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Gospel Confusion Conference



GOSPEL CONFUSION CONFERENCE

Gospel Confusion

Sessions:
What is/is not the Gospel; Methods; Which gospel?; Which grace?; The Presentation of; The Theology of; What about those who have never heard?...and more...

Saturday October 19th, 9.30am - 3.30pm | St. John's Park Baptist Church, 178 Humphries Rd, Sydney | Cost: Free. Lunch and tea/coffee provided

Please register at sjpbconference@gmail.com

Speaker
Terry Arnold is a retired pastor, and author of several books on the Gospel and various other subjects. He is the editor of a growing worldwide publication 'Diakrisis'. Terry is involved in a full-time ministry of teaching, informing and equipping the church.

Date: Saturday October 19th,
9.30am - 3.30pm

Venue: St. John's Park Baptist Church,
178 Humphries Rd, Sydney

Sessions: *What is/is not the Gospel?; Which gospel?; Which 'Depravity' / Which grace?; Various Methods...and more...*

Cost: Free. Lunch & tea/coffee provided

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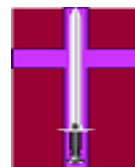
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'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [diakrisis] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry,
Teaching, Informing and Equipping the church.
Editor: Terry Arnold (Dr.Th; MABS; Dip.Bib.&Min.)

The editor may not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by subscribers in this newsletter.

We welcome comments or items contributed by readers. Unless otherwise requested, these may be included in following newsletters at the discretion of the editor.

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This newsletter is distributed bi-monthly *free* of charge. The cost to this ministry is approximately \$20.00 per subscriber annually. Any donation to help with these expenses is received with gratitude.

Contents

- P.2 Editor's Comment
- P.3 Church of England Apostasy;
- 'Prophecy' - How They Deceive
- P.4 Apostasy in Methodist Church
- P.5 Hamas and Media Lies
- P.6 The Jehovah Witness 'a god'
- P.7,8 Thoughts on 'Grace'
- P.9-12 Booklist
- P.13-16 The Strawmen in Christian Teaching
- P.17,18 Your Comments & Questions
- P.19 Itinerary
- P.20 Gospel Confusion Conference

Newsletter Changes

Due to the upcoming travelling itinerary, this newsletter (July) is a shorter edition in articles, pending a more complete edition for Aug/Sept/Oct.

Gospel Confusion Conference

God willing we will hold a conference on October 19th (Sat) in Sydney.

See P.20 for details and more in the next edition of this newsletter.

Editor's Comment

Persecution against Christians is now estimated to affect more than 300 million, *more than at any time in history*. In the middle east Christians are suffering every day. Laying down one's life is now not rare, but a daily reality. Places like Egypt, Africa, North Korea, India, China, Iraq, Syria and more, are regularly experiencing deaths of Christians martyred or abused for their faith.

But in the west, the days of Christians living in a free world with free speech may also be evaporating. The author has met persecuted people who when they come to western countries are surprised at the lack of zeal and complacency Christians have, and their apathy to what is the start of a loss of freedom in the west. Persecuted people often know the simplicity of faith and the joy that comes with *knowing the person of Christ*. When they are tortured, driven out of their homes and separated from others, they have their faith tested in a way that tests the substance thereof. Their relationship with Christ dare not be built on decisions, religious practises, works, or anything of themselves. They know that the governments or persecutors can take their goods, their families, their very lives, but they *cannot take the Spirit of Christ from them*.

Do we take for granted the freedom we have now to have a Bible, to read it, to preach it, to worship and share the person of Christ with others? Last year the author was preaching in a southern state where some pastors seemed to have a more heightened awareness of this, where due to new state laws one might well be more cautious of what is publicly preached or taught. The caution was due to groups that would set out to lay charges against what they deem as 'offensive' or 'hate language' by Christians. Charges can now force Christians to appear before a tribunal. This has already occurred, and with new 'misinformation' laws in the pipeline, Christians may be on thin ice compared to the freedoms once had.

However, such erosions of freedoms should not deter the propagation of the Gospel and truth as found in scripture. Any attack on Christians for teaching and quoting what the Bible says, is an attack on God, and He the Lion of truth is well able to defend Himself.

This attack on freedom of speech is from the *outside* and not the only attack the church is experiencing. From *within* the church is already under attack with new doctrines, false teaching, and the increasing acceptance of immoral and cultural changes backed by governments and driven by the media.

Those who are not regenerated, and thus gripped by the person of the Saviour, or who do not have a high view of the written Word of God as their only sanctifying truth, may well be sifted and tossed to and fro.

God has not promised to protect people from persecution, trials, sufferings and the increasing apostasy (Jn.15:20; 2Tim.2:12; 2Thess.2:3), whether it be from without or within. But he has taught us to stand, resist, and teach the Word no matter what the opposition is (1Cor.2:5; 15:1; 16:13; Eph.6:11-18). For whatever afflictions are to come they are *'not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us'* (Rom.8:18).

Terry Arnold

Interstate Itinerary (To be updated next newsletter)

Qld

Aug 4th (Sun) 10am Ayr Presbyterian church 109 MacMillan St, Ph.0458174880

NSW

Aug 11th (Sun) 9:30am Sovereign Church, Port Macquarie, Heritage Christian School, 33 Mumford St. Ph.0423019348

Aug 14th (Wed) 6:30pm Home meeting at Sovereign Hills Ph.0423019348

Aug 18th (Sun) 10am Tumut Grace and Faith Fellowship, Franklin public School, Forrest st. Ph.0447722008

Victoria

Aug 21st (Wed) 7.30pm Numurkah Gospel, 60 Meiklejohn St. Ph.0407040820

Aug 25th (Sun) 10.30am Numurkah Gospel Fellowship (details as above)

Sept 1st (Sun) 10am & 1pm Mt. Cathedral Baptist, 37 Grant St Alexandra, Ph.0409382041

Sept 8th (Sun) 10am Hamilton Presbyterian 29 McIntyre St, Ph.0412327170

Sept 15th (Sun) 10am Kangaroo Flats Baptist, 32 Church St, Ph.0488100204

Sept 22nd 10am & 11am (Sun) Open Doors Baptist (Melton) Botanica Springs Community Centre, 249 Clarkes Road Brookfield Ph.0432862979

NSW

Sept 25th (Wed) 5pm Eden Aboriginal Evangelical church Cnr Moorehead & Clare St. Ph.0401340393

Sept 28th (Sat) Eden Aboriginal Evangelical church, details as above

Sept 29th (Sun) 11am & 5pm, Aboriginal Evangelical church, Eden (details above)

Oct 6th (Sun) 10am Fellowship Baptist, 226 Nuwarra Rd, Moorebank Ph.0488555981

Oct 6th (Sun) 5pm Central Mountains Baptist, Sydney, Hazelbrook school hall 159 Great Western Highway Ph.0466590132

Oct 11th 7.30pm (Frid) Evangel church, cnr Neville & Clarke St, Bass Hill Ph.0409090568

Oct 13th 9.30am (Sun) Evangel church (details as above)

Oct 19th (Sat) 9.30am - 3.30pm St Johns Park Baptist, Sydney - *Gospel Confusion* Conference - see next page.

Oct 20th 10.30am & 5pm (Sun) St Johns Park Baptist, 178 Humphries Rd, Ph.0417179610

Qld

Oct 27th (Sun) 9.30am Hervey Bay Bible Church (Urangan Community Hall, Elizabeth St. (entrance opposite Miller St) Ph. 0411051118

Oct 27th (Sun) 6pm Gin Gin Baptist, English St, Ph.0428385852

Hi folks, As you are no doubt aware, there has been a huge rise in Antisemitism since HAMAS attacked and brutally killed over 1,200 Israelis.

Since Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005, there have been five times (2008, Nov 2012, July-Aug 2014, May 2021, May 2023) when Israel, after being under serious attack (mainly by thousands of rockets) started to fight back, entering Gaza with military forces. Under international pressure, every time this happened, Israel was 'forced' to withdraw prematurely, and HAMAS has grown stronger and bolder. They have continued to grow their army. One of their declared aims is the slaughter of any Jew they could find - men, women, children, the young, the old - October 7th 2023, was to foment a Middle East war and unite all who opposed Israel around the world. I'm sure you have seen the slogan, 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free'. It's meaning is that they literally want every Jew to be removed from the land and they will accept nothing less.

Within three days, and well before Israel's entry in Gaza, Antisemitism was again brought out into the open with vile words being yelled openly on our street, rejoicing at what HAMAS had done, and angry mobs marching and threatening Jews right HERE, in Australia! Of course, as the months have passed, all through the Western world as well as in places in the Middle East, Antisemitism has reached fever-pitch. No other nation on earth would be expected to 'just do nothing' but Israel is not treated like other nations. And when HAMAS hides behind and under their own people to turn the tide of public opinion, Israel is damned if they do and damned if they don't try to remove an enemy which has vowed to destroy them by any means!

Our great concern, no matter what takes place in the war in Gaza, is that we are seeing JEWS here in our own beautiful country facing persecution the likes of which have not been seen since the Holocaust...Be sure to watch Frydenberg's documentary on Sky News: 'Never Again-The Fight Against Antisemitism'...

(Ps) Colin Lituri, Rep. For 'Friends of Israel' (foiaustralia.foi.org)

Quotable

'Paul does not paint the future with rose-colour: he is no smooth-tongued prophet of a golden age, into which this dull earth may be imagined to be glowing...for Scripture gives them no solid basis to rest upon. We believe that there will be no millennial reign without the King, and we expect no rule of righteousness except from the appearing of the righteous Lord...a king shall reign. Israel has now become alienated from her own land...If there be anything clear and plain, the literal sense and meaning of this passage (Ezekiel 37:1-10) - a meaning not to be spirited or spiritualised away - must be evident that both the two and the ten tribes of Israel are to be restored to their own land, and that a king is to rule over them'.

Charles Spurgeon 'The Restoration and Conversion of the Jews' (MTP 10&23)

Rico Tice, a well-known Evangelical leader and former Church of England clergyman, has left the denomination in reaction to what he perceives as its growing departure from biblical values, especially concerning same-sex marriage and repentance. Tice, best known for co-writing the evangelism course 'Christianity Explored' and co-founder of Christianity Explored Ministries, cited the denominations recent decision to allow priests to bless same-sex couples and its lack of substantive response to concerns laid out by him and five other leaders of CofE-connected parachurch organizations last October...Tice now worships at the International Presbyterian Church (IPC) in Ealing, London.

...[Tice stated] 'We called upon the Archbishop to resist the influence of cultural values when they are in opposition to those of the Bible...and opposed by many Evangelicals within the Church of England amid a growing divide within the Anglican community regarding same-sex marriage and biblical orthodoxy. But I think it vital that I demonstrate clear separation from a church that no longer affirms biblical orthodoxy, especially with regard to preaching repentance...The sad fact is that the Church of England has left Anglicanism'.

(Christian Post, April 2024)

'Prophecy' - How They Deceive

Every day there are those who claim to prophesy words from God to the unsuspecting. These words are always *extra biblical additions to God's Word*.

Recently, the practise of prophesying was exposed in u-tube clips by the son of a 'prophet' Bob Hartley, who was involved in Bethel and IHOPKC (International House of Prayer, Kansas City).

Jedidiah Hartley detailed how his father would 'get information' to 'prophesy'. He would go to a church and ask for names to pray over. Then he would search out information about them from Facebook, other media and other methods such as to google church directories for details. Then in 'prophesying' he would 'generalise' with detail that would fit many people. In sometimes naming precise names and details, it would awe people into thinking God was speaking to the 'prophet'.

This kind of information gathering is not uncommon and is also used in healing services. Wifi connection, scams and looking at peoples tablets has also been used in the past by the likes of Sid Roth and others. Bob Hartley admitted to his son that he got information from 'natural sources'. The last few numbers of people's phone numbers would sometimes be recited with a use of scripture for that number.

In this day of technology it is not hard to see how many would be deceived. But there is only one Word of God - the *written* scriptures. Speaking extra biblical words, but also accepting them as a word from God, will bring a serious judgement by a God *who has already once spoken* (Heb.1:1,2; 2Pet.1:19-21).

Terry Arnold

Apostasy in Methodist Church



Bishop Karen Oliveto and her 'wife', Robin Ridenour (front centre), joined in embracing delegates and visitors at the 2024 United Methodist General Conference in Charlotte, N.C., after the conference voted to remove the denomination's ban on the ordination of clergy who are 'self-avowed practicing homosexuals' [a 1984 prohibition].

The United Methodist General Conference voted to remove this decades-old ban on ordaining pastors in romantic same-sex relationships even after thousands of conservative congregations left the denomination in recent years.

At the UMC General Conference delegates approved without debate a measure removing the language from the Book of Discipline as part of a broader consent calendar, passing it by a final tally of 692 to 51.

...Applause from General Conference attendees was heard after the vote, with retired Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, a longtime proponent of removing the language, offering a prayer: 'You every day are great God, and every day You are working for good in the world. Stir up in us a desire to serve You, to live peacefully with our neighbours and all creation, and devote this day to your service'.

...Many theological liberal leaders within the UMC had been ignoring the rules and allowing individuals who were in same-sex relationships to be ordained or even promoted to bishop...[as was Karen Oliveto]

...Bishop Oliveto gave a sermon at General Conference, asking those gathered if they were 'willing to meet and serve Jesus with the queer clergy person who has been faithful to God's call even when the Church has tried to deny that call'.

(Michael Gryboski, *Christian Post*, May 01, 2024)

Editor's comment:

A staggering 7,500 Methodist churches in the U.S. have now applied for, or been disaffiliated. When will denominations learn that these issues of same sex, women in ministry, and other cultural driven changes, have never been part of 'the faith once delivered' and are designed to divide and conquer?

Throughout the General Conference, delegate speakers were asked to give their 'preferred pronouns' as an act of inclusion and diversity. Note the prayer by 'bishop' Ward - 'God is working for good in the world...in [our] desire to serve you...' And 'good' is supposedly reversing what God calls an abomination, and reversing his creative order and headship? How can we 'serve' God as 'a queer clergy person'? How can the 'church deny that call' when it is not a call in scripture? God has NOT called the 'queer'. 'Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!' (Is.5:20)

The definition of 'apostasy' is here exemplified - it is to stand away from what was once held. For 1,500 years the Bible has been read, interpreted and taught as giving clear and numerous warnings against same sex sin, and changing God's headship and creative order of male and female in ministry.

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

Hi Terry, God's love and peace to you and ministry. After receiving your newsletter for many years and getting much blessings from them I felt to respond regarding your comments on the 'Pandemic' [Diakrisis May/June].

In my job...I was able to talk to many in the hospital system who had creditable information regarding the virus. I saw first hand the damage the virus does to the lungs...Hospitals were overrun with respiratory patient numbers...A nursing home near us had 20 residence die within days of the pandemic peak...This never happened before...The virus was real, but yes not in the true sense of a 'pandemic'.

I agree the amount of people who died from this pandemic is nowhere in the numbers of the Spanish Flu or the Black Death, but a deadly virus all the same. My first concern that being your comment saying it was a 'plandemic' cannot be 100% proven or accurate at this time or publicly declared as such, even though it would seem that it might be unfortunately true in this the case? Statements of this nature can only serve to the conspiracy movements to spread fear?

My other concern is with your saying that 'many Christians bought the health and media narrative'. Well, myself and my wife are one of those who did. This comment well intended by you I'm sure, I found offensive and insensitive to brand other Christians who felt the need for whatever reason (not just what the health and media narrative had said), but what they believed they should do. We sought the Lord's guidance in prayer and information which included misinformation, conspiracy theories and family members, and made a choice we felt was the right decision for us. Given our age 60 plus, our concern was that if we got the virus and did not take the vaccine and suffered possible damaged to our lungs or even death there would be the 'what it factor'. I would never say to anyone to take or not take the vaccine as I would not want the responsibility for either outcome...

There would be many who did as we did regardless of some Christian churches who embarrassed themselves saying the vaccine was the Mark of the Beast and other non related scripture claims...Many Christians don't understand their Bibles in relation to the Mark of the Beast which is directly related to the Anti-Christ, as the last time I checked during that time there was no 7 year peace treaty being signed and regardless we would have been raptured anyway?

This Pandemic has had a deeper effect of which you have correctly highlighted, many families been torn apart with opposite views, my family one of them. The time of the pandemic was a chaotic time filled with fear information from all sides but who can ever say that they had all the correct answers to make a 100% correct decision?...but time will tell as more and more information comes to light, maybe then, but during the time of the pandemic I believe no one could!

This Pandemic...could be the introduction to what is coming regarding the end times, BUT we as Christians who seek to grow in Grace and knowledge still live in his tent of a body waiting for the mighty return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we will be subjected to Satan's continuing reign of evil...

[Name withheld]

But neither did they command Christians to keep a Saturday Sabbath.

‘Give one text that releases us from the observance of the fourth commandment, and its sacred Sabbath requirements’.

The strawman is that we are commanded, or not released from any fourth commandment. Yet this commandment is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament. The Sabbath was also given as a sign *‘to the children of Israel’*, (Ex.31:13,16,17; Ezek.20:12).

‘Give one text proving that Christ or His apostles ever ignored the sacred seventh-day Sabbath as most Church-goers do today’.

No text says that Christ or His apostles *‘ignored’* the *‘sacred seventh-day Sabbath’*. No text says they kept it or considered it as *‘sacred’* either.

On Same Sex

‘How can I, a heterosexual who’s been very happily married for 50 years, tell anyone else they don’t have the right to form a loving, committed, lifelong union and enjoy the fruits of marriage as I have done? Marriage is not a club to be restricted to some. Like the Gospel, it is a blessing to be shared’.

(Rev. Rowland Croucher, Baptist Minister, Sydney)

This is a common emotional strawman. *‘Rights’* becomes a weapon wielded to humanise the issue of same sex. One response is to agree with the premise - *‘of course anyone can marry who they will’*. Another response is to extend the premise - *‘Do we have the ‘right’ to marry a young child, a relative, or two people at the same time?’* When the strawmen is tested in such ways it then is important to move the argument back to *‘but what do the scriptures say?’*

Further, no one is saying *‘marriage is a club’*. Yet God does *‘restrict’* it to a man and woman (Matt.19:4-6; Lk.17:27; Rom.7:3; 1Cor.7:10,33-39). And whoever said such a marriage is to be *‘shared...like the Gospel’*?

On Women as Pastors/Elders...

The Bible never gives any reasons suggesting women are physically weaker, less intelligent, more emotionally frail, or inferior to men...

This is a common emotional strawman mixed with truth and error. However, the Bible does say women are the *‘weaker vessel’* (1Pet.3:7). Physically women are in general weaker and a strong argument can be put for a difference in emotions also. However, this does not mean women are *‘inferior’* to men. This *‘strawman’* bears no weight on the issues of women in ministry, one being that God says: *‘I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man...’* (1Tim.2:12).

Strawman argumentation is poor apologetics, weak and deceptive argumentation that can deceive one’s thinking on any issue. The truth is found in answering *‘what do the scriptures say?’*. ***‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them’*** (Is.8:20).

Terry Arnold

Hamis and Media Lies

It is simply amazing how many times the media have misrepresented or flat out lied about the Israel/Hamas war. For years the mainstream media have quickly reported when Israel attacks in retaliation or there is collateral damage in war, yet is silent when thousands of missiles are sent into Israel each year.

So quick is the media to report the deaths in Gaza with *figures that come from Hamas*, an organisation that is hardly known for telling the truth. The figures of deaths have recently been shown to be not just grossly exaggerated but impossible. Hamas claim 30,000 dead, 72% being women and children. But the Hamas graphs show fake figures revealed by statisticians who cite the too perfect linearity of the graphs with hardly any variations. The correlation between women and children and between men and women do not match. Clearly Hamas have already assigned a 70% figure of women and children into the graphs. Hamas also *add in* the terrorists killed in war to these figures and their own misfiring of rockets.

Israel estimates 12,000 Hamas fighters killed. If so then the ratio of civilians to terrorists killed is remarkably lower than Hamas figures. The truth is that considering Hamas imbeds themselves inside the population and uses them as shields, then the ratio of deaths is arguably remarkably low for such a war.

But the media continues to report these Hamas figures. What people do not realise is that Palestinian authorities are well versed in lying. As far back as the PLO Yasser Arafat the lies were evident in statements of peace and reconciliation being given to the western media, yet another to Palestinians inside Gaza, with the usual hatred of Jews: *‘We will make the lives of the infidels Hell! ...Millions of martyrs marching to Jerusalem!’* (See *Diakrisis* Jan/Feb/2024. P.10,11).

Much of the quick fire reporting of the conflict is not retracted even when it is obviously found to be false or even fake. The IDF were supposed to have massacred over 100 Gazan civilians trying to get needed food supplies. There was outrage around the world when the media narrative was released. Soon after it was shown that Hamas had either taken the supplies or prevented them from reaching where they should reach. Many of the deaths were shown by aerial cameras to be caused by stampeding and being crushed by Arab trucks pushed into the crowd. But again, the false reports came from the Hamas operated *Gaza Health Ministry*. But any corrections did not make the news like the initial false reporting did.

Israel was supposed to have bombed a hospital earlier on. That has by several sources found to be false even by media sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. But again little was reported as to where the lies came from. The evidence showed the event was caused by a misfired Palestinian rocket and the numbers killed were *less than a tenth* of what was reported by Hamas.

Do Israel make mistakes, yes. People seem to forget that war has casualties with collateral damage. But why is it that Israel seems to be blamed the most for what they did not start? It seems the October 7th atrocities of the murder of innocent men, women, babies, and raping, is now almost forgotten? The media is not calling for the release of hostages but for Israel to stop the war they did not start!

Terry Arnold

(See letter also P.18)

The Jehovah Witness 'a god'

The Jehovah Witnesses (JW), in their 'New World' translation, translate John 1:1 as 'In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god'.

However, their own Greek Interlinear ('Kingdom Interlinear') reads: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was toward the God, and god was the Word'. Most interlinears agree with this word order but may have 'with' instead of 'toward'. (One wonders why the JW translation would use 'towards' if the person who is the 'Lógos' was there in the beginning?)

But the outstanding difference is that interlinears do not have the insertion of 'a' in 'a god' and a small 'g' in 'God'. (There is no indefinite article 'a' in Greek).

The context is about *someone with an eternal existence*. The JW interlinear reads 'In the beginning was the Word [*Lógos*]'. Here 'lógos' is the word given to a person and His existence 'in the beginning'.

The question is: Who is this 'Lógos'? Is he just 'a god' of many gods?

There are two verbs in this passage in John chapter one which move this person from timelessness ('in the beginning') to time on earth - 'made flesh and dwelt among us'. The first 'was' ('in the beginning the Word was') is in the imperfect tense which is a continuous action in the past - that is, this 'Word' always had been, and always existed. This same tense is found in every instance in this context where the person of Jesus Christ is referred to in His eternal state of being (vs.1,2,4,8,9,10,15...).

In verse 14 when this same 'Lógos' enters time, the verb is 'egéneto' - to become - something that was not before, thus translated 'the word became flesh'.

How does 'a god' who 'became flesh and dwelt among us' also claim to be the great 'I Am' of both the Old and New Testaments? (Jn.8:24,58; 13:19; 18:5 cp. Is.43:10), 'the First and the Last' (Rev.1:17; 2:8; 22:13 cp. Is.44:6; 43:12; 41:4), and the Creator, God, the Rock, the Saviour...*

In their own Greek Kingdom interlinear the JW's have no indefinite article 'a' in Greek. Their own word order also has 'God was the Word' (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος)! Their own Greek word order is not 'the Word was the God' (the Father), or 'the Word was a god', but 'God was the Word'!

The 'Word' has the definite article with it 'ὁ' ('the'). Greek scholars say this makes it the subject and that the force of the position of the 'Word' tells us that the 'Lógos' has all the attributes, the essence of God, without being the Father.

This author knows of no Greek scholar that will accept the JW English translation. It is a tragedy that so many will not see that the 'Lógos', Jesus Christ, is not 'a god', or a created man, but a *divine* person who *pre-existed* with the Father, and was sent as the final and perfect Lamb in sacrifice to take away the wrath of God upon the sin for those who would believe.

Terry Arnold

* (See TA Ministries website 'cults' section in 'articles' for a 'wheel chart' for scriptures for each of these attributes)

damns people to Hell' and 'unfairly' loves the elect, is simply not found in Scripture, but is a humanistic, logical and emotional strawman of *extra Biblical thinking*. It cannot be argued against with objective Scriptural facts - they are simply not in Scripture, which alone must be our only yardstick (2Tim.3:16). This 'strawman' of a double predestination *misrepresents* the historic Doctrines of Grace and is considered by most to be part of 'hyper-calvinism'. Most of the great evangelists and teachers argued strongly and effectively against these Arminian 'strawmen' that were raised in their day against the Doctrines of Grace.

A possible reply to this strawman is to *extend* or *question* the logic. Consider such logic *in reverse*. If God is unfair in matters of election and predestination, then would He have been unjust in allowing *all* peoples after the fall of Adam and Eve, to go to Hell? By the *same logic* the answer has to be 'yes' - God would have been unjust in allowing such a punishment. Yet *objectively* is Hell fair for all...yes! Otherwise, the same reasoning for God being 'unjust' in election and predestination must also be applied! *This counter logic shows the need for an objective and absolute standard based on facts from God's Word.*

Spurgeon, in a sermon 'Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace' (11th.April, 1861), countered this same logic above: '...To this day, there are many of our opponents, who, when they run short of matter, invent and make for themselves a man of straw...shoot at it or burn it as you will, and, if it suit your convenience, still oppose doctrines which were never taught, and rail at fictions which, save in your own brain, were never in existence...If they can disprove our doctrines, let them state them fairly and then overthrow them, but why should they first caricature our opinions and then afterwards attempt to put them down.'

But if grace is 'irresistible' then man is therefore forced to submit or become a 'robot' or 'puppet' in the hands of God.

This is a strawman used against the doctrine of the 'Effectual Calling' (Jn.6:37-44,65; Rom.8:29,30; Acts 2:38,39). But it is 'logical' argumentation which is not in scripture, yet also can be refuted with similar logic. 'Who would not want to have their wills changed to enter Heaven rather than Hell'! At no time when man is being 'drawn' and 'called' to salvation is his will violated. Therefore how can such people be 'robots' or a 'puppets'? *God does not violate the will of the unsaved but he rather 'frees' it!* Charles Spurgeon summarises: 'A man is not saved against his will, but he is made willing by the operation of the Holy Ghost. A mighty grace which he does not wish to resist enters into the man, disarms him, makes a new creature of him, and he is saved'. (Sermons, Vol.10, P.309).

Seventh Day Adventist Strawmen

(The following are parts of a challenge by the Seventh Day Adventist church. Many are strawmen that argue from the *silence of scripture*)

'Give one text that says that the Sabbath was ever changed by Christ or His apostles, from Saturday, the seventh day, to Sunday, the first day of the week'.

The strawman is that the Sabbath day was changed by Christ or His apostles.

stated negatively for effect. It is not about God ‘trampling’ on anyone’s will, but He does give a grace to change that will, and He does ‘draw’ people to be saved.

Notice not a single scripture is used for the strawmen ideas that err on the side of human logic, emotion and negative suppositions. They have little to do with what God actually does in salvation. It is a false picture of God and His salvation!

‘The exhausted, drowning man, who hears the voice of those in the boat, cries out, ‘save me’, and then permits the strong arms of his rescuer to pull him into the boat, has certainly done nothing to contribute to his salvation. Yet we know that some drowning men will push away their rescuers in their unreasoning panic. In each case, both are exercising choice...’ (Berean Call, Q&A, April/2011)

This strawman analogy for salvation is flawed, again having *no scripture*. Firstly, drowning people don’t behave in this way or choose to drown! (They will often latch onto a rescuer endangering both). Secondly, there are not ‘two choices’. The Bible is clear that unsaved man does not seek or choose God unless the Holy Spirit first draws him (Eph.1:4,5; Jn.15:16; Rom.3:11; Lk.19:10; Rom.8:6,7; Rom.3:10-11; Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7). Lastly, the person does not understand they are drowning, being already ‘drowned’, *dead in sins* (Rom.2:5; Col.2:13)!

‘God never forces anyone to believe the good news of the Gospel (see John 3:16). And once you are in God’s family through faith in Jesus, God will never force you to love Him. You were created with free will and God longs for you to freely love Him, just as He chose to freely love you by sending His only Son to die in your place. God made that enormous sacrifice because He wants to spend eternity with you in Heaven...‘Choose for yourself this day whom you will serve’ (Joshua 24:15). If you refuse to come to Christ today, the only one forcing you to say ‘No’ to God is the person you see when you look in the mirror’.

(Dan Delzell, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Papillion, Nebraska).

Again, with a man centred negative strawman, it is not about God ‘forcing’ anyone to believe or love him, but God giving grace, drawing and saving...and the saved will love Him! John 3:16 is quoted for something God does not do! The truth here is replaced with a negative strawman with *the emphasis on man*. God is also made out here to be *longing* and *wanting* something which depends on man’s will. This is not the sovereign God of the Bible and no scripture is there for this! To cap off an array of emotion and logic, Joshua 24:15 is misused, the scripture having nothing to do with man choosing Christ as Saviour, it being to *Israel about idolatry*! This picture of an impotent saviour ends with yet another negative strawman of a saviour being ‘refused’ and seemingly unable to save!

‘If God elects and predestines a people for himself; then He must also elect, predestine and damn the rest to Hell; and if so, he unfairly loves only a select group of people’.

This common strawman against those who teach unconditional election or a predestination to Heaven, adds logic and bypasses Scripture which states God does elect a certain people to glory. The thinking that God ‘elects, predestines and

Thoughts on ‘Grace’

What Is ‘Grace’?

The Greek word for ‘grace’ is ‘*cháris*’, meaning favour, a kindness granted, unmerited in the receiver. The only motive is found in the giver. It is unearned and remains unearned when received (Eph.2:8,9). There is nothing one can do to get grace. It is received. It is given by God solely on His discretion.

The word ‘grace’ is also used in other senses such as in the manner of a person being gracious, kind, agreeable, acceptable (eg. Lk.4:22 ‘*gracious words*’; Eph.4:29 ‘*that it may minister grace unto the hearers*’).

‘*The word of His grace*’ refers to the Gospel of the grace of God, the good news part of the Gospel being God’s favour (Acts 14:3, 26; 20:24).

God shows a *common grace* even to the unthankful and wicked (Luke 6:35) in conferring on them common blessings such as the sun and rain which He sends on the just and the unjust (Matt.5:45).

Saving Grace is unmerited, undeserved favour, shown by the creator God to his fallen helpless creatures.

Derivative words close to grace in meaning are ‘*charizomai*’ - to be kind; ‘*charitóo*’ - to highly honour. Other synonyms are ‘*euergesía*’ - to benefit; ‘*apodochem*’ - acceptance; ‘*eucharistía*’ - thankfulness, gratitude; ‘*épainos*’ - praise; ‘*domron*’ - gift; ‘*chárisma*’ - gift, as result of grace (shown by suffix ‘*ma*’).

Antonyms (opposite words) are: ‘*krisis*’ - judgement, and ‘*kríma*’ - condemnation (the result of judgement).

The word grace is indeed pregnant with meaning, teaching and application. Whole books have been written on it. Indeed, the whole Bible is the story of God’s revelation to, and His redemption plan to man, in giving grace and favour in the gift of His Messiah.

The Necessity of Grace

To understand, appreciate and have a high view of grace, it is imperative that one see the plight of God’s fallen helpless creatures, who without the visitation of God with His grace would surely perish eternally.

The necessity of grace is because the condition of man without grace is that he is a slave to, and dead in sins, and by nature a child of wrath (Jn.8:34; Eph.2:2-5; Col.2:13), unable to come to and obey the law of God (Rom.8:7,8; Jn.6:37-44,65), has no understanding of the things of the Spirit of God (1Cor.2:14), has eyes blinded by Satan (2Cor.4:4), a heart wicked to the core and blinded (Jer.17:9; Eph.4:18), and with a righteousness as ‘filthy rags’ (Is.64:6-8).

Oh, how man needs grace! Without this backdrop of man’s utter radical depravity, how can grace be understood or appreciated? This lowly man lost in the depravity of his sin, necessitates that someone who has the power to change his very nature, will resurrect him from an eternal separation. Only a grace that is an unmerited favour, a heavenly gift, can set such a slave free!

The Giving of Grace

The initial work of grace given by God is entirely His work. The meaning of Grace is perverted and corrupted when anything of humanity or human conditions are added. Grace is not given for anything man is, has, or can do. Grace is not given because of any action of man's will, but given when man's will is changed by God to receive that grace! The giving is not tied in any way to a cause within man. It is freely given by God. God is not waiting with his hands tied, offering grace to someone who has to exercise any will to receive that grace. There is no preventent grace given for any action or ability within man.

The giving of grace is initially all in the cause and the 'good pleasure' of God alone (Eph.1:5,9). It is '*not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*' (Eph.2:8,9). The '*not of ourselves*' here contrasted with the '*of God*' is crucial to understanding the very meaning of, and the giving of Grace!

The Effect of Grace

This grace starts in regeneration, the sinner being born again from above (Jn.3:3-8). Grace makes a spiritually dead person come alive. It changes the very nature, the heart and thus the mind. It is the beginning of eternal life and a new creation (2Cor.5:17). This new creation is empowered to love and serve God and seek after His righteousness.

When a deceitful heart (Jer.17:9) enslaved in sin (Jn.8:34) is opened by God (Acts 16:14) to understand spiritual things (1Cor.2:14), the person is then justified in the courts of Heaven. This occurs when the person believes, and by faith alone a righteousness is imputed that is not their own (Rom.3:28; 4:5; Phil.3:9).

This justification is all of grace. '*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God*' (Rom.3:24).

All the terms used with salvation, including grace worked out in sanctification and glorification, stem from the initial grace given by God. '*That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life*' (Tit.3:7).

Even any works we would do after salvation are the effect of His giving of grace. '*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them*' (Eph.2:10).

The promised perseverance of our salvation to the end is the effect of His grace (Jn.10:29; Eph.1:13,14; Jude 24; Rom.8:29). If that grace stopped being given, we would perish eternally!

Were it not for Jesus Christ and his offering to God for our sins, there would be no grace to offer. With the apostle Paul, we thank the Lord Jesus for His mediation and then intercession: '*I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ*' (1Cor.1:4).

Terry Arnold

The Strawmen in Christian Teaching

A strawman argument is one that distorts an opposing argument in order to make it easier to attack and pull down. The strawman argument is not necessarily supported by any side but made out as though the opposing side does support it. It recreates the opposing argument in different terms untrue to the real argument. The strawman does not accurately represent the belief of the first person. The strawman is often a hyper version of the truth, and thus appears to be defeated more easily.

For example, against the belief of unconditional election or predestination as a prior decree by God to salvation - this is often opposed with '*man therefore is a robot without any freedom or ability to make choices*'. A similar strawman is '*therefore God must also predestine and elect people to Hell*'. Both these strawman arguments are used to refute election and predestination, yet neither is relevant and not usually what those who teach election and predestination believe.

This is a common practise that we have exposed and refuted many times in this publication. The practise of this is widespread and either inherently dishonest, or more kindly the person using the strawman is ignorant of the teachings they are refuting. Nevertheless these strawmen deceive those not educated in the subject. Strawman arguments drift people into emotional and logical thinking instead of objective and scriptural study.

To combat a strawman, one either needs to expose and *call out* the strawman; or a second method is to *test the strawman* and *extend or question its logic* thereof.

The following are just some of the strawmen this author has encountered and suggested methods of reply.

On Salvation

'You say, 'Well, Brother MacDonald, I've been praying for the salvation of a loved one, and as far as I know, that loved one has never been saved...How do you reconcile that? Isn't it God's will to save?'

Yes, it is God's will to save that person. But...God is not going to populate heaven with people who don't want to be there. And God has given each person a will, and God doesn't trample on the will of any person. He doesn't drag reluctant people to heaven. And my Bible and my experience tell me that there was a time in my life when by a simple act of faith I had to trust Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior' (Heaven's Cure For Our Troubled Hearts - Part 2, William MacDonald)

This quote *assumes* God's thinking but with *no scripture* to back it. It is a mixture of truth and strawmen, a *false picture of salvation*. For if it is '*Gods will to save that person*' then *He will* according to scripture (Jn.6:37-44)! The statement '*God is not going to populate Heaven with people who don't want to be there*' is a strawman of what God actually does to populate Heaven, for *He makes people willing to be there* (Jn.8:36)! He draws those who *will come* and the same *He will raise up* (Jn.6:37-44). He is the *author and finisher of faith* (Heb.12:2).

But the strawmen continues: '*God doesn't trample on the will of any person. He doesn't drag reluctant people to heaven*'. Again, this is an emotive half truth

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