

The TULIP of Modern Media: Analyzing Editorial Bias Through Calvinist Doctrine

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In an increasingly polarized media landscape, understanding the mechanics behind editorial bias is essential. This paper, *"The TULIP of Modern Media: Analyzing Editorial Bias Through Calvinist Doctrine,"* explores the intriguing parallels between the Calvinist TULIP doctrines and the practices of modern media organizations. TULIP—Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints—provides a framework that reveals systematic choices in how news is reported, framed, and repeated across different outlets. By drawing analogies between these theological doctrines and media practices, we expose how ideological and structural biases shape public perception. Each section explores a Calvinist doctrine as a metaphor, examining media's inherent biases, selective focus, targeted narratives, the bandwagon effect, and editorial steadfastness. This analysis not only illuminates how media organizations maintain audience loyalty but also raises questions about the ethical implications of these biases. Readers are encouraged to reflect on the role of media in shaping public consciousness and the need for transparency, diversity, and critical media literacy.

Keywords: media bias, editorial bias, Calvinism, TULIP doctrine, news media, selective storytelling, public perception, media ethics, ideological bias, news framing.

1. Introduction

Statement of Purpose:

In an era where information is more accessible than ever, the role of media in shaping public opinion and perception is under increased scrutiny. Major news agencies—like CNN, BBC, AP, and CBS—are powerful entities that influence millions of minds daily through selective reporting, framing, and editorial choice. This paper proposes an unconventional analytical approach by applying Calvin's TULIP doctrines—an acronym for five key tenets of Calvinist theology—as a lens for examining editorial bias. By using TULIP as a metaphor, we aim to uncover patterns within mainstream media that echo theological notions of inherent human tendencies, selective favor, targeted messaging, and consistency of purpose. This approach highlights that just as Calvinist doctrines interpret human behavior as guided by divine sovereignty, modern media behaviors might similarly be seen as structured by specific, often unseen forces, such as political influence, economic incentives, and audience targeting.

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CNN + BBC + AP + CBS = T, where T is defined by Calvin's T U L I P.

Lead-In with Figure:

To illustrate this perspective, we use the following formula as a provocative entry point: "CNN + BBC + AP + CBS = T, where T is defined by Calvin's T U L I P." This equation implies that, collectively, these prominent media outlets embody a particular stance, which aligns with "T" or "Total Depravity" in Calvinist doctrine. In this context, "Total Depravity" does not imply outright corruption or evil; rather, it suggests that these agencies, due to inherent institutional biases and constraints, cannot achieve absolute neutrality or objectivity. Like individuals bound by human nature, these agencies are shaped by their corporate, ideological, and audience-driven mandates. By analyzing these biases through the TULIP framework, we can explore how each tenet offers a unique metaphor for understanding editorial practices, from selective focus to targeted storytelling.

Thesis Statement:

This paper explores how Calvinist doctrines—Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints—serve as metaphors for the biases and choices inherent in mainstream media. Each tenet, when applied to editorial practices, provides a fresh perspective on how news agencies select, frame, and disseminate information, as well as how they maintain a steadfast ideological stance despite evolving political and social landscapes. By the end of this analysis, we aim to deepen our understanding of the ways in which media practices resonate with these theological doctrines, revealing the systematic choices that underlie the information we consume daily. This exploration encourages readers to question the neutrality of mainstream media and to approach news consumption with a critical and discerning mindset.

2. Total Depravity: The Inherent Bias of Media

Definition and Context:

Calvin's doctrine of Total Depravity asserts that, due to the Fall, human nature is fundamentally flawed and inclined toward sin. In this theological framework, "depravity" does not mean that people are as evil as possible, but rather that every aspect of human life is affected by sin. Calvin argued that no human can achieve true moral purity or perfect understanding on their own; all are biased, limited, and shaped by self-interest. The doctrine suggests that humanity is

incapable of complete righteousness or objective goodness without divine intervention. This theological concept portrays human nature as irreparably compromised by inherent tendencies, leading individuals to act in ways that serve personal interests, often subconsciously.

When applied to the realm of media, Total Depravity can be seen as a metaphor for the inherent biases that shape news organizations. Just as individuals are inclined toward certain biases and self-serving behaviors, so too are media institutions shaped by economic, political, and ideological forces. Despite claims of objectivity and impartiality, news agencies cannot escape the influences that pervade their operations and decision-making processes.

Media Analogy:

In a media context, Total Depravity suggests that news agencies, like humans, possess inherent biases that compromise their ability to provide purely objective or neutral information. These biases may not necessarily be overt or intentional; rather, they are often structural, deeply embedded in the corporate framework, editorial processes, and profit motivations of the organization.

For instance, corporate interests play a significant role in shaping content. Major news networks operate under the umbrella of large media conglomerates with diverse financial interests. These parent companies may have investments or partnerships that subtly influence editorial choices, steering coverage in a way that aligns with corporate priorities. Political leanings also affect content, with certain networks consistently leaning left or right in their reporting, framing, and choice of stories. These leanings are often reinforced by the demographics of their audience; news agencies tend to tailor their reporting to satisfy the expectations and beliefs of their viewers or readers, creating feedback loops where biases are continually reinforced.

Thus, just as Total Depravity implies an inherent limitation in achieving perfect goodness, news agencies exhibit a type of "journalistic depravity"—a built-in incapacity to deliver purely balanced and unbiased reporting. This "depravity" reflects not a moral failing but the reality of operating in a competitive, profit-driven industry that often prioritizes sensationalism, audience engagement, and ideological alignment over objective truth.

Case Studies:

Examining recent news stories offers concrete illustrations of how this “Total Depravity” plays out in practice. Consider the coverage of political rallies, particularly events surrounding divisive figures or contentious issues. Media outlets often adopt starkly contrasting tones and narratives when covering the same event, reflecting their ideological orientations and audience expectations.

For example, a political rally featuring a high-profile figure like former President Donald Trump may be framed in vastly different ways by different news organizations. A left-leaning outlet might focus on controversial or inflammatory statements, highlighting elements that portray the rally as divisive or problematic, while a right-leaning outlet may emphasize large attendance numbers, enthusiasm among supporters, and messages that resonate with conservative values. The same event is thus filtered through contrasting lenses, each shaped by the biases of the respective news agencies and the anticipated reactions of their core audiences. This selective framing demonstrates how editorial choices can create distinct versions of reality, leaving viewers with a partial, ideologically tinted understanding of events.

International conflict coverage is another area where Total Depravity is evident. In complex, polarized conflicts—such as those involving Israel and Palestine, or Russia and Ukraine—media organizations often exhibit biases based on national and ideological affiliations. Western media, for instance, may emphasize narratives that align with NATO perspectives, depicting one side as a democratic underdog and the other as an authoritarian aggressor. Meanwhile, media outlets in non-Western countries might offer counter-narratives that question Western motives and highlight local perspectives often minimized or ignored by Western media. These divergences underscore how geopolitical biases shape the narrative, showing that each outlet has inherent limitations in achieving a truly balanced portrayal.

Even seemingly apolitical stories, such as climate change or public health issues, reveal the imprint of Total Depravity. For instance, media coverage of climate change varies widely depending on the outlet's audience and corporate affiliations. Outlets with connections to industries reliant on fossil fuels may downplay climate risks, framing environmental regulations as economically

harmful. Conversely, those with audiences that prioritize environmental issues might amplify the urgency of climate action, sometimes overlooking nuanced discussions about economic impacts. These editorial choices contribute to a fragmented media landscape where audiences consume information that aligns with preexisting beliefs, rather than receiving an objective assessment.

Through these examples, we see that the concept of Total Depravity serves as a useful metaphor for understanding the inherent limitations of media objectivity. Despite claims of impartiality, news agencies are ultimately guided by a combination of corporate interests, political ideologies, and audience expectations, leading to reporting that reflects partial truths rather than a fully balanced perspective.

3. Unconditional Election: The Selective Nature of News Coverage

Doctrine Overview:

Unconditional Election is a central concept in Calvinist theology that asserts God's decision to "elect" or choose certain individuals for salvation is made without regard to any merit, action, or qualification on their part. This election is "unconditional" because it does not depend on anything the chosen individuals have done or will do; rather, it is based solely on divine will and purpose. Calvinists believe that this doctrine underscores God's absolute sovereignty, emphasizing that salvation is a gift, not earned or merited, and that the selection is solely God's choice.

In the context of media, we can draw an analogy between Unconditional Election and the editorial practice of selecting certain stories, figures, or causes to feature prominently while ignoring or marginalizing others. Just as Calvinist doctrine suggests a select group is "chosen" for salvation without condition, news agencies "elect" particular narratives to spotlight, often without any objective standard guiding this selection. Instead, editorial choice may be influenced by factors that remain invisible to the public but serve the network's broader goals or align with its ideological leanings. This "election" of stories often shapes public perception by creating a hierarchy of issues that appears arbitrary or ideologically driven rather than reflective of balanced reporting.

Media Analogy:

The idea of Unconditional Election in the media context refers to how news outlets often "choose" certain stories, perspectives, or individuals to cover extensively, while overlooking others, shaping public discourse by what they elect to spotlight. This selection is typically guided by internal criteria that may include audience demographics, ideological affinities, corporate interests, or the potential for sensationalism. Rather than presenting a broad spectrum of events and viewpoints, each outlet tends to prioritize specific narratives, thus "electing" them to the forefront of public consciousness. This choice is "unconditional" in the sense that it is rarely transparent or based on objective criteria; instead, it is influenced by the unseen motivations of the organization.

For instance, certain celebrities, politicians, and social movements receive disproportionate media attention, often for reasons that extend beyond the inherent newsworthiness of their actions or messages. Prominent news organizations may choose to amplify voices and causes that resonate with their audience's values or align with their editorial stance. Conversely, they may downplay or ignore stories that challenge their core narrative or are less likely to attract viewership. This selective coverage creates an echo chamber, where certain viewpoints become dominant in the public sphere, while others remain in the shadows, effectively "electing" particular perspectives and events to become part of the broader discourse.

Examples:

To illustrate the selective nature of news coverage, we can look at recent case studies where certain narratives have been given prominence while others are marginalized, often aligning with the perceived leanings or interests of the news outlet.

1. Coverage of Social Movements:

In recent years, movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the "Freedom Convoy" protests in Canada have received divergent coverage based on the ideological leanings of the reporting news agency. Left-leaning media outlets have generally provided supportive or sympathetic coverage of BLM, focusing on issues of racial justice and systemic inequality, while right-leaning outlets often emphasize any incidents of violence or

disruption associated with the movement. Conversely, the “Freedom Convoy” protests, which were predominantly associated with right-wing causes, were often framed by left-leaning outlets as extremist and disruptive. In both cases, each news agency’s selective focus on certain aspects of these movements reflects an "election" of narratives aligned with their audience's ideological leanings.

2. International Conflicts:

The coverage of international conflicts also reveals the selective nature of media election. For example, Western media has frequently focused on the narratives surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, with many outlets unconditionally presenting Ukraine as a democratic underdog resisting authoritarian aggression. This framing, while understandable, often overlooks or downplays other geopolitical conflicts in regions like Yemen, where a humanitarian crisis has persisted with limited media attention. The disparity in coverage suggests an "election" based on Western geopolitical interests, with stories that align with those interests receiving more attention. By spotlighting some conflicts and sidelining others, the media shapes public awareness and sympathy along lines that may not correspond to the objective severity or scale of each crisis.

3. Political Figures:

Political figures are another area where selective coverage is evident. Former U.S. President Donald Trump, for example, received extensive media attention throughout his presidency, much of it highly polarized. Left-leaning outlets like CNN and MSNBC focused intensively on his controversial statements, potential legal issues, and divisive rhetoric, frequently portraying him as a threat to democratic values. Right-leaning outlets, on the other hand, often elected to ignore or minimize these controversies, instead emphasizing his policies and the economic gains under his administration. Meanwhile, figures from opposing parties, like Joe Biden, have sometimes received more favorable or less scrutinized coverage in left-leaning outlets, where certain gaffes or controversial policy decisions are downplayed. This selective focus reveals an “election” of certain figures as symbols of ideological battles, shaping how the public perceives political leaders.

4. Climate Change Narratives:

Climate change is a topic that illustrates selective election within the same issue based on audience demographics. Outlets with environmentally conscious audiences, such as the BBC, consistently highlight the urgency of climate change, amplify scientific consensus, and focus on the need for immediate action. Meanwhile, outlets with strong affiliations to fossil fuel industries or conservative-leaning audiences may elect to downplay or cast doubt on climate urgency, sometimes giving disproportionate attention to minority opinions that downplay the severity of the crisis. This selective coverage reflects an “election” that reinforces audience beliefs, with each outlet tailoring its message to align with the values and expectations of its viewership.

5. Health and Public Safety:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the selective coverage of health policies also demonstrated the concept of Unconditional Election. Certain news outlets chose to emphasize vaccine efficacy and support strict public health measures, while others highlighted the economic impact of lockdowns and concerns about individual freedoms. Right-leaning networks, for example, often elected to cover stories that focused on personal freedom and the drawbacks of restrictive policies, while left-leaning networks focused more on health risks and scientific recommendations. This selective coverage shaped public understanding of the pandemic, often resulting in polarized perspectives on the best course of action, as each outlet elected to emphasize stories that reinforced its ideological stance.

Through these examples, we see that Unconditional Election is an apt analogy for the media’s selective nature in coverage. Just as Calvinist doctrine posits that God unconditionally selects certain individuals, news agencies unconditionally choose certain narratives to promote, often based on ideological alignment, corporate interests, or audience preferences. This selective process isn’t always explicit or overt, but it creates an underlying framework through which stories are filtered, determining what makes it into the public sphere and what remains largely unseen. In doing so, media organizations “elect” particular issues, figures, and events to prominence, shaping collective consciousness and influencing public

opinion in ways that may not align with an unbiased, comprehensive view of reality.

4. Limited Atonement: Targeted Messaging for Selected Audiences

Doctrine Explanation:

In Calvinist theology, Limited Atonement is the belief that Jesus's sacrificial atonement was intended only for the "elect"—a specific group of individuals chosen by God—rather than for all of humanity. According to this doctrine, Christ's redemptive power is not applied universally but is limited to those whom God has predestined for salvation. This selective nature of atonement underscores a focused, purposeful action rather than a broad, all-encompassing offer. Limited Atonement is thus a doctrine of particularity, where divine grace is reserved for those within a defined boundary.

When applied as an analogy to media, Limited Atonement parallels how news organizations often craft their narratives with a focus on a specific audience segment. Instead of offering information for a general, universal viewership, each outlet tends to tailor its content, themes, and framing to align with the values, beliefs, and expectations of its core demographic. This targeted approach to news creates an "atonement" that is limited to those already aligned with the outlet's perspective, creating a feedback loop that reinforces existing worldviews rather than challenging them. This selective framing and focus allow news agencies to foster a loyal following, cultivating a space where viewers or readers receive information in a way that validates and strengthens their preexisting beliefs.

Application to Media:

In practice, Limited Atonement within media manifests as strategic messaging that is finely tuned to resonate with specific audiences. Major news agencies, from CNN and BBC to AP and CBS, are each informed by a blend of audience demographics, ideological leanings, and corporate interests, which shape the way stories are presented. Rather than aiming for universal appeal, these organizations create content that appeals specifically to their dedicated viewership, limiting the scope of information to perspectives that are palatable to their core audience.

This targeted messaging involves not only the choice of topics but also the framing and depth of coverage. By emphasizing certain aspects of a story and omitting others, news agencies effectively "atone" only for the informational needs of their selected audiences. This approach maintains viewer loyalty but also narrows the range of perspectives that audiences are exposed to. For instance, a right-leaning audience may prefer a focus on stories that emphasize personal responsibility and skepticism toward government intervention, while a left-leaning audience might respond more favorably to narratives centered on social justice, environmentalism, and government support for marginalized communities. As each outlet caters to these expectations, it reinforces a limited narrative that speaks to the ideological preferences of its audience, rather than offering a broad, balanced spectrum of views.

Evidence of Targeted Bias:

To illustrate the concept of Limited Atonement in media, we can examine how CNN, BBC, AP, and CBS shape their content and narrative focus in ways that reflect the interests and biases of their core audiences.

1. CNN:

CNN, often perceived as leaning left, has tailored its messaging to audiences that tend to value progressive social issues, governmental accountability, and scientific consensus. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, CNN focused heavily on health experts' guidance, the dangers of misinformation, and the need for stringent public health measures. This approach resonated with viewers who were concerned about public safety and supported government-led initiatives to curb the virus. Similarly, CNN's coverage of environmental issues often emphasizes climate change as an urgent crisis, aligning with the values of environmentally conscious viewers. In doing so, CNN limits its atonement to viewers who are already inclined to support these perspectives, reinforcing a worldview that aligns with progressive ideals and scientific advocacy.

2. BBC:

The BBC, as a public service broadcaster, aims for a certain level of impartiality, but it still exhibits targeted messaging, particularly in its international coverage. As a British institution, the BBC's reporting often

subtly reflects the foreign policy perspectives and cultural priorities of the UK, shaping narratives in ways that align with British values and interests. For instance, in covering conflicts such as Brexit, the BBC emphasized its impact on British society, economy, and political landscape. International stories are similarly tailored to highlight issues that resonate with British audiences, such as the humanitarian aspects of conflicts or the impacts of climate change on global stability, which align with the interests of a largely socially conscious and globally aware viewership. This selective focus limits the BBC's reach, creating a nuanced narrative that speaks primarily to British cultural and political concerns.

3. Associated Press (AP):

AP, known for its relatively straightforward and factual reporting, still exhibits targeted bias in its choice of stories and the tone it adopts. As an agency serving a wide network of publications globally, AP's reporting tends to adopt a perspective that resonates with Western democratic values, emphasizing themes of press freedom, democracy, and human rights. In its international coverage, AP often highlights conflicts involving authoritarian governments or human rights abuses, which align with the expectations of Western audiences invested in democratic ideals. By focusing on issues that appeal to Western sensibilities, AP limits its atonement to readers and viewers who prioritize these values, implicitly shaping a worldview that upholds Western ideals as a normative standard.

4. CBS:

CBS, one of the major American television networks, has a large, diverse audience but often tailors its news coverage to highlight stories that appeal to American interests, middle-class values, and familial themes. For example, CBS's political reporting frequently adopts a more centrist approach compared to other networks, appealing to moderate viewers who may not align with the far-right or far-left perspectives. In its coverage of social issues, CBS often emphasizes stories that align with traditional American values, focusing on family, community resilience, and the achievements of ordinary Americans. This messaging is crafted to resonate with viewers who see themselves as pragmatically moderate, reinforcing a

limited narrative scope that speaks to centrist, middle-America perspectives rather than a broader ideological range.

5. Audience-Centric Framing on Key Issues:

Across networks, certain issues are framed differently depending on the outlet's core audience. For instance, on the topic of immigration, left-leaning outlets like CNN or BBC may focus on humanitarian angles, highlighting the plight of refugees and the benefits of diversity. Meanwhile, outlets that cater to more conservative or centrist audiences, such as Fox News or CBS, might focus on economic impacts or border security, framing the issue in terms of national interests and safety concerns. This selective framing creates a limited form of "atonement" by reinforcing specific viewpoints that align with audience biases, rather than offering a holistic picture that includes diverse perspectives on immigration.

These examples demonstrate that news agencies tailor their messaging to align with the preferences and beliefs of their audiences, creating an informational landscape in which people are selectively exposed to narratives that affirm their worldview. Each outlet, much like the concept of Limited Atonement, provides a limited "service" to a specific audience segment rather than striving for a universal reach. This targeted approach reinforces ideological divides, as audiences are continuously exposed to stories that confirm their preexisting beliefs while alternative perspectives are left out or minimized.

Ultimately, this selective messaging shapes public perception, creating informational silos where each outlet serves a different subset of the population with narratives that align with their values. In doing so, news agencies enact a form of Limited Atonement, crafting stories to "atone" for the informational desires of their specific audiences, rather than addressing a broader or more diverse viewership. This approach is highly effective in cultivating loyalty and trust within these subsets, but it comes at the cost of a more nuanced and universally inclusive media landscape.

5. Irresistible Grace: The Bandwagon Effect in News Narratives

Doctrine Overview:

In Calvinist theology, Irresistible Grace is the concept that those whom God has chosen for salvation cannot resist His divine influence. This doctrine asserts that when God extends His grace to the "elect," they are drawn toward salvation inevitably and willingly. In this view, grace is a compelling, transformative force that overrides any resistance. The power of Irresistible Grace lies in its inescapable nature; it is an influence so profound that it becomes impossible to turn away from. For Calvinists, this doctrine reinforces the idea of God's absolute authority and sovereignty over human will.

In the context of media, Irresistible Grace can be seen as a metaphor for the "bandwagon effect" in news coverage, where certain stories become so compelling, sensational, or attention-grabbing that news outlets find them "irresistible" to cover. These stories exert a form of "gravitational pull" over media organizations, drawing them into coverage cycles that repeat and amplify the same narratives across numerous platforms. The media's version of Irresistible Grace occurs when a story captures the public's interest to such a degree that news agencies feel compelled to focus on it extensively, regardless of its objective importance, depth, or relevance. This creates an echo chamber where certain narratives dominate the media landscape, shaping public perception through repetitive coverage.

Media Analogy:

The concept of Irresistible Grace in media manifests as a phenomenon where certain stories achieve an "irresistible" status due to their sensationalism, intrigue, or broad public appeal. Much like those who cannot resist divine grace in Calvinist theology, news organizations find themselves unable to resist these stories. This "bandwagon effect" in media happens when one outlet begins intense coverage of a story, prompting others to follow suit, amplifying the story's prominence regardless of its substance.

This effect is especially prevalent in the digital age, where social media virality can rapidly propel stories into the spotlight. Once a story reaches this level of visibility, it becomes nearly impossible for news agencies to ignore. The fear of losing relevance, or missing out on the traffic and engagement that these stories

generate, drives multiple outlets to cover the same narrative from slightly different angles. This widespread, repetitive focus on a single story creates an echo chamber effect, where audiences are exposed to the same information from multiple sources, reinforcing the narrative and making it seem even more significant.

Examples and Analysis:

Several examples highlight how Irresistible Grace operates in the media landscape, with sensational events or high-profile figures capturing near-universal coverage. These examples show how certain stories spread rapidly, sometimes regardless of their depth or true importance, as outlets cannot resist the public interest they generate.

1. Political Scandals:

Political scandals are a classic example of the bandwagon effect, where media outlets find it nearly impossible to ignore stories that involve high-profile figures and potential misconduct. For instance, during the Trump presidency, stories about various investigations, allegations, and controversies related to his administration became a continuous media cycle. When one news agency broke a story on possible legal troubles or controversial statements, other outlets often felt compelled to cover it as well, leading to wall-to-wall coverage across media platforms. Even minor incidents, such as provocative tweets, were scrutinized and reported repeatedly by numerous agencies. The collective focus on these scandals, fueled by the irresistible public fascination with Trump's polarizing figure, created an echo chamber where audiences were constantly exposed to updates on the same issues, regardless of the broader relevance or long-term impact of each specific event.

2. Celebrity News and Scandals:

Celebrity news, particularly scandals involving well-known figures, also exemplifies Irresistible Grace in media. One of the most notable examples in recent years was the media frenzy surrounding the defamation trial between Johnny Depp and Amber Heard. What began as a legal case quickly escalated into a media spectacle, with both traditional news agencies and social media platforms covering every detail. The sensational

nature of the trial, combined with its appeal to audiences invested in celebrity culture, created a magnetic pull that news outlets found irresistible. Reporters provided live updates, recaps, and analysis, while headlines around the world featured dramatic moments from the courtroom. This intense focus on the trial's details often overshadowed other important news, illustrating how the media can become enraptured by stories that appeal to the public's fascination with celebrity and scandal.

3. Mass Shootings and Tragedies:

In cases of mass shootings or tragic events, the media often gravitates toward extensive coverage that goes beyond initial reporting. Once one outlet begins providing in-depth coverage of a tragic event, other agencies often feel obligated to follow suit, leading to continuous updates, interviews with witnesses, analyses of the perpetrator's background, and coverage of political debates around the incident. While these stories are undoubtedly significant, the bandwagon effect can sometimes amplify the narrative in ways that heighten public fear or anxiety, especially if the coverage is sensationalized. For example, after high-profile shootings, news outlets repeatedly cover the same angles and elements, creating an echo chamber effect where audiences are exposed to the story across multiple sources, amplifying its emotional impact and perceived frequency. This can create a distorted perception of safety and social stability, as well as contribute to the "contagion effect," where intense media coverage may inadvertently inspire similar incidents.

4. Natural Disasters:

When major natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, or wildfires, strike, they also create an irresistible pull for media coverage. For instance, when Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, news outlets from across the globe provided exhaustive coverage of the unfolding tragedy, with live broadcasts, emotional interviews, and extensive analysis of the government response. This sustained focus led to intense public scrutiny and outrage over the perceived mishandling of the disaster, highlighting how widespread media attention can influence public opinion. While such coverage is necessary to inform and mobilize relief efforts, it also demonstrates the bandwagon effect, as the intense focus can

sometimes overshadow other important events or issues happening simultaneously. The repetition of distressing images and stories reinforces the narrative of catastrophe, contributing to a collective experience shaped heavily by media emphasis.

5. **Social Movements:**

Social movements, especially those that gain traction on social media, illustrate the bandwagon effect in real time. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests following the death of George Floyd in 2020 quickly became a focal point for news coverage globally. Initially, local coverage of the incident sparked outrage on social media, which subsequently drew the attention of major news networks. As protests erupted across cities worldwide, the media's "irresistible" pull towards the BLM movement created a sustained, nearly ubiquitous narrative, with outlets covering demonstrations, policy debates, and incidents of civil unrest. This collective focus on the movement, amplified across news channels, newspapers, and social platforms, not only increased public awareness but also pushed other ongoing issues into the background. The intensity of the coverage meant that audiences were immersed in the narrative, fostering a unified, global awareness and response but also contributing to a polarized discourse.

These examples demonstrate how certain stories become "irresistible" due to their sensational, emotional, or controversial nature, drawing multiple news agencies into an echo chamber of coverage. Once a story achieves this level of media saturation, it becomes a dominant narrative that is difficult for other topics to displace, regardless of its depth or overall relevance. This bandwagon effect not only amplifies the importance of these stories but also reinforces specific themes or agendas, as audiences encounter similar perspectives and framings across multiple sources.

While the "irresistibility" of such stories ensures broad awareness, it also contributes to a skewed informational landscape where certain issues are magnified, while others remain overlooked. Audiences may be left with the impression that these dominating stories are more important than other issues, simply because of the volume and consistency of the coverage. In this way, the media's Irresistible Grace shapes collective consciousness, drawing the public

toward selected narratives with a force that, like Calvinist grace, can be impossible to resist.

6. Perseverance of the Saints: Media Consistency and Editorial Stance

Doctrine Definition:

In Calvinist theology, Perseverance of the Saints is the doctrine that those whom God has chosen for salvation will remain faithful until the end. This belief asserts that true believers, once chosen, will persist in their faith, regardless of challenges, doubts, or hardships they encounter. Perseverance of the Saints emphasizes the steadfastness of divine purpose and the immutability of God's will. It implies that, despite external influences or internal struggles, the "elect" will not deviate from the path laid out for them, as their ultimate destiny is divinely ordained.

When applied as a metaphor to media, Perseverance of the Saints reflects how news agencies exhibit a form of editorial steadfastness. Like the saints, these organizations adhere to a consistent ideological or editorial stance, even in the face of changing facts, new perspectives, or public backlash. Each media outlet has a distinct narrative style and set of priorities, often shaped by its audience, ownership, and institutional culture. This "perseverance" leads to the continual reinforcement of specific viewpoints and values, which shape how stories are reported and discussed. Even when contrary evidence emerges or public sentiment shifts, news agencies often remain committed to their established perspectives, thereby fostering a form of consistency that resonates with their core audience and maintains their ideological brand.

Analogy in Media:

Perseverance in media functions as a kind of editorial "faithfulness" to the values, ideologies, and narratives that define each outlet. Just as the saints remain committed to their beliefs, media organizations persist in their chosen editorial stance, framing events in ways that align with their established viewpoints. This consistency helps cultivate trust and loyalty among their audience, as viewers and readers come to expect a familiar perspective from each source. However, this steadfastness can also result in a reluctance to adapt to new information that contradicts the prevailing narrative, leading to a selective interpretation of facts.

For example, a left-leaning outlet like CNN might continue to emphasize stories that align with progressive perspectives on social justice, environmental protection, and governmental responsibility, even if certain facts complicate these narratives. Similarly, a right-leaning outlet like Fox News will generally maintain a focus on stories that emphasize personal freedom, national security, and economic conservatism, persisting in these viewpoints even when counterarguments or conflicting data arise. This “perseverance” is not simply a matter of stubbornness; it is a strategic editorial choice that reinforces the outlet’s brand identity and maintains its resonance with a specific demographic. The result is a media landscape where audiences receive a stable, albeit sometimes one-sided, perspective that reinforces their beliefs rather than challenging them with alternate views.

Examples:

Several examples illustrate how media outlets persist in their chosen narratives, showing editorial consistency even when faced with shifts in public opinion, emerging evidence, or criticism.

1. Coverage of Climate Change:

Left-leaning outlets like the BBC, CNN, and The New York Times have maintained a strong, unwavering stance on climate change, consistently emphasizing its urgency, the scientific consensus around it, and the need for government intervention. This position aligns with the values of their audiences, who tend to support environmental initiatives and view climate change as an existential threat. Despite fluctuations in public opinion and challenges from climate change skeptics, these outlets have remained steadfast in their messaging, often framing environmental policy as a moral imperative. Right-leaning outlets, however, such as Fox News, often take a more cautious approach to climate change, questioning the severity of the crisis or highlighting the economic risks associated with environmental regulations. Even as scientific evidence and public concern grow, these outlets continue to emphasize stories that question the urgency of climate action, showing “perseverance” in their editorial stance that resonates with their more conservative viewership.

2. Political Allegiances and Coverage of Political Figures:

Political coverage offers a clear example of editorial perseverance. For instance, CNN and MSNBC consistently took a critical stance toward former President Donald Trump throughout his presidency, focusing on his controversial statements, alleged misconduct, and policy decisions that clashed with progressive values. This narrative consistency persisted even when Trump implemented policies that had bipartisan support or positive economic outcomes. Conversely, right-leaning outlets like Fox News displayed steadfast loyalty to Trump, emphasizing his achievements and defending him against criticisms, even when certain policies or actions sparked controversy. This consistency continued even in the face of changing public sentiment or emerging evidence, illustrating how each outlet's editorial perseverance reinforced its established political alignment.

3. Healthcare and Social Policy:

The issue of healthcare reform in the United States reveals how media outlets maintain consistency in their ideological perspectives. Left-leaning outlets tend to support universal healthcare measures, often highlighting stories about the struggles of uninsured Americans and the inefficiencies of private health insurance. Even when critics argue about the potential economic downsides or logistical challenges of universal healthcare, these outlets persist in portraying it as a moral and social necessity. Right-leaning media, on the other hand, consistently highlight the downsides of government-led healthcare, framing it as inefficient or prone to bureaucracy, and emphasizing personal responsibility and market-based solutions. This consistency holds even when faced with public demand for broader healthcare access, as these outlets maintain a narrative that aligns with their foundational ideology.

4. International Relations and Military Intervention:

The media's approach to international relations, particularly military interventions, is another example of editorial perseverance. During the U.S. involvement in conflicts in the Middle East, outlets like Fox News often framed military actions as necessary for national security and global stability, focusing on the importance of a strong American presence abroad.

This perspective persisted even in light of growing anti-war sentiment and criticism of interventionist policies. Conversely, outlets with more progressive leanings, such as MSNBC and The New York Times, frequently highlighted the human cost of military interventions, the complexities of international alliances, and the importance of diplomatic solutions, persisting in these narratives even when public support for military actions surged following certain events. Each outlet's perspective on foreign policy remains consistent, reflecting an editorial perseverance that aligns with their broader ideological stance on the role of the U.S. in global affairs.

5. Corporate Accountability and Economic Policy:

When it comes to economic issues, particularly corporate accountability, media outlets show significant editorial perseverance. Outlets with a left-leaning audience, such as The Guardian, routinely publish stories critical of corporate influence, tax avoidance, and environmental impact, portraying large corporations as a potential threat to social and economic justice. This perspective persists even when corporations implement progressive policies or engage in philanthropy, as these outlets continue to emphasize systemic flaws and the need for regulatory oversight. Right-leaning media outlets, like Fox Business, tend to focus on the positive economic impact of corporations, highlighting job creation, innovation, and the benefits of deregulation. This editorial consistency persists even during economic downturns or public backlash against corporate practices, as the outlets maintain a pro-business narrative that aligns with their audience's views on free-market principles.

These examples reveal how major news organizations demonstrate a form of "Perseverance of the Saints," showing consistency in their editorial stances despite changing circumstances, criticisms, or emerging evidence. This steadfastness is a form of brand loyalty that reflects the values and beliefs of their audiences, creating a feedback loop where consistent narratives reinforce the ideological alignment of their viewers or readers. Just as the saints are said to remain faithful to their beliefs through divine perseverance, media organizations remain faithful to their editorial perspectives, crafting a stable and reliable identity for their followers.

However, this consistency can come at the cost of adaptability. When media outlets commit to a particular narrative or worldview, they may selectively interpret or even ignore information that challenges their established perspective. This persistence, while appealing to loyal audiences, can contribute to polarization, as audiences receive information that reinforces rather than questions their existing beliefs. By consistently portraying events through a specific ideological lens, each outlet creates an echo chamber, cultivating an audience that remains within a familiar framework rather than exploring diverse viewpoints.

In summary, Perseverance of the Saints serves as a fitting analogy for the editorial consistency observed in modern media. Just as Calvinist doctrine asserts that the chosen will remain steadfast in faith, media organizations demonstrate a similar steadfastness in their editorial stance, offering narratives that remain true to their brand identity and ideological alignment. While this editorial perseverance can create trust and loyalty among audiences, it also perpetuates informational silos, as outlets selectively uphold perspectives that affirm rather than challenge their viewers' beliefs.

7. Discussion: The Ethical Implications of the TULIP Framework in Media

Critical Analysis:

The TULIP-inspired framework provides a unique perspective on the ethical implications of media bias by highlighting how news agencies operate within structures that often mirror the selective, targeted, and persistent nature of Calvinist doctrines. By examining media through the lens of Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints, we can see how each doctrine metaphorically aligns with specific editorial practices that shape how news is presented, consumed, and understood. This framework illuminates the ethical dilemma of selective storytelling, wherein media outlets, much like Calvinism's "elect," choose specific narratives and frame stories in ways that align with their values, corporate interests, and audience preferences. This selective process inevitably shapes public perception, as audiences are exposed to a filtered version of reality rather than a comprehensive, balanced perspective.

These patterns raise significant ethical concerns around the power of media to influence public opinion, reinforce ideologies, and selectively highlight or ignore certain issues. The TULIP framework suggests that media, like the Calvinist "elect," is not neutral or universally objective; rather, it is inherently constrained by structural and ideological biases. This raises questions about the responsibility of news agencies to offer a fair representation of events, as their selective framing can perpetuate stereotypes, exacerbate polarization, and create informational echo chambers. By consistently choosing stories that align with their editorial stance, news outlets contribute to a reality where individuals are increasingly siloed, receiving information that reinforces their existing beliefs and biases, often at the expense of understanding broader, more nuanced viewpoints.

In this light, the TULIP-inspired framework suggests that media organizations must grapple with ethical questions around transparency, fairness, and accountability. Should they disclose the biases and interests that shape their editorial choices? Is it their duty to provide diverse perspectives, even if it risks alienating their core audience? These questions underscore the ethical tensions inherent in media as both a business and a purveyor of information, where the pursuit of profitability and audience loyalty may conflict with the ideal of balanced, impartial reporting.

Potential Solutions:

To address the ethical issues raised by media biases, news agencies and audiences alike could consider several strategies aimed at fostering a more balanced informational ecosystem.

1. Increased Transparency and Disclosure:

News agencies can take steps to increase transparency regarding their editorial stance and biases. By openly acknowledging their ideological leanings and corporate interests, they can provide audiences with context about the perspectives that influence their reporting. This approach would allow viewers and readers to better assess the content they consume and understand the potential biases at play. For instance, outlets could include disclaimers or editor's notes on stories that cover particularly polarizing topics, explaining the reasoning behind their framing. This transparency would create a foundation of trust and encourage critical engagement with

the news, as audiences become more aware of the factors that shape editorial decisions.

2. Diversification of Perspectives:

Another potential solution is for media outlets to deliberately include a wider range of voices and viewpoints, especially on complex or divisive issues. By showcasing diverse perspectives, even those that may challenge their established narrative, news organizations can foster a more nuanced understanding of events. This approach might involve incorporating opinion pieces or commentary from individuals with contrasting views, as well as featuring stories that highlight less-covered aspects of a topic. While this strategy may alienate some segments of their audience, it would ultimately contribute to a more balanced and informed public discourse.

3. Encouraging Media Literacy and Critical Thinking:

Given the structural biases inherent in most news organizations, it is equally important to empower audiences to approach media with a critical eye. Media literacy education—emphasizing skills such as identifying bias, assessing sources, and cross-referencing information—could equip individuals to navigate the news landscape more responsibly. Educational initiatives could be implemented at the school level, as well as through public campaigns, to raise awareness about the potential biases in media. Audiences could also be encouraged to diversify their news sources, seeking out content from outlets with different ideological perspectives to gain a broader understanding of current events. This approach would shift some responsibility to the consumers, encouraging them to become active participants in evaluating the news rather than passive recipients.

4. Creating Independent, Nonprofit News Outlets:

Another potential solution to counteract the biases of for-profit news agencies is the establishment of independent, nonprofit news outlets dedicated to impartiality and balanced reporting. By operating outside the profit-driven structures that influence mainstream media, these organizations could focus on comprehensive, in-depth coverage without the pressure to cater to specific audience demographics or ideological leanings. Such outlets could be publicly funded or supported by donations,

allowing them to prioritize unbiased reporting. Although the sustainability of nonprofit news outlets can be challenging, they offer a valuable alternative in providing well-rounded information without the inherent constraints of for-profit media.

Implications for Public Perception:

The ethical concerns highlighted by the TULIP framework have profound implications for public trust in media. As news agencies continue to operate within a model that prioritizes selective storytelling and ideological consistency, public perception of the media's credibility may be further eroded. Increasing awareness of bias can lead audiences to become skeptical, if not outright distrustful, of mainstream media sources, potentially undermining the role of journalism as a reliable pillar of democracy. This erosion of trust has already contributed to a rise in "alternative" news sources and a growing public interest in independent journalism. However, the quality and reliability of these alternatives can vary widely, sometimes leading audiences to turn to sources that further entrench ideological biases and misinformation.

The media's selective focus, as described by the concept of Limited Atonement, creates information silos where audiences consume news that reaffirms rather than challenges their beliefs. This segmentation of news consumers by ideology reinforces societal divides, as individuals are less likely to encounter perspectives that differ from their own. Over time, these informational silos contribute to polarization, as people form disparate understandings of reality based on the narratives they are consistently exposed to. This phenomenon is particularly concerning in democracies, where an informed citizenry is crucial for healthy debate and collective decision-making. Without exposure to diverse perspectives, individuals may become increasingly entrenched in their views, leading to a society where compromise and mutual understanding are harder to achieve.

The echo chamber effect, captured by the notion of Irresistible Grace, amplifies this problem. When sensational stories dominate the media landscape, they crowd out more nuanced or lesser-known issues, creating a skewed public agenda where certain topics receive disproportionate attention. As audiences encounter the same stories repeatedly, they may perceive them as more significant than they objectively are, shaping public priorities and concerns in ways that do not

always reflect the broader reality. This selective amplification not only distorts public perception but also reinforces the editorial biases of each outlet, as audiences grow accustomed to a particular style of coverage and come to expect it.

In the end, the ethical implications of the TULIP-inspired framework underscore a need for greater awareness, both within media organizations and among consumers. As news agencies grapple with the tension between profit and integrity, they must consider the long-term effects of their editorial practices on public trust, societal cohesion, and democratic health. At the same time, audiences bear a responsibility to engage critically with the news, recognizing that no single outlet can offer an entirely objective perspective. By fostering media literacy, promoting diverse viewpoints, and supporting transparent reporting, society can move toward a media landscape that better serves the public good while respecting the ethical complexities inherent in news production.

8. Conclusion

Summary of Findings:

In this paper, we have explored how Calvinist doctrines, summarized in the TULIP framework, provide a unique lens for examining the practices and ethical implications of modern media. Through this analogy, we gain insight into the ways in which media organizations shape public perception, often in ways that mirror Calvinist doctrines' perspectives on selectivity, influence, and perseverance.

We began with **Total Depravity**, using it to describe the inherent bias present in all media organizations, influenced by corporate interests, audience demographics, and ideological leanings. This notion reflects the structural limitations that hinder truly objective reporting, as each outlet inevitably filters reality through its own lens. **Unconditional Election** demonstrated how news agencies selectively choose stories and perspectives to align with their target audiences' interests and values, creating a hierarchy of attention that reinforces specific ideologies. Through **Limited Atonement**, we observed how media outlets tailor their narratives to resonate with specific audience segments, thereby "atoning" only for a limited set of beliefs and values, resulting in information silos.

Irresistible Grace highlighted the bandwagon effect, where sensational stories gain irresistible traction across media platforms, creating echo chambers that amplify certain narratives and influence public opinion disproportionately. Lastly, **Perseverance of the Saints** served as an analogy for the editorial consistency demonstrated by news agencies, which adhere to their established stances even when faced with shifting facts or public criticism. This steadfastness, while fostering brand loyalty, often results in selective storytelling that reinforces ideological divides.

Together, these sections illustrate how the TULIP framework not only sheds light on the mechanics of media bias but also raises ethical questions about the media's influence on public discourse. By mirroring these theological doctrines, we reveal how news organizations function in a way that reinforces, rather than challenges, the beliefs of their core audiences, shaping a fragmented public consciousness where individuals are increasingly isolated in ideologically consistent echo chambers.

Final Thoughts:

Applying theological insights to modern media deepens our understanding of how news organizations impact public consciousness by helping us see these influences as systematic rather than incidental. Just as Calvinist doctrines view human nature and divine grace as structurally predetermined, we can view media practices as inherently shaped by systematic biases and the economic, ideological, and social forces at play. This perspective encourages us to approach media with a critical eye, recognizing the invisible structures that influence what stories are told, how they are framed, and which perspectives are amplified.

While this TULIP framework reveals concerning aspects of media practices, it also opens up a dialogue about the potential for reform. By acknowledging these patterns, news organizations can strive toward greater transparency, diversity of perspectives, and an increased commitment to media literacy among their audiences. Likewise, audiences can cultivate a more discerning approach to media consumption, recognizing the underlying biases and selecting diverse sources to gain a more balanced view of current events.

In conclusion, by examining media through the TULIP framework, we gain not only a clearer picture of its role in shaping public consciousness but also an

opportunity to reflect on the ethical responsibilities that accompany the immense power wielded by news organizations. As we become more aware of these influences, we can foster a media environment that upholds integrity, encourages critical thinking, and ultimately contributes to a more informed and cohesive society.

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