**T.U.L.I.P.** (continued) dkm August 2023

The acronym TULIP refers to the five points of Calvinism, points put forward by the Reformed church at the Synod of Dort (1618-19) in reply to the Remonstrance Articles of Arminius in 1610.The Reformers believed in the sovereignty of God in all things, especially in salvation. We are not saved by good works or by any mix of good works and grace; salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. We have already looked at the first point, **total depravity**. The ‘total’ refers to every part of our being, and the very core of our being, which means that we cannot do anything to please God or save ourselves (Heb 11:6). The second point is **unconditional election**. God initiates and completes our salvation in Christ. In fact he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). God predestined those he will save, those he elects or chooses. The elect he will save and the rest will remain under the wrath of God (John 3:36). ‘As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed’ (Acts 13:48). The next three points are consistent with these two points in that they uphold the absolute sovereignty of God in all things, in election, in atonement, and in perseverance to the end.

**3. Limited atonement**

For whom did Christ die, for everyone or for the elect only? This point answers Arminius who said that Christ died for all mankind without exception, but only those who believe are saved. Such teaching elevates the role of man, like all his teaching, and takes a simplistic view of verses that speak of Christ dying for the sin of the whole world (John 1:29, 1John 2:12). ‘Whole world’ often meant the world beyond the Jews, as in Jew and Gentile, and all classes of men; it does not mean all without men exception. Jesus said that he was giving his life ‘a ransom for many’, not for every individual (Mark 10:45, Heb 9:28). His desire that all be saved does not mean that he died for all without exception (1Tim 2:4-6).

If atonement is not limited to the elect it means Christ failed because not all are saved, unless we are Universalists who believe that everyone will be saved in the end- a belief that is not uncommon. Christ could not have died for the sins of those who die in their sins (John 8:44). We believe that Christ died as our substitute, that he took our sin upon himself on the cross. His death not only made our salvation possible but effected the salvation of the elect. Christ died for the elect and for the elect only.

**4. Irresistible grace**

Arminius would have us believe that man may resist the grace of God, grace applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. So even those predestined and called by God can resist God’s sovereign choice and will. Jesus gives a different picture in teaching about the shepherd and the sheep in John 6 and 10. Not only can no one come to him unless the Father draws them, but ‘all whom the Father gives me will come to me’ (John 6:44, 37). Jesus makes no provision for the elect of the Father not coming to him. His emphasis is on the will of the Father who sent him.

The power of grace is the power of God. The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). If God’s grace is resistible then who will be saved? We are all born in sin and are dead in sin unless and until God in his grace quickens our dead hearts. In John 10 Jesus again speaks of calling his sheep and his sheep following him; ‘My father who has given them to me is greater than all’ (John 10:29). ‘Blessed is the man You choose and cause to approach You’ (Ps 65:4). God is sovereign election, and in drawing people to himself and saving them. Revelation 3:20 is about Christ coming to the church not to sinners hoping for them to open the door to him!

**5. Perseverance of the saints**

The fifth article of the Remonstrants was not an outright denial of this teaching but expressed doubts. Many today, including Roman Catholics, have no doubts in telling us that we are arrogant in claiming ‘once saved, always saved’. Along with election, this may be the doctrine you know most about. It is actually tied in with divine election. If we contribute to our salvation by good works, how can we know that our good works are sufficient?

Jesus says, ‘The one who comes to me I will in no wise cast out’ and, ‘no one shall pluck them out of my hand’ (John 6:37, 10:29). We are saved by the grace of God, by grace alone, so our salvation is of God, ‘and can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace’ (Large Catechism Q79). Paul understood and taught this in Romans 8:39: ‘No created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus’. You are a ‘created thing’ so you are not able to separate yourself from the love of God if you are truly saved. Some Scriptures speak of stumbling or falling away, which we can do, but wherever it speaks of being lost, notice that it comes with an ‘if’, there being no certainty that the person is truly saved (Heb 6:5). Judas was with Christ receiving many benefits but was lost because he was the ‘son of perdition’ (John 17:12).