooses to soften the hard, sin-enslaved hearts of certain fallen individuals and liberate them from their death not because of any merit they have but despite their demerits--i.e., He ELECTS to change their hearts (and thereby join them to Christ and His saving work) DESPITE the fact that they hate God and oppose Him and have hard hearts, not soft hearts, and have sin-enslaved wills, not free wills. Thus, believers have no reason to boast about themselves or their own actions: the only thing that differentiates them from Judas, Esau, or others who never respond in faith is that God gave them grace that He withheld from such reprobates (Calvinists cite, e.g., Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27; Rom. 9:11-18; 1 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 2:8-10; cf. Jn. 1:13; 15:16; Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; Phil. 2:13).

**LIMITED ATONEMENT or Particular Redemption (= "L" of TULIP)**

This point says that while Christ's blood--indeed, His entire life, death, and resurrection--is infinitely INTENSIVE in saving power and thus unlimited in one sense, it is not infinitely EXTENSIVE and is thus limited, not universal, in the extent of its application; for while everyone CONDITIONALLY or "provisionally" shares in Christ's life, death, and resurrection (thus, if everyone believed, everyone would be joined or married to Christ), only members of Christ's body or bride or flock (ELECT believers) actually share in His blood (Calvinists cite, e.g., Jn. 10:11, 15, 26; 17:9; cf. 6:37, 39; 17:2, 6, 24).

**IRRESISTIBLE (SUFFICIENT) GRACE (= "I" of TULIP)**

This is virtually a synonym for Luther's slogan "grace alone" (sola gratia) and is logically implied by points "T" and "U" above. It teaches that God's INWARD CALL is perfectly EFFECTUAL or SUFFICIENT--a hard, fleshly, sinful heart need not add anything to God's grace, such as "co-operation," for this special call or grace is invincible, overpowering all hatred and melting all opposition (Calvinists cite, e.g., Jn. 3:6-8). Here Calvinists distinguish God's inward, effectual call--i.e., IRRESISTIBLE GRACE or sufficient, effective grace--from His outward call, which is simply His commandments written on tablets of stone. The latter is eminently resistible, insufficient, and ineffective to give life to a dead soul or liberate a sin-enslaved heart (e.g., Acts 7:51; 13:39; Rom. 8:3).

**PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS or Eternal Security (= "P" of TULIP)**

This is not the idea that no matter what a believer does he or she cannot lose his or her salvation but the idea that " . . . He who began a good work in you will perfect it . . " (Phil. 1:6 [NASB]; cf., e.g., Jn. 6:37, 39; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:31-39)--i.e., the idea that whenever God creates faith in our hearts and thereby joins us to Christ and His saving work, He will sustain that faith, that saving relationship with Christ, causing us, by His grace, to persevere in faith.

**An Explanation of the TULIP**

The aforementioned "TULIP" was fashioned at the Synod of Dordt (Dordrecht) in the early 1600s only in REACTION to five assertions of the Arminians (the "Remonstrants" or Dutch "semi-Pelagian" protesters). As a result, these five points aren't the clearest, most coherent, or most comprehensive presentation of the Calvinistic doctrine of salvation. By the way, Luther, Cranmer, Zwingli, Bullinger, Bucer, et al., were all strict predestinarians and fully Augustinian in their view of grace, etc., but the AP test seems to associate predestination only with Calvin and Zwingli).

Nonetheless, once one understands the essence of the Calvinistic order of salvation (ordo salutis), then TULIP makes sense. According to both English and American Puritans and Continental Calvinists, SALVATION is conditional, whereas ELECTION is unconditional (U = UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION). This distinction is vital to understanding TULIP: ELECTION is God's eternal decree, outside of time, of who will have faith in Christ and thereby become a member of His body and thus be spotless and righteous and obtain eternal life; in contrast, SALVATION is God's historical outworking of this decree in time. Thus, according to Calvinism, there is an entire chain of necessary and sufficient CONDITIONS one must meet in order to be "saved" or obtain "SALVATION": if and only if one believes will one be joined to Christ's body and participate in His blood and His fulfillment of the law; if and only if one is thus joined to Christ will one be justified or declared legally righteous; if and only if one is thus justified will one be adopted and volitionally sanctified and persevere in Christ; if and only if one thus perseveres will one be physically glorified and receive a transformed resurrected body and spend eternity with Christ.

HOWEVER, according to Calvinism, while one can thus ask "What must I do to be SAVED" (Acts 16:30), it is nonsense to ask "What must I do to be ELECTED?" Why? Because a volitional corpse or a spiritually dead person simply cannot read the Word or pray to God in a way that will volitionally resurrect himself (herself) or soften his (her) heart's hostility to God--i.e., in regeneration or in being "born again," one is passive. In a word, the unregenerate, fleshly person is TOTALLY UNABLE (= "T" of "TULIP") to do any spiritual good--he or she can't even co-operate or work "synergistically" with the Holy Spirit (hence Calvinism teaches a pure monergism, as did St. Augustine). Thus, if one is born a slave to sin and spiritually dead--is "TOTALLY DEPRAVED or spiritually unable"--then salvation must ULTIMATELY be a free or UNCONDITIONAL gift, in no way finally dependent or contingent on one's actions--back to the "U" or "UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION": God simply reaches down and chooses to breathe life into some spiritual corpses and pass over others.