Some of you have expressed dismay that comments/questions you submitted on Randy Alcorn’s book review of my book *Heaven and Hell* (from June 21) did not get posted. So sorry. There were some technical difficulties and problems on this end, and when they were resolved Randy found himself confronted with about a hundred comments, some of them with multiple points/questions, and it was more than a mere mortal could handle.

Moreover, a number of the comments/questions were along the same lines. So, instead of responding to each comment/question individually he has written two additional posts to explain himself and his position. I will post these separately, though they are related to each other, the first one here today.

I will also go ahead now and post your comments/questions that have come in from the beginning. Randy will not be able to respond directly to them, but he appreciates very much your concerns and questions. If you have questions/comments for me, instead of him, feel free to submit them. I’ll post and answer them as usual. I ain’t goin’ anywhere....

Here’s his first post:

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A large number of commenters alluded to me being unfair to Bart and accusing him of an air of certainty when obviously I am guilty of the same and worse. So I am going to give two longer replies here covering a number of interrelated concerns different ones of you raised and hope others see it, as I can’t repeat it to everyone one by one. (If I were more familiar with commenting on this blog maybe I’d know a better way.) Given my belief that Scripture is God-breathed, provided that I’m interpreting it well (I hope usually I do, sometimes I’m sure I don’t, though I always seek to), I can have confidence in believing something even when it’s not my preference. I can believe it not because I think I’m smarter than everyone, but because I think God is smarter than I am and yes, smarter than others too.

Even if you think supernaturalism is a faulty worldview, I think I’m being consistent with it. IMO materialists/naturalists act consistently with their worldview when they don’t believe in an afterlife, as Bart doesn’t, though he shows some openness to Heaven while stating he doesn’t believe in it. I look to the Bible as a higher authority, and I think I have good reasons for that (of course, many of you don’t).

But I’m struck when people who don’t believe in a higher authority seem to be absolutely certain about so many things. For instance that an apostle couldn’t have written the particular NT books that bears his name. They are as certain about this as the most adamant fundamentalist is certain about the virgin birth (I am not a fundamentalist but I do believe the Bible, Mary’s supernatural conception included). When such people read my books it’s not surprising they are positive I’m wrong despite the evidence I present and the scholars I cite. (There are thousands of pages with IMO cogent arguments written by scholars who believe apostles wrote certain books which other scholars believe they didn’t.) I often have a marvel when someone declares something with certainly because “scholars say” and “educated people believe” and “in my studies I have found.”

I don’t think Bart always does that, as I said I did see occasional admissions of uncertainty in his book, I am just saying sometimes I think he declares something to be true because, well, he’s a smart guy and that’s his opinion, it makes most sense to him, that’s what the books and journal articles he reads say, and maybe what the teachers he sat under taught. EXACTLY the same is true of evangelicals, who went to Trinity, Fuller, Reformed or
whatever instead of Princeton, Harvard, Stanford or whatever. And many of those going to
the evangelical seminaries went to secular universities first, while Bart went to Moody and
Wheaton.

We all have our vested interests in some opinions because of our intuition, preferences,
upbringing, training and sometimes wonderful or terrible experiences. But “scholars say”
and “there is a firm consensus among scholars” always leaves out the scholars who do not
say that but something very different, and who are part of a consensus of scholars
themselves that are unpopular with the other group of scholars. When I write my books, I’m
prone to cite scholars I agree with, except when I cite those I disagree with and cite others
who think they’re wrong. Based on the books by Bart I’ve read, I think he does the same. At
the end of the day, my impression is Bart believes he’s right (don’t we all?), I get that, as I
believe I’m right, and we both cite our sources.

That’s the way of things, hard as we try to self-correct we are subjective. I read broadly,
books by atheists and theological liberals as well as many kinds of evangelicals. I am
currently reading three books advocating universalism, just finishing one of them, not to
write a book or even an article refuting them, but just because I want to better understand
their position (actually positions, as they think differently, just as evangelicals and agnostics
and atheists think differently). They are good writers who make good points along the way,
even though I still don’t agree with their conclusions, no surprise there.

OK, I will come back finally to address the belief that I have slandered Bart.

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Did You Register for the Webinar on Sunday?