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Andy,

Thank you for inviting inquiry of your series, "Aftermath" via *Relevant* magazine. Provoking people to think more clearly about the Gospel and spiritual formation in general is something that I regularly champion in the teaching ministry at Grace Fellowship.

The following questions include citations in bold and are accompanied by the time-stamp in order to be clear as to the source material for my question.

In "Stand Alone," (6:03) you indicate that in light of events of "9.11," the growing anti-religious sentiment in our Country, the influence of the "new atheists," combined with the rise of the internet, that **the Achilles heel of our modern version of faith was about to be exploited in a way that threatened the faith of the next generation.** Then, in segment 6:40, you said **what has been true for a long time was about to be exposed.** Continuing that thought, you said that **the Achilles heel... is a misapplication of a very important reformation concept ... the idea of Sola Scriptura** (7:14). You went on to clarify what this misapplication was when you said (8:14): **Over time, the idea of Sola Scriptura, which is... you know, Scripture alone is the authority, has been taken to mean that the Scripture or in our case we would say, the Bible, is actually the foundation of our faith. There is a difference between something that is seen as an authority for you to live by and something that is considered the foundation of your faith or your faith system. But over time these two ideas have merged. It's nobody's fault. It's just the way the world is. It's just the way church leaders began talking about the Bible. So many of you... I'm in this group, we were raised to believe that the foundation of our faith was the Bible. That as the Bible goes, so goes our faith and if all of it is not true then none of it can be trusted. Its' a house of cards.** You then go on to make the case that the next generation needs help to **step back on a more solid foundation as it relates to faith... because, you know, if Genesis isn't true well then, the Bible isn't true. If all of it isn't true, then you can't say the Bible's true and if the Bible's not true then why would I depend on it and why would I look to it as a source of faith or really as a source of anything.**

You also said ("Stand Alone" - 9:52): **They** (referring to Harris and Dawkins) **have attacked persuasively and effectively the credibility and the morality of our Bibles.**

At the end of "Stand Alone," (36:21) you said: **If the foundation of your faith is an absolutely true book, good luck with that against this kind of onslaught** ("onslaught" referring to the intellectual assaults by both Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins).

Q. Are there any parts of the Bible that you do not believe are inspired by God and inerrant? In other words, do you believe the Bible is without error or fault in all its teaching and that the Scriptures in the original manuscripts do not affirm anything that is contrary to fact? The reason I ask this is because you indicate that there are parts of the Bible that are **indefensible.** What does **indefensible** mean?

Q. What specific argument(s) have these men (Harris and Dawkins) posed that has discredited the **credibility** and **morality** of the Bible and what is the particular **onslaught** that you are referring to and what is it that you believe is about to be **exposed**?

You said: **The foundation of your faith is not a book, it is an event. The Bible did not create Christianity, Christians eventually created the Bible.** ("Stand Alone" - 32:21)

Q. How do we know of the event of the resurrection without the **book**? It seems that you aim to exclude the Bible as a whole in this statement. In other words, you seem to make a distinction that the Old Testament has some deficiency in being believable and that the event of the resurrection is a better proof due to it not being based not on faith but an experience - a higher or weightier form of proof that was responsible for the boldness and the courage of the Apostles. However, isn't faith necessary for both believing the Scriptures as well as believing the visible appearance of Jesus in the resurrection? Doesn't believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead make the entire Bible believable since no story or event in the Bible could be harder to believe than a man telling people how and when he is going to be killed, dying, and then coming back to life at the precise time He foretold? Additionally, the force of your argument seemingly reduces or even eliminates altogether the supernatural role of the Holy Spirit in the very formation of the Bible.

You seem to indicate that Peter (as well as the leaders in the early church), based his hope in the resurrection and not in the Old Testament and then you went on to make the point that: **The first century believers... they embraced what I want you to embrace and what our children must embrace and what our grandchildren must embrace. They embraced the first-century version of faith. They embraced the stand-alone version. I don't need a book to prop up my faith. I don't need you to explain creation to me to prop up my faith. The whole Noah thing... it's fascinating, I don't know... but that's not what props up my faith. Christianity can stand on its own two nail-scarred resurrection feet. The foundation of your faith and mine is not a book, it is an event. The Bible did not create Christianity, Christians eventually created the Bible. And this is where we must stand in our new generation** ("Stand Alone" - 32:00). You illustrate this point in a fictional conversation that Peter might have had with Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins. In representing Peter's response to their questions, you advocate that Peter would not have given any rationale from the Old Testament (assumedly because they would have rejected it as being sourced in the Old Testament) but would have made the foundation for trusting in Jesus as being the resurrection alone.

Q. Doesn't this contradict what Peter said regarding his belief concerning the Prophecies contained in the Old Testament? Peter explicitly gives us the basis for his hope when he says:

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:16-21

Peter declared that the foundation and authority for his faith as well as the faith for everyone reading his letter - disciples dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, was based on two things: First, seeing Jesus glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration and God's verbal affirmation of His beloved Son (c.f. Mark 9:2-8) and, second, the message of the prophets in the Old Testament - "the prophetic word more fully confirmed." Peter is, in effect, saying, 'If you don't believe me, go to the Scriptures'. Therefore, the foundation and compelling authority/source for Peter's faith was primarily the Old Testament prophetic writings. While there can be no doubt that the resurrection was part of Peter's faith, it is simply not accurate to even insinuate that it was the only basis for his/the faith.

In "Mix n' Match," (5:22,5:35) you said that **it was very difficult** for the early church (given their Jewish upbringing) to **break away from the Law and the Prophets, Old Covenant, Old Testament thinking, again, just basically because of how they were raised but, and here's why we are talking about this, eventually they did break away from it ... eventually they did break some of those habits and eventually many of us need to break similar habits as well.**

Note: You indicated that the time period for the early church to "break away" was approx., 20 years.

Q. The segment characterizes the role of the Law and the Prophets, Old Covenant, and Old Testament as becoming less and less over time as the reality of the New Covenant progressed. However, does the Apostle Paul share this view? Paul tells us when he is writing to Timothy (between 58 A.D. and 65 A.D.) the following:

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I Timothy 3:14-17.

Doesn't Paul overwhelmingly commend the credibility and profitability of the Old Testament "Scripture" since this term explicitly refers to the entire Old Testament? Paul views the Old Testament as containing the Old Covenant which included the Law and the Prophets as a precursor to understanding God's plan of salvation for the entire world. Paul does not minimize nor see the Scriptures as becoming less and less informative or useful, rather, doesn't Paul see the Scriptures as setting the stage for the very need and knowledge of the hope of the "good news" of the New Covenant?

Moreover, doesn't Paul emphatically endorse the use of the Law as the predicate for compelling the lost (Jew and Gentile) to see their very need of the Gospel now revealed in the New Covenant?

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. I Timothy 1:8-12

Note: The decreased role of the Old Testament Prophets in the early Church is also disputed by Peter through the previous question related to 2 Peter 1:16-21 given it was written between 60-68 A.D.

Q. If the early church was seeking to **break away from the Law and the Prophets** ("Mix n' Match" - 5:24,5:35), and we should do the same given the Law and the Prophets contains subject matter that when challenged could possibly threaten the faith of next generation; why then do so many of the New Testament authors quote from the Law and the Prophets (and Old Testament as a whole) so often in the New Testament?

Instead of listing numerous citations of the Old Testament by New Testament authors (as I did above) consider the following summary overview by Dr. Roger Nicole in regard to New Testament authors reliance in citing the Old Testament:

"The New Testament contains an extraordinarily large number of Old Testament quotations. It is difficult to give an accurate figure since the variation in use ranges all the way from a distant allusion to a definite quotation introduced by an explicit formula stating the citation's source. Thus, a very conservative count discloses unquestionably at least 295 separate references to the Old Testament. These occupy some 352 verses of the New Testament, or more than 4.4 per cent. Therefore, one verse in 22.5 per cent of the New Testament is a quotation...

If clear allusions are taken into consideration, the figures are much higher: C. H. Toy lists 613 such instances, Wilhelm Dittmar goes as high as 1640, while Eugen Huehn indicates 4105 passages reminiscent of Old Testament Scripture. It can therefore be asserted, without exaggeration, that more than 10 per cent of the New Testament text is made up of citations or direct allusions to the Old Testament. The recorded words of Jesus disclose a similar percentage. Certain books like Revelation, Hebrews, Romans are well-nigh saturated with Old Testament forms of language, allusions and quotations. These facts appear even more impressive when one remembers that in New Testament times the Old Testament was not as today duplicated by the million but could be obtained only in expensive handwritten copies.

If we limit ourselves to the specific quotations and direct allusions which form the basis of our previous reckoning, we shall note that 278 different Old Testament verses are cited in the New Testament: 94 from the Pentateuch, 99 from the Prophets, and 85 from the Writings. Out of the 22 books in the Hebrew reckoning of the Canon only six (Judges-Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles) are not explicitly referred to."

Revelation and the Bible, ed. Carl F.H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), pp. 137,151

Roger Nicole (1915-2010) is visiting Professor of Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando and professor emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Seminary. A native Swiss Reformed theologian and a Baptist, Dr. Nicole is regarded as one of the preeminent theologians in America. He was an associate editor for the New Geneva Study Bible and assisted in the translation of the NIV Bible. He is a past president and founding member of the Evangelical Theological Society, and a founding member of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. He has written over one hundred articles and contributed to more than fifty books and reference works. Dr. Nicole received his S.T.M. and Th.D. degrees from Gordon Divinity School, a Ph.D. from Harvard University, and D.D. degree from Wheaton College.

You said in *Not Difficult*: **Two episodes ago ... we discovered that when the church launched that the foundation of the faith of the early Christians was not a book - they didn't have one, it wasn't the Bible - there wasn't one, it wasn't the Old Covenant or what we call the Old Testament or what they called the Law and the Prophets, um because that (unintelligible)... didn't tell the story of Jesus... the foundation of the faith for the early church was an event, it was the resurrection of Jesus. (4:58).**

Q. When you cite that the Law and the Prophets **didn't tell the story of Jesus** doesn't that contradict what Jesus taught after His resurrection on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:15-27?

"While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²²Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵**And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself"** (emphasis mine).

Q. Do you hold to a distinction between the Law of Moses and the entire Old Testament? Throughout the series, you seem to conflate the Old Testament, Law of Moses, and Law and the Prophets as if they are one and the same at times and yet separate and distinct at other times.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these questions and posting a reply. I know that doing so does take valuable time away from other ministry needs and priorities. However, given the nature of the subject of this inquiry, I am confident that you see the value of clarifying and supporting a subject such as the very nature of both the authority of Scripture as well as its intended meaning in the Church today.

Best Regards,
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