

Soteriological Suicide

Abstract:

Correct reasoning is essential for every scientific, mathematical, or philosophical discussion and its principles hold true for everyday issues as well as for theological since they are philosophical studies of God and religion. However, when arguing from a pre-suppositional view, one often abuses rather than uses logic, ultimately producing conclusions corresponding to one's preconceptions. The result is a logical fallacy. In his article entitled "Loving God With All Your Mind: Logic and Creation" (Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1998, p. 142-151), Jonathan D. Sarfati commits such a fallacy and ultimately, Soteriological suicide.

Jonathan D. Sarfati's article on the correct use of logic contains a prejudice toward explicit Scriptural Soteriological teaching. While correctly exposing logical fallacies committed by atheists and evolutionists when peddling their evolving lie in the Creation-Evolution controversy, Sarfati fails to accurately present how Biblical salvation is acquired. His false perception misleads individuals into not obeying the gospel of Christ thereby damning their souls.

While illustrating a Modus Tollens (Denying the Consequent) and the fallacy of "Denying the Antecedent," Sarfati attempts an analogous counter-example of Mark 16:16. Let us examine the veracity of Sarfati's argument:

The fallacy of denying the antecedent is committed by some groups that teach the error of baptismal regeneration by citing the following statement of Christ according to the Majority Text of Mark 16:16: 'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.' The first part of the verse is an

implication: if a person believes and is baptized then he will be saved. It is invalid to argue from this that anyone who is not baptized will not be saved. The second part is an explicit statement that unbelief results in condemnation.

To demonstrate the fallacy, examine the following statement which is in the same logical form: 'Whatever has feathers and flies is a bird, but whatever does not have feathers is not a bird.' This statement does not teach that there are no flightless birds.

First, Sarfati contends some groups “teach the error of baptismal regeneration” based upon Christ’s words in Mark 16:16, then insists it is erroneous to conclude that one “who is not baptized will not be saved.” But from what in Mark 16:16 does Sarfati conclude “baptismal regeneration” is an “error?” If by “baptismal regeneration” Sarfati refers to the act of being “baptized” (from the Greek βαπτίζω - to dip, immerse, or submerge) and “regeneration” (from the Greek παλιγγενεσίας - a rebirth, renovation, or restoration), then contextually, does not Mark 16:16 imply a spiritual rebirth through the instrumentality of immersion? Indeed, Sarfati admits “*The first part of the verse is an implication: if a person believes and is baptized then he will be saved.*” Though Mark 16:16 never mentions “baptismal regeneration,” the concept, indeed, is implied. However, “regeneration” does occur in Matthew 19:28:

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel

and in Titus 3:5:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

In both passages the topic of discussion is salvation: “*Who then can be saved?* (Matthew 19:25)?” and “*being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:7),” respectively. So “baptismal regeneration” is Biblical soteriology despite Mr. Sarfati’s objections.

Second, Mr. Sarfati specifically refers to the “Majority Text of Mark 16:16” as if it were suspect, or perhaps untrustworthy. I realize some desire to remove text from Holy Writ when their false doctrines contradict it, however, if Mark 16:16 is suspect because it teaches “baptismal regeneration,” then so is Matthew 28:19 (“*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*”), Acts 2:38 (“*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*”), and numerous other passages “in the Majority Text.” Of course, this would also eliminate faith, repentance and confession as well as baptism from any Soteriological plan. So Sarfati here creates more problems than remedies.

Third, using logical propositions we can show the fallacy of Mr. Sarfati’s argument and on that basis alone we should reject it. Sarfati’s conclusion is predicated upon his presupposition that it is wrong to affirm that unbaptized persons are not saved. Yet in Mark 16:16A-1 by Modus Ponens ($P \supset Q$, P , $\therefore Q$ - Affirming the Antecedent) it can be proven that:

P1 - If a person believeth and is baptized then that person shall be saved

P2 - That person believeth and is baptized

P3 - Therefore that person shall be saved

Clearly from syllogism Mark 16:16A-1 above, if a person is to be saved, by Christ’s own affirmation, it is imperative that a person “believeth and is baptized.” Otherwise, Mark 16:16A says nothing. Sarfati concedes the first part “is an implication” (p. 147) and that “for our axioms, it is rational to accept the

propositions revealed by the infallible God in the 66 books of the Bible” (p.142). Logically, the above syllogism is valid and Sarfati admits the premises are true, therefore the argument is sound and the conclusion is true.

However, this by no means supports Sarfati’s claim that unbaptized persons are saved persons. From syllogism Mark 16:16A-1 above, he who is saved, is he who “believeth and is baptized.” Yet Sarfati insists it is “invalid to argue from this that anyone who is not baptized will not be saved.” His claim is false. Christ’s statement: “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*”(KJV) can be restated in syllogistic form:

Mark 16:16A-2 (Modus Tollens: $P \supset Q, \sim Q, \therefore \sim P$ - Denying the Consequent)

P1 - If that person “believeth and is baptized” then that person shall be saved

P2 - That person is not saved

P3 - Therefore, that person believeth not and is baptized not

And:

Mark 16:16B (Modus Ponens: $P \supset Q, P, \therefore Q$ - Affirming the Antecedent)

P1 - If a person believeth not, then that person shall be damned

P2 - That person believeth not

P3 - Therefore, that person shall be damned.

Since Modus Ponens (MP) and Modus Tollens (MT) are conditional “If-Then” statements, they imply certain antecedent requirements must be met before certain consequences result. Mark 16:16A-1 (MT) above is valid, its premises true, and therefore sound. Mark 16:16A-2 (MT) above is also sound.

Now, Sarfati stated Mark 16:16B is “an explicit statement that unbelief results in condemnation” and that “it is invalid to argue from this that anyone who is not baptized will not be saved.” But if one

does not believe, one certainly is not going to be baptized. If one doesn't believe one can fly, will one leap off a roof to fly? The answer is obvious except to one trained to miss it.

The word "condemned" in Mark 16:16B is translated "damned" in the Authorized Version (KJV) and both words are denials of "saved" in Mark 16:16A. So Mark 16:16B merely restates Mark 16:16A in another form. Christ simply stated: "All persons that believeth not are persons that shall be damned." This categorical proposition affirms: "any person who does not believe, is damned" and reaffirms the first conditional proposition that, in order to be saved, one must believe and be baptized. The fallacy peddled by Sarfati and they of his persuasion is, since Mark 16:16B does not explicitly say "he that believeth not and is baptized not shall be damned," then this passage does not teach unbaptized believers are not saved. The fallacy is both semantical and logical.

Semantically, the word "believeth" in Mark 16:16 implies a continual, not temporary, belief. Many passages use "believe" or "believer" to specifically refer to individuals who obeyed the gospel of Christ--Christians--not individuals who merely believe. Just as "All dogs are animals but not all animals are dogs," so "All Christians are believers but not all believers are Christians." John 1:12: clearly shows this to be the case:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

They who "received" Christ are non-Christian believers who were given the power, opportunity or ability to "become the sons of God"--they who "believe on his name"(cf. Rom. 8:14; Phil. 2:15; I John 3:1,2). Hebrews 10:39 also states:

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul

where “*them that believe*” refer to Christians, believers who obeyed the gospel of Christ, steadfast in their profession unto salvation, not willing to “*draw back.*” To “*believe*” (Greek: πιστις), is to trust, have confidence or faith in someone or something. Advocates of “faith only” salvation need only read James 2:19 to see that if “*faith only*” were true, then devils are also saved (“*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble*”). The only time “*faith only*” is used in Scripture is James 2:24 where: “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*” So salvation by “*faith only*” is anti-Biblical, therefore, anti-Christ.

Logically, Sarfati’s argument commits the fallacy of *petitio principii*, or circular reasoning. His conclusion is really a postulated suppressed premise. He presumptuously concludes the exclusion of baptism will not condemn one’s soul, then constructs an argument to produce his assumption. However, two rules of logic, Exportation and Commutation, will expose his fallacious argument.

First, Exportation is represented symbolically as: $[(P \bullet Q) \supset R] = [P \supset (Q \supset R)]$. In Mark 16:16 the subject term (antecedent) is a conjunction (combination) of two terms: he that “bElieveth and is bAptized,” while the predicate term (consequent) is a singular term: “shall be Saved.” This may be expressed symbolically by Modus Ponens: $(E \bullet A) \supset S$, $(E \bullet A)$, $\therefore S$ and grammatically as:

P1 - If a person (bElieves and is bAptized), then that person shall be Saved - $(E \bullet A) \supset S$,

P2 - That person (bElieves and is bAptized) - $(E \bullet A)$ _____

P3 - Therefore, that person shall be Saved - $\therefore S$

Sarfati concedes this implication. But since the antecedent is conjunctive (containing two terms), whatever relation the first term has with the consequent term also applies to the second. Thus, if one must believe to be saved, then one must also be baptized to be saved. By invoking the rule of Exportation ($[(P \bullet Q) \supset R] = [P \supset (Q \supset R)]$), we find Modus Ponens: $(E \bullet A) \supset S$, $(E \bullet A)$, $\therefore S$ above becomes Exportation $[P \supset (Q \supset R)] = (E \supset (A \supset S))$, (E) , $\therefore (A \supset S)$:

P1 - If a person (bElieves) then if that person is (bAptized, then that person shall be Saved)

P2 - That person (bElieves)

P3 - Therefore, if that person is (bAptized, then that person shall be Saved)

Logically, this syllogism is valid, Sarfati concedes the premises are true, hence, it is sound. Notice that being saved occurs NOT at the point of one's faith or belief as some advocate, but rather when the antecedent conditions are fulfilled - both of them. Applying Exportation to Sarfati's counter-argument, his Modus Ponens $[(E \bullet L) \supset R, (E \bullet L), \therefore R]$ below:

P1 - If a thing has (fEathers and fLies), then it is a biRd.

P2 - That thing has (fEathers and fLies)

P3 - Therefore that thing is a biRd

becomes Exportation: $[E \supset (L \supset R)] = (E \supset (L \supset R), (E), \therefore (L \supset R))$:

P1 - If a thing has (fEathers and fLies), then it is a biRd.

P2 - That thing has (fEathers)

P3 - Therefore if that thing (fLies then it is a biRd)

In his article Sarfati admits flightless birds exist, yet his argument concludes the contrary—that a thing MUST fly to be a bird! Yet he maintains the form is equivalent to Mark 16:16, proving his case! But we know ostriches are flightless birds, so flight is not a uniquely Avian feature. Bats, insects and airplanes also fly, but have no feathers, so they are not “birds” in the sense of our discussion, lest we equivocate. But feathers are a uniquely Avian feature! Both antecedent terms are essential Avian characteristics if Sarfati's counter-argument is to be analogous with Mark 16:16. Had Sarfati argued:

“If a thing has feathers and lays eggs then it is a bird, but if it does not have feathers it is

not a bird. It is invalid to argue from this that if a thing does not lay eggs it is not a bird.”

then his argument would clearly shown to be false because both feathers AND egg laying are equally essential Avian features. But Sarfati did not offer this analogous counter-example. To deny one term of a conjunctive antecedent is to deny both since whatever relation one term has to the consequent also applies to the other term.

To be thoroughly fair, let us incorporate the rule of Commutation to show the invalidity and fallaciousness of Sarfati’s argument. Again in a proper Modus Ponens, we have:

P1 - If a thing has (feathers and flies), then it is a bird.

P2 - That thing has (fEathers and fLies)

P3 - Therefore that thing is a biRd .

Both stipulated terms of the antecedent (that a thing **must** have feathers AND **must** fly to be a bird) **must** be met to achieve the consequent. Sarfati essentially asserts Christ stipulated a superfluous condition for salvation in Mark 16:16 by when He requires one to believe AND be baptized in order to be saved. Paul told Timothy “*All [emp. KAP] scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (II Tim. 3:16).

But consider another counter-example of Commutation showing Sarfati’s fallacious reasoning.

Notice:

P1 - If a person attains the age of 35 years old and is a natural born citizen of the United States, then that person may become President of the United States

P2 - If a person does not attain the age of 35 years old, then that person may not become President of the United States (“non-Presidential material” or “unqualified”)

P3 - It is invalid to argue from this that anyone who is not a natural born citizen of the United States may not become President of the United States.

This conclusion is simply false yet it is the same argument Sarfati makes with respect to Mark 16:16.

Commutation permits one to change the order of the two antecedent terms without changing the value or meaning of the argument, if it is valid. Therefore:

P1 - If a person is a natural born citizen of the United States and attains the age of 35 years old,
then that person may become President of the United States

P2 - If a person is not a natural born citizen of the United States, then that person may not
become President of the United States

P3 - It is invalid to argue from this that anyone who does not attain the age of 35 years old
may not become President of the United States.

Again, the conclusion is false because both antecedent terms must be met to achieve the consequent. It matters not in which order they occur, both are essential and must be accomplished BEFORE one may be President of the United States. It is absurd to deny the failure to meet either of these terms prevents one from becoming President. Also notice the conclusion directly contradicts the antecedent terms of P1 by denying one of the stated required terms. Now consider Sarfati's argument under the same scrutiny:

P1 - Whatever has feathers and flies is a bird

P2 - But whatever does not have feathers is not a bird.

P3 - This statement does not teach that there are no flightless birds.

By Commutation we get:

P1 - Whatever flies and has feathers is a bird

P2 - But whatever does not fly is not a bird.

P3 - This statement does not teach that there are no featherless birds.

Notice that P2 contradicts P1, indicating one of Sarfati's antecedent terms is false or superfluous—flight is not an essential Avian requirement since he admits flightless birds exists. Thus his fallacy! The

conclusion leads us to believe there are featherless birds. But by definition, birds are feathered creatures.

So, P1 - Whatever is a bird (has feathers) and flies is a bird

P2 - But whatever is not a bird (does not have feathers) is not a bird.

P3 - This statement does not teach that there are no flightless birds.

is really Sarfati arguing with himself, saying: “birds are birds and some of them do not fly.” The two conditions specified within his original argument’s antecedent must be treated as a whole and must be essential prerequisites for the “If-Then” scenario to be a valid conditional statement. If not met, then the consequent is fallacious.

Examining each antecedent term independently, its truth value can be determined.

Concerning birds:

“Whatever has feathers is a bird”; “All feathered things are birds” ; “All birds have feathers.”- True

“Whatever flies is a bird”; “All flying things are birds”; “All birds fly.” - False

The conjunction: “Whatever has feathers and flies is a bird” is false because not all birds fly. Therefore the valid argument is unsound by virtue of a false premise.

Concerning Presidents:

“All Presidents are at least 35 years old.” - True (But not “All 35 year olds are Presidents.”)

“All Presidents are natural born citizens of the United States.” - True (But not all natural born citizens are Presidents.)

The conjunction: “All Presidents are at least 35 years old and natural born citizens of the United States” is true. Therefore, the valid argument is sound by virtue of true premises.

Concerning Mark 16:16:

“All saved persons are believers.” - True (But not “All believers are saved.”)

“All saved persons are baptized.” - True (But not “All baptized persons are saved.” Some may not have

truly repented, believed, or confessed or were baptized for reasons other than Biblical requirements, i.e., “to join a church”).

The conjunction: “All saved persons are believers and baptized” is true. Therefore, the valid argument is sound by virtue of true premises.

Again to be fair and objective, it must be noted that in the case of Presidents, the qualifications are subject to change by man by constitutional amendment. In the case of Mark 16:16, only the Lord Himself as the Will maker or Testator (Hebrews 9:17) can authorize and publish any change of the terms in the antecedent, otherwise they are imperative. The case of birds is axiomatic—birds are feathered creatures, the only feathered creatures. Flight is inherent in many animals and not exclusive to birds. Indeed, Sarfati cannot produce a featherless AND flightless creature that is a bird—except of course, an unhatched one. But by the same logic, no one, not even Sarfati can produce one saved person who has not “believeth and is baptized” (again, except for an unborn child, or one who has not reached the age of accountability—not knowing what is or is not sinful) and remain Scripturally and intellectually honest.

In closing, individuals attempt to justify beliefs about salvation in all sorts of ways. In the end, however, God’s word will still judge us all (John 12:48). No one should commit soteriological suicide simply because we do not like the way God, in His infinite wisdom, has decided to save mankind. Indeed, personal faith is necessary for salvation. But it alone is not sufficient. It is my earnest prayer Mr. Sarfati will agree.