

## Reformed Irenics (Volume One)

### Preface

Some comments to give an idea of what Reformed Irenics (tolerant Reformed or tolerant Calvinist) is all about. The following describes what some have called “A Startling catholicity”:

As one becomes more familiar with the Reformed Tradition, their particularly pernicious form of irenicism and catholicity is not so “startling” after all. For instance, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) — the Luther of Switzerland some say — exhibited a rather startling degree of candor in his contempt for Romans 1:16 and 10:1-4. Zwingli wrote the following:

“I certainly, if the choice were given me, should prefer to choose the lot of Socrates or Seneca, who, though they knew not the one Deity, yet busied themselves with serving Him in purity of heart, than that of the Roman pontiff who would offer himself as God if there were only a bidder at hand, or the lot of any king, emperor or prince, who serves as defender of such a little tin god. For though those heathen knew not religion in the letter of it and in what pertains to the sacraments, yet as far as the real thing is concerned, I say, they were holier and more religious than all the little Dominicans and Franciscans that ever lived. These for a long time have been so far from humbling themselves and giving God the glory for their holiness that there is no need of the touchstone of the Word of God to detect their hypocrisy. Their boldness, luxury, unrestrained recklessness, unbelief and cruelty show that their hearts are without God so completely that no one is so ignorant and boorish as to fail to see it clearly.” (Zwingli)

Ulrich Zwingli enunciates what is commonly referred to as “inclusivism” which is quite prevalent in Theologically-Reformed history.

In a 2015 blog post Mark Jones wrote the following:

“Here’s the irony: to be truly Reformed, in my view, is to be a Reformed catholic. To be truly Reformed means you can freely quote men who are Papists or Arminians. Our Reformed forefathers didn’t have to worry about

people freaking out when they quoted Arminius approvingly.”

It depends on what is meant by “quote approvingly.” For a hypothetical example, I may quote Plato, Socrates, or W.G.T. Shedd “approvingly” — and the all-important context would determine whether this *ad hominem* approval was approval of a Christ-hating unbeliever or a “confused” or “muddled” believer. And as seen in the case of Zwingli’s “startling catholicity” he believed that the Socrateses of the world would be seen in glory despite ignorance of the true and living God.

[In Acts 17:28 Paul quotes a certain poet for the purpose of highlighting and accentuating the heathen idolatry (the phrase “For we are also his offspring” contained a different meaning to Paul than that of his hearers and the original author (who many say was Aratus).]

In view of certain Reformed Standards of judging, would it be possible for, say, Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) to be approvingly quoted as a “dear muddled brother” blanketed by layers of tradition? Would any “Reformed catholic” be “freaked out” if someone of their same Confessional Standard (e.g., WCF, 2nd Helvetic) thought that Bellarmine was a spiritual brother?

Jones writes:

“Today, the Reformed catholic can quote N.T. Wright approvingly, but he must be prepared to pay the price (personally, I am not much of a fan of Wright, but the example is still useful). It was Thomas Goodwin, a Westminster divine, who called Estius an ‘ingenious Papist’ and a ‘learned expositor.’”

I’m not familiar with Estius, but in certain respects I would say that John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger are learned, ingenious, and wise expositors according to flesh (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26) What of it? I also discern these two learned mens’ doctrines of demons that state that Christ died for everyone without exception and that God is not completely and absolutely sovereign over His creatures.

More from Jones:

“So much theology online today reflects a party-spirit: if my friend says

certain things it is okay, but if someone I don't like says the same things he is creating confusion and we need to send emails warning people about their heterodoxy."

I do not know if Mark Jones has (or had) anyone specific in mind when he wrote that, but it calls to mind how, several years ago, Douglas Wilson got into trouble with some of the Calvinist-Reformed Sanhedrin when he said (among other things) something about

"looking back to one's baptism."

Except that this "Wilson line" comes from an old Reformed document called The Directory Of The Publick [sic] Worship of God:

"He is also to admonish all that are present,

'To look back to their baptism; to repent of their sins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; to improve and make right use of their baptism, and of the covenant sealed thereby betwixt God and their souls.'"

My point here being that those subscribing to the Wicked Westminster Standards were evidently ignorant (or just forgetful) regarding their friend the Directory of Publick Worship saying "the same things" as Douglas Wilson.

Jones writes:

"Charles Hodge spent a lot of time with Schleiermacher. Consider this rather startling catholicity from Hodge:

'When in Berlin the writer often attended Schleiermacher's church. The hymns to be sung were printed on slips of paper and distributed at the door. They were always evangelical and spiritual to an eminent degree, filled with praise and gratitude to the Redeemer. Tholuck said that Schleiermacher, when sitting in the evening with his family, would often say 'Hush, children; let us sing a hymn of praise to Christ.' Can we doubt that he is singing those praises now? To whomsoever Christ is God, St. John assures us, Christ is a Saviour.' (II. 440 footnote).

Maybe spending time with Schleiermacher was the difference. We tend to be more forgiving towards people with whom we've spent time."

Mark Jones says that Charles Hodge's catholicity is "rather startling." Why "startling"? According to the Reformed Confessional lights and standards, is Charles Hodge's "rather startling catholicity" a good thing or a bad thing? If good, why? And if bad, why? Or is a possible response more nuanced, complicated, and messy than that (e.g., "good" or "bad" in this sense or up to that point, etc.)?

If this is "rather startling" in a good sense, then Charles Hodge appears to be the gold standard for a "charitable" catholicity and Reformed Irenicism. Not truly and Biblically charitable, of course, since Hodge is spiritually-fornicating with a clear and obvious hater of Jesus Christ in Schleiermacher.

In his Systematic Theology Charles Hodge spills a fair amount of ink addressing the various views of Schleiermacher. Hodge represents Schleiermacher as denying the personality of God (Systematic Theology, Volume 1, p. 439) and then has the meretricious audacity to state that

"[to] whomsoever Christ is God, St. John assures us, Christ is a Saviour." (Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, p. 440 footnote)

Charles Hodge twists and mangles the meaning of Schleiermacher's words. It seems to be customary, traditional, and fashionable for the tolerant Reformed to expend "imaginative" and "creative" energy in committing spiritual fornication with God-haters. This is NOT true Scriptural love, irenicism (peace); this is antichristian hatred that speaks "love" and "peace" apart from the only ground of peace.

Gresham Machen commit the same spiritual whoredom with another obvious God-hater in Wilhelm Herrmann.

I was thinking of the concept or idea of a "Reformed distinctive." Throughout the Bible we see how spiritual fornication is commonplace; it is prevalent; it is everywhere. The book of Revelation mentions the Great Whore with whom the world fornicates. This sort of fornication is not limited

to those adhering or subscribing to Reformed Confessions, Catechisms, or Standards. John Wesley and John Milton are reported to have “made room” for those ignorant of God’s righteousness revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 10:1-4). Thus, Reformed and non-Reformed alike like to speak peace, peace, when there is no peace.

The warnings in the Old Testament against committing spiritual fornication are pervasive. In Ezekiel 13:9-16 God not only destroyed the wall, He also destroyed those who plastered the wall. In Jeremiah 14:11-16 the false prophets and those to whom they spoke peace were consumed in judgment. This inextricable link that is established in the Old Testament is reaffirmed in the New Testament: If you share in her sins, you WILL receive of her plagues (Revelation 18:4; cf. 2 John 9-11). The immediate & inevitable result of God’s regenerating His people is NOT to dally with, but to come out of the Great Harlot. And since they come out of her by true faith & repentance (<https://agrammatos.wordpress.com/2017/07/31/gospel-repentance/>) they do NOT speak false visions of peace to themselves back upon their former times of ignorance (cf. Romans 10:2-3; Philippians 3:8).

## Reformed Irenicism Hostile To True Gospel Simplicity (2 Cor. 11:3)

The irenical Reformed catholic (or tolerant Calvinist) is hostile toward the Truth and tolerant of damnable heresy. By “tolerant” I mean the specific type of tolerance exhibited by the false prophets in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. A New Testament hypothetical example of this irenically-Reformed “lime-daubing” and “false peace-speaking” would be if Paul had NOT said “let them be anathema” to the erring Judaizers, but had rather said “These dear muddled brothers are better Christians than logicians” (cf. Galatians 1:8-9).

In stark contrast to this hateful and uncharitable Tolerant Calvinism/Reformed Irenicism, there IS such a thing as true and Biblical irenicism described in Galatians 6:14-16. Which speaks “peace and mercy” to those whose hope is based upon the only ground of peace -- the propitiating blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. The following passages from Ezekiel and Jeremiah provide us with a sober description of Reformed Irenicism.

“And My hand shall be against the prophets who see vanity, and who divine a lie. They shall not be in the assembly of My people, and they shall not be written in the writing of the house of Israel, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah. Because, even because they made My people go astray, saying, Peace! and there was no peace. And he builds a wall, and, behold, others daubed it with lime. Say to those daubing with lime, Yea, it will fall. There will be a flooding rain; and you, O hailstones, shall fall, and a tempestuous wind shall break. And, behold, when the wall has fallen, it shall not be said to you, Where is the daubing with which you have daubed? So the Lord Jehovah says this: I will even break in My fury with a tempestuous wind. And there shall be a flooding rain in My anger, and hailstones in fury, to consume it. And I will break down the wall that you have daubed with lime and bring it down to the ground; yea, I will bare its base. And it shall fall, and you will be consumed in its midst. And you shall know that I am Jehovah. And I will complete My wrath in the wall, and in those who daubed it with lime. And I will say to you, The wall is not; and, Those who daubed are not. The prophets of Israel who are prophesying concerning

Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her, even there is no peace, declares the Lord Jehovah” (Ezekiel 13:9-16).

“How do you say, We are wise, and the Law of Jehovah is with us? Behold, the lying pen of the scribes has certainly worked deceit. The wise are ashamed; they are terrified and are captured. Behold, they have rejected the Word of Jehovah, and what wisdom is theirs? So I will give their wives to others, their fields to those who shall inherit. For everyone from the least even to the greatest cuts off a profit. From the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace! And there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had done hateful things? They were not even at all ashamed, nor did they know how to blush. So they shall fall among those who fall. In the time of their punishment they will wither, says Jehovah. I will utterly consume them, says Jehovah. No grapes will be on the vine, or figs on the fig tree; even the leaf withers. And I will give to them those who pass over them” (Jeremiah 8:8-13).

Tolerant Calvinist Snippets (Reformed Irenic Brushstrokes)

## Righteous Gospel Judgment

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ [is] the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:1-4).

Tolerant Calvinist: Yes, Paul. Israel is holding to doctrinal error; but is this error necessarily a damnable error? Your prayer for Israel’s salvation clearly implies that this doctrinal ignorance is a deadly ignorance. By playing judge, jury, and executioner in this winsome and idiosyncratic way, are you not making your perfect submission to Christ’s righteousness as the basis of your justification instead of Christ’s righteousness itself as the basis?

NOTE: These sorts of nefarious *non sequiturs*; of tolerant Calvinist canards; of customary abuses of logic; of traditional toying with the science of necessary inference, are commonplace. People actually do “reason” (and have “reasoned”) in precisely the manner above upon encountering a person who judges righteous judgment according to the gospel, instead of judging by reputation, appearance, religious zeal and dedication, or a false gospel. Making judgments in this manner reveals that the typical tolerant Calvinist places NO VALUE on the true gospel. Thoughtfully observe how vehemently these Calvinists defend the regency of their Arminian (perhaps Open Theists too?) brothers in Satan. And then consider whether or not they have received or rejected the love of the truth; or whether or not they are not believing the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness.

I am NOT equating “Calvinism” or “the five points” or “TULIP” with the true gospel of Christ. Consider the “second point” (or the “U” in TULIP) as an example: It stands for “unconditional election.” The doctrine of unconditional election IS BIBLICAL and IT IS an essential gospel doctrine that every single regenerate person without exception, believes. However, as the quote from John Owen showed us, the true doctrine of unconditional election DOES NOT involve the elect sinner being infallibly enabled to

establish his own righteousness (by “grace” of course). So, in the conspicuous case of Owen we see that he held to a mere verbal form of “unconditional election” but certainly NOT to the Biblical form. Words mean things. And for John Owen, what he means by “unconditional election” and what the Bible means by these same words, are NOT the same thing.

One could run (or walk) through what is commonly called “the doctrines of grace” and perform a similar type of unpacking (e.g., how do most Calvinists or Reformed persons define “the doctrines of grace” as compared and contrasted with how the Bible defines these essential gospel doctrines of grace?)

Imperfectly Submitted

“Brothers, truly my heart’s pleasure and supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for [it] to be saved. For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ [is] the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Romans 10:1-4).

Unregenerate Israel (i.e., Tolerant Calvinist): Keep your self-serving prayer to yourself, thanks. Strangely twisted logic here. You think that I am NOT regenerate just because immediately and inevitably upon regeneration (2 Corinthians 4:3-6) I did not have a perfect view and submission to the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel? Well, contrary to your uncharitable prayer I was NOT establishing my own righteousness, but was merely being imperfectly submitted to His.

However, Paul, I am more perfectly submitted to His righteousness NOW. I suppose you would say that I believe that I was regenerated while I remained ignorant of the righteousness of God. Well, fine, whatever you say. I am certainly NOT going to get all extreme and begin judging my imperfect knowledge and zeal as self-righteous dung and trash like you did in Philippians 3:8. Not even going there, Paul. Nor am I going to follow your lead in judging others unregenerate who had similar struggles that I had with imperfect submission to Christ and His righteousness. That would be imperious, impatient, and downright mean.

They may eventually progress into a more perfect understanding and submission to Christ as the end of Law for righteousness, like I me. But these zealous yet “ignorant” ones (as you call them) possess imperfect knowledge and don’t need your cold-hearted-perfectionistic prayer. You need to approach them as believers like James White, Douglas Wilson, and John Piper do, Paul. Then — and ONLY THEN — will you possibly get a hearing and convince them to grow into a more orthodox or a more perfectly knowledgeable and submitted position. Something along those mature and charitable lines.

A Matter Of Course

“And as Isaiah has said before, Except [the] Lord of hosts left a seed to us, we would have become as Sodom, and we would have become as Gomorrah. What then shall we say? That [the] nations not following after righteousness have taken on righteousness, but a righteousness of faith; but Israel following after a Law of righteousness did not arrive at a Law of righteousness? Why? Because [it was] not of faith, but as of works of Law. For they stumbled at the Stone-of-stumbling, as it has been written, Behold, I place in Zion a Stone-of-stumbling, and a Rock-of-offense, and everyone believing on Him will not be shamed” (Romans 9:29-33).

“Brothers, truly my heart’s pleasure and supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for [it] to be saved. For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ [is] the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Romans 10:1-4).

Tolerant Calvinist Heretic: Fine, Paul. But let us push this out to the end of the logical road, shall we? Multitudes of professing Christians who believe that Jesus Christ died for everyone without exception stumble at the Stone-of-Stumbling in just the same way that national Israel did — tolerant Calvinists like me stumble too, except that most of us are not as honest and forthright about it as others.

I am Reformed and so it is A MATTER OF COURSE that I believe national Israelite expressions of the gospel are deficient in certain ways. If I didn’t think so, I wouldn’t be Reformed. But — and this is important — do those deficiencies (which, like the Galatian Judaizers, amount to a certain level of self-righteousness-establishing) necessarily reveal them to be unregenerate? NO. And the reason I would say “NO” is that I believe in the doctrine of justification by faith ALONE.

So, Paul, in spite of your prayer in Romans 10:1, those who are “ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness” (Romans 10:3) ARE NOT necessarily unregenerate because we are NOT saved by works! I’ll be quite candid here and say that I CANNOT EVEN BEGIN to take seriously what you said in Romans

9:29-33 and 10:1-4 since we are NOT saved by works!! Perhaps there is a textual variant there or something (wishful thinking, perhaps).

Paul, I desire to maintain (at least) a modicum of self-control here and not become too heated about your idiosyncratic version of slimy-sanctimonious-sectarian-man-centered-save-yourself-if-you-can-and-devil-take-the-hindmost form of doctrinal perfectionism. You may think that is quite the mouthful of misrepresentation, but I must strongly disagree in light of your uncharitable and imperious exhibition of doctrinal merit-mongering in Romans 9:29-33 and Romans 10:1-4.

Dearest Paul, I insist that you do NOT realize that a genuine faith in Jesus can reside (thank God) in a very imperfect and stumbling heart. To stumble at the Stone-of-stumbling can cause us to be humble, sometimes. And sometimes that imperfect and wavering submission “to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3) gets into the doctrine, and bless God, we are still not undone. Why? Because God does not receive us on the basis of our performance in ANY area.

Jesus is my righteousness and His perfection is imputed to me, to the Galatian Judaizers whom you cruelly and gleefully anathematized in Galatians 1:8-9. This perfection is ALSO imputed to those national Israelites for whom you presumptuously and prematurely prayed (Romans 10:1). You see, Paul, Jesus understands the Stone perfectly, and that understanding is mine, national Israel’s, and the Galatian Judaizers’ by imputation. But if God were to take us out of Jesus, and run us through our doctrinal paces, with us handling His hardball questions on our own, we are in the highest degree confident that we would be condemned to Hell for our failures of understanding in Romans 9:29-33 and 10:1-4.

So, again, despite what you say in Romans 9:29-33 and Romans 10:1-4, you are wrong. W-R-O-N-G. Wrong. We (national Israel, the Galatian Judaizers, and myself) are going to heaven because of Jesus, and NOT because of our mastery of the *dikai*-word group.

A Little Muddy

“Brothers, truly my heart’s pleasure and supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for [it]to be saved. For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ [is] the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Romans 10:1-4).

Tolerant Calvinist: In the interest of not utterly discrediting myself in the responsible Reformed world, I must raise a mild and dispassionate protest against your faulty conclusion concerning theologically-zealous Israel. What’s that? I forgot to mention their ignorance of the righteousness of God revealed in Christ? So I did. But this world can get quite messy, you know.

Paul, this is not about making clean necessary inferences relative to Israel’s ignorance of Christ’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own. And contrary to what you write, I think “ignorant” Israel (as you call them) actually have a good functional grasp of grace even though their theology of it is a little muddy.

Last thing before I wave your puerile behavior good-bye. Methinks a daubing of your dour forehead with the washcloth of charity may cool your streak of hotheaded radicalism that takes pleasure in judging people such as zealous Israel, unregenerate.

Paul, your supposed “love of the truth” (2 Thes. 2:10) is a sham, a fraud, a mere pretext, nothing but a cantankerous cloak for your delight in judging people lost. It’s quite peevish and petty to consign Israel to the flames of hell for just being a bit off on a doctrine. What’s that — you say judging someone presently lost is not the same as “consigning to the flames of hell.” Well, one would think I ought to know that Biblically careful and cautious distinction. But it’s much easier to misrepresent your position, you see.

Further, my assertion of the falsehood that you’re consigning Israel to flames eternal — instead of the truth of you simply judging them presently lost — is an emotional and sensationalistic tactic of sorts. I somewhat resemble the preacher who wrote in the margin of his sermon outline,

“Argument weak — shout slander here.”

Which Jesus?

Christian: “And as Isaiah has said before, Except [the] Lord of hosts left a seed to us, we would have become as Sodom, and we would have become as Gomorrah. What then shall we say? That [the] nations not following after righteousness have taken on righteousness, but a righteousness of faith; but Israel following after a Law of righteousness did not arrive at a Law of righteousness? Why? Because [it was] not of faith, but as of works of Law. For they stumbled at the Stone-of-stumbling, as it has been written, Behold, I place in Zion a Stone-of-stumbling, and a Rock-of-offense, and everyone believing on Him will not be shamed.

Brothers, truly my heart’s pleasure and supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for [it] to be saved. For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ [is] the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Romans 9:29-10:4).

Tolerant Calvinist: Isaiah and Paul, guess what — I am going to heaven because of Jesus ALONE, and NOT because of my mastery of the dikai-word group. I am NOT saved by submitting to the righteousness of God as the only ground of salvation; I am saved by Jesus.

Christian: Which “Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4)?

“But also if our gospel is being hidden, it has been hidden in those being lost, in whom the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, [so that] the brightness of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, [should] not dawn on them. For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your slaves for the sake of Jesus. Because [it is] God who said, Out of darkness Light shall shine, who shone in our hearts to [give the] brightness of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

Which Jesus does God desire to glorify Himself in the hearts of His people by? Which Jesus does God shine the redemptive knowledge of? Which Jesus does God reveal the brightness of the knowledge of as an immediate and inevitable fruit of the Holy Spirit’s regenerating work?

Microscopic Field of Orthodoxy

“Gather yourselves and come; draw near together, escaped ones of the

nations; the ones who set up the wood of their carved image, and the ones who pray to a god who cannot save; they know nothing. Declare and bring near; yea, let them consult together. Who has revealed this of old; who has told it from then? Is it not I, Jehovah? And there is no God other than Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the Word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. He shall say, Only in Jehovah do I have righteousness and strength; to Him he comes; and they are ashamed, all who are angry with Him. In Jehovah all of the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory” (Isaiah 45:20-25).

Tolerant Calvinist: Isaiah must be some type of cold and sterile epignostic who makes perfection of understanding an ADDITION to the gospel. All is black and white: everyone outside the microscopic field of orthodoxy as defined by Isaiah, “know nothing.” Isaiah’s uncharitable and idiosyncratic lens will NOT ALLOW for the possibility that those who pray to a god who CANNOT save simply have an imperfect and inconsistent understanding of the true and living God who CAN save.

Perfectionistic Prayer

“Brothers, truly my heart’s pleasure and supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for it to be saved. For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Romans 10:1-4).

Tolerant Calvinist: Paul, your prayer is perfectionistic, simplistic, anti-pastoral, and puerile. Wow. What an uncharitable and ghastly mural. For I, like SO MANY zealous and well-intentioned persons, was for many years a stranger to what the Bible teaches about the sovereignty of God and His saving grace. Yes, I was relatively ignorant (yet still fuzzily knowledgeable) of God’s righteousness revealed in the gospel. That clearly being the case, I was NOT necessarily unregenerate (as your perfectionistic prayer implies) since God is NOT dependent upon the perfection of my knowledge and submission to His righteousness in bringing about salvation.

Would you be so galling to say that you and the other Apostles preached that the salvation of sinners includes perfect and complete knowledge of, and submission to the sole ground of salvation right from the start?

That being said, I now realize in hindsight that my (partial) ignorance of Jesus Christ as the end of law for righteousness stemmed primarily from my own prejudice. BUT my prejudice was amply reinforced by what I was taught. So though I had a cranium half-empty of enmity against God that propelled me to establish a smidgen of my own righteousness, that did NOT necessarily preclude the reality that I was imperfectly submitting to God’s righteousness at least at some level.

Would you so unlovingly, impatiently, and imperiously assert and demand that the light of the knowledge of the redemptive glory of God is seen and known in the face of Jesus Christ by every regenerate person, with absolutely no exceptions?

“Because [it is] God who said, Out of darkness Light shall shine, who shone in our hearts to [give the] brightness of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Tolerant Calvinist: Wow, Paul. It seems that you would have us “zealously

ignorant ones” to believe that God births no children, but only mature adults. That is absurd on a level that I cannot even begin to understand.

“For the Word of the cross is foolishness to those being lost, but to us being saved, it is the power of God. ...But a natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14).

Tolerant Calvinist: Grow up.

The Assyrian Concern

“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger! And My fury is the staff in their hand. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath. I will command him to plunder, and to strip off spoil, and to trample them like the mud of the streets. Yet he does not purpose this, nor does his heart think so. For it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off not a few nations. For he says, Are not my commanders all like kings? Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is Hamath not like Arpad? Is Samaria not like Damascus? As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols (for their carved images excelled Jerusalem’s and Samaria’s); shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her idols?” (Isaiah 10:5-11).

Tolerant Calvinist: Take it easy there, Isaiah. You need to be cautious lest you imply that God approves of Assyria’s sin. You don’t want to say that Assyria is a rod of anger that God actually controls and actively swings do you? Wisdom and tact resort to the incoherent doctrine many Calvinists call, “compatibilism.” This way God may be said to be “in control” without actually controlling anything. Or even said to kind of “cause” something in a passive sort of way. See that?

“And it will be, when the Lord has broken off all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will visit on the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Assyria, and on the glory of his lofty eyes. For he says, I have worked by the strength of my hand and by my wisdom; for I am wise. And I take away the borders of peoples, and have robbed their treasures. And like a mighty one, I put down ones living in it. And my hand has found the riches of the people. Like a nest, I also have gathered all the earth, as forsaken eggs are gathered. And there was not one moving a wing, or opening a mouth, or one chirping. Shall the axe glorify itself over him chopping with it? Or shall the saw magnify itself over him moving it? As if a rod could wave those who lift it. As if a staff could raise what is not wood!” (Isaiah 10:12-15).

Tolerant Calvinist: Don’t you think that’s just a bit over the top? The “fruit of the proud heart”? The “glory of his lofty eyes”? The “saw magnify[ing] itself over him moving it”? Really, Isaiah? You need to work on balance and maturity, Isaiah. Assyria’s denial that God actively and totally controls their sinful actions does NOT stem from pride. Rather, pious Assyria and their humble king are simply concerned to protect God’s holiness, honor, and

glory.

“So the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts shall send leanness among his fat ones. And under His glory will kindle a burning like the burning of fire. And the Light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day. And He shall consume the glory of his forest and his fruitful field, even from soul to flesh; and it shall be as a sick man melts away. And the rest of the trees of the forest shall be few, so that a boy might write them” (Isaiah 10:16-19).

Thieves and Plunderers

“Brothers, truly my heart’s pleasure and supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for it to be saved. For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Romans 10:1-4).

Tolerant Calvinist: I see you going to that verse a lot, Paul. Allow me to remedy your ignorance of something important that you have obviously overlooked. Evidently you have never known a believer whose doctrine was a deluge of man-centered ignorance of the righteousness of God, but whose spiritual life was brimming over with a totally God-centered zeal. We abhor jumping to snap-conclusions and desire a more balanced broadening of your stifling and constricted road. You would shut the door of salvation in the sincere and devout face of Israel. But we allow them to go up by another way by what we customarily call a felicitous inconsistency or “a happy sacrifice of logic” (cf. A.A. Hodge, *The Atonement*, p. 14).

“Truly, truly, I say to you, The one not entering through the door into the sheepfold, but going up by another way, that one is a thief and a plunderer” (John 10:1).

By Whose Standard?

“But a slave of the Lord ought not to quarrel, but to be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness teaching those who have opposed, if perhaps God may give them repentance for a full knowledge of the truth, and they having regained senses out of the snare of the devil, being captured by him to do the will of that One” (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Tolerant Calvinist: So you're praying for God to grant certain persons repentance out of the snare of the devil? Really? Are you serious? You're actually judging people lost for incompletely-knowing and partially-understanding the only righteousness that God accepts (cf. Romans 10:1-4)? Paul, have you ever considered that you have become extremely harsh in your dealings with these people instead of gently and meekly instructing them? (cf. 2 Timothy 2:25)

Does this Tolerant Calvinist understand what Paul is actually saying in this particular passage in 2 Timothy 2:25? By whose standard do we define and deal with “gentleness” and “meekness”? Perhaps Tolerant Calvinist believes Paul is not really talking about an unregenerate person, but a very muddled and cantankerous spiritual brother.

A Full-Orbed Understanding

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:1-4).

Tolerant Calvinist: Now wait a minute, Paul. Just because I was prejudiced early in my Christian walk against the truth that Jesus Christ is the end of law for righteousness does not mean that I was NECESSARILY going about to establish my own righteousness. That’s a non sequitur wearing an imperious robe of doctrinal perfectionism. That’s a demand for a full-orbed, perfect understanding of the relationship of all parts of the gospel. I did not teach against this righteousness out of malice, but out of a sincere zeal common to the ignorant. But God is good. And since God is good, then He could not possibly agree with your Diotrophesian insistence that one of the divine gifts given in regeneration is perfection of theology.

Christian: “Then being filled of the Holy Spirit, Peter said to them, Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we are being examined today on a good work of an infirm man, by what this one has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in this name this one stands before you whole. This One is the Stone counted worthless by you the builders, the One who has come to be into the Head of the Corner; and there is salvation in no other One, for neither is there any other name under Heaven having been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:8-12).

Tolerant Calvinist: You cannot even begin to substantiate the idea that Jesus’ apostles were going around adding efficacious atonement to the list of things that define the true Stone and Head of the Corner in their gospel proclamation, without which, there is no salvation.

By the way, I must put forth this necessary qualifying nuance. If belief in this Stone MUST be the immediate and inevitable fruit of regeneration (salvation) for every believer without exception, then I say that this particular Stone is worthless, absurd, divisive, schismatic, sectarian, cultic, perfectionistic, and even scandalous (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Peter and John do not realize that my stumbling at this Stone was a breaking, and difficult process. A more mature, loving, and balanced view of this Stone is NOT to preach it as Head of the Corner, but to preach it as an enormously enriching, yet optional and inconsequential pebble. I mean, for Peter and John to preach Jesus Christ as THE Head of the Corner (without which there is no salvation), is to make their OWN understanding and practices an ADDITION to the gospel. Well, unless I’m just being a hypocrite here by judging their true gospel standard by my false gospel standard.

Christian: Tolerant Calvinist stumbles for many, many years at the Stone of Stumbling and Rock of Offense. Tolerant Calvinist thinks it is “some form of doctrinal perfectionism” and “radical to the extreme” to judge unregenerate those who have so stumbled. Tolerant Calvinist continues to stumble. The following is a sermon excerpt about this aforementioned stumbling.

“Do you believe that there are some saved people who believe that Jesus

Christ died for everyone without exception? Then you don't believe that Jesus Christ is truly a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. You believe that Jesus Christ is a little pebble that can be stepped over or even stepped on without any consequences. You don't believe that the atonement of Jesus Christ is an essential gospel doctrine, let alone the very heart of the gospel. You agree with those who are hiding themselves under a refuge of the lie that when the overwhelming rod passes through, it will not come to them. You are the ones telling them, 'Peace and safety!' You do not truly believe that Jesus Christ did not come to bring peace but a sword. You do not truly believe that those who are offended with the message of Christ in John 10 are as lost as the Jews of Christ's day who were offended with that same message. Your christ is not an offense to those who believe that he died for everyone without exception. Those who believe that Christ died for everyone without exception do not stumble at your christ. They just agree to disagree, as you do with them, all the while agreeing that both of you believe the true gospel. This shows that YOU, TOO, stumble at and are offended at the true cross of Christ. You don't even know what the true gospel is. For me to tell you that you are NOT SAVED and are a GOD-HATER who HATES the true gospel is offensive to you. Many of you who say 'peace, peace' to the universal atonement advocates also believe that faith is a condition for justification or that perseverance is a condition for final glory or that your everlasting habitations are based on your present stewardship. Your refuge is a refuge of the LIE. You have made a covenant with death and hell, saying to yourself that you will be safe in the day of judgment. But God will lay justice for a line, and righteousness for a plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of the lie, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place, and you will be exposed and trampled and broken to pieces. When you say, 'peace and safety,' then suddenly destruction will come upon you, and you will not escape."

Not My Job

"Brothers, truly my heart's pleasure and supplication to God on behalf of

Israel is for it to be saved. For I testify to them that they have zeal to God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of Law for righteousness to everyone that believes” (Romans 10:1-4).

Tolerant Calvinist: Paul, it sounds like you are advocating a “Perfection of Knowledge Required for Salvation” heresy. Now before you go off like a bottle rocket, let me explain a few things to you, okay? Now, do I call Israel to hold to a consistent theology on the righteousness of Christ as the only righteousness God accepts? You bet I do. Do I teach it in the fellowship where I serve as an elder? Sure do. Do I believe it important to the honoring of God to believe it? Yes indeed. Do I believe someone who is ignorant of it is lost? Of course not. Do I believe someone who denies the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel and yet gives no evidence of actually understanding why they do so is, by strict virtue of that denial, lost? Of course not. Do I agree that it is not a good thing for someone to be thoroughly informed of this truth and reject it? That such could possibly indicate that such a person loves their tradition more than the truth? Yes, I do. But I also recognize that we normally jump to snap conclusions about this righteousness and God works on a much longer timetable than we do. I know that someone may well reject the teaching of the righteousness of God to them for a multitude of reasons that have little to do with the actual teaching of the righteousness of God under discussion, and may change their mind a little later, or long after. In either case, Paul, it is not my job to attempt to look into their hearts.

Not Abiding

“Everyone transgressing and not abiding in the doctrine of Christ does not

have God. The one abiding in the doctrine of Christ, this one has the Father and the Son” (2 John 1:9).

Tolerant Calvinist: It is Jesus who saves; not perfect doctrine or perfectionistic abiding in doctrine.

Christian: It's not about perfection. The doctrine of Christ has been revealed with sufficient clarity to identify and distinguish between the one true Christ and the myriad of false christs. Those who believe they began their “Christian life” with a “christ” who died for everyone without exception, have YET TO BEGIN in the doctrine of Christ. Thus, they do not have God.