

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 242

ETS Conference Interviews, Part 1

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**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

**Guests: Dr. Peter Gurry (PG)**

**Henry Smith (HS)**

**Dr. Mark Ward (MW)**

**Dr. Dave Burggraff (DB)**

### Episode Summary

In this set of interviews we talk to Dr. Peter Gurry of the Evangelical Textual Criticism blog; Henry Smith of ABR (Associates for Biblical Research); Dr. Mark Ward of Lexham Press/Faithlife/Logos, and Mike's original pastor after he came to the Lord, Dr. Dave Burggraff. Subjects range from new books of interest to our audience, archaeology, textual criticism, and reminiscences of Mike's beginning in his spiritual journey and biblical studies.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 242: ETS Interviews, Part 1. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! Well, we're in Denver! Another year of conferences!

**MH:** Yes, we are.

**TS:** How many of these are there now? They're all starting to blur together. I don't know.

**MH:** I walked past Hugh Ross the first day we were here and I literally had this spasm like, "Didn't I just interview you yesterday?" [laughing] It was really weird!

**TS:** It's fun! I think people enjoy these interviews. We've got several good ones lined up all week.

**MH:** This episode we're going to talk to Peter Gurry of the Evangelical Textual Criticism Blog. Peter has talked with us before, but he's got some new things to talk about. And then Henry Smith, who is with ABR (the Associates for Biblical Research), which is aimed at archaeology and biblical studies. He'll be new. Then after him we had Mark Ward. Mark is someone who works inside Faithlife.

He's an academic editor for the Faithlife Corporation. That's the makers of Logos Bible Software, if you don't know that. He has a book out of his own on the King James Version debate—that whole sort of battle over whether the King James Version should be perceived as not only the best Bible version, but sort of "God's Word in English." It's a gentle book. It's irenic in tone. I think readers listeners will be interest in that work. Lastly is sort of a special treat in this episode. My original pastor, Dave Burggraff, who now lives in Cary, North Carolina, comes to the conferences a lot. He hasn't been here for the last couple years, but we were able to get him on the podcast. We probably won't dish a lot of dirt about me growing up as a teenager, but he could! I wanted to talk to him so that people sort of know where my story began and the person who really was instrumental in the way I think about Scripture—just sort of our early history—he and I and the church that he started, which I was a part of when I became a Christian in high school. So I think that'll be a big treat for listeners.

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**MH:** Welcome to Denver, Colorado! This is our set of interviews that we do every year at the Evangelical Theological Society meeting and also, of course, later in the week the Society of Biblical Literature meeting. We have with us today Peter Gurry. Now, we've interviewed Peter before, but for the sake of a new audience, just give us a little bit of an introduction. Who are you, what do you do?

**PG:** Sure. First of all, it's great to be with you. Thank you for having me!

**MH:** Absolutely.

**PG:** My name is Peter Gurry and I teach New Testament at Phoenix Seminary in Arizona. I finished my PhD just a couple years ago—just about two years ago now—in Textual Criticism at the University of Cambridge. Before that, I was at Dallas Seminary. So I've been in school for a long time and am now teaching.

**MH:** [laughing] Like so many of the rest of us!

**PG:** That's right, yes.

**MH:** Now, you are one of the... I want to say you're the major person behind the Evangelical Textual Criticism Blog. Is that true? Is that a fair characterization?

**PG:** I think it's probably, de facto, yes, because I probably blog the most. But we do have multiple contributors, and I'm not either of the editors. The editors are Tommy Wasserman and Peter Head. But I do end up doing a lot of posts, probably because I have too much time.

**MH:** Yeah, I've posted a lot of links on my blog and a few things on Twitter from the ETC blog. I think it's really useful and lots of people are interested in New

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Testament textual criticism, even though some of the stuff you do can get pretty technical. Some of it's also, I think, within the reach of people who are just laypeople and interested. So to that end, one of the questions I wanted to ask you is, in your opinion, what is the best introduction to New Testament textual criticism? So give us a recommendation for someone who has maybe had a year of Greek and can sort of waddle through. They know the alphabet, they know kind of what they're looking at, as opposed to the person who says, "I've heard about the King James Version debate and I don't believe that, but I don't really know why" or something like that —somebody that's just really lay-level.

5:00

**PG:** That's a good question. Okay. For somebody who doesn't know Greek, I might recommend something like David Alan Black's little book.

**MH:** Yep, I'm familiar with that.

**PG:** I think it's still in print. I can't remember the exact title now, but I'm sure if you search Amazon for David Alan Black and text criticism it'll come up. It's very slim, so it's not a hard, long read. For somebody who's looking for a bit more than that, I still recommend Bart Ehrman and Bruce Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament*.

**MH:** So that... Metzger had *The Text of the New Testament*, and this is Ehrman's... what would you call it?

**PG:** Revision.

**MH:** Would you call it a revision?

**PG:** They did edit together at the very end of Metzger's life. Metzger wrote three editions of this, and then the fourth edition he asked Bart Ehrman, who was one of his last doctoral students, to edit it with him and update it. So what will happen if there will be a fifth edition, I don't know. In some ways I still like the third edition better, but there are important updates in the fourth edition that I think are worth it. And it's still the best one-stop shop.

**MH:** Why don't you give us an example of that, because when people hear the name "Bart Ehrman," they're like, "Oooh, I don't want to go anywhere near anything that Ehrman does!" But you obviously have a different perspective there.

**PG:** Bart Ehrman is a well-trained text critic. As I said, he worked under Bruce Metzger. So one example maybe in the fourth edition is I think Bart overplays the influence of what he calls "orthodox corruptions" of the New Testament, and that is this idea that scribes were influenced by their theology and changed the text. Now, I think that absolutely happened in certain cases—yes. So I'm not debating whether that happens. It's really just how often it happened. I think in the vast

majority of cases, scribes merely tried to copy what was in front of them. They weren't trying to change it. And the other thing, I think, is sometimes in reading Ehrman's work, one can get the impression that this was some kind of concerted effort that scribes were doing this, when in fact it may be a single reading that was introduced into the text at some point and then really just got copied.

**MH:** Right. There's no conclave of scribes that get together annually and say, "Hey, what do we need to change this year? What did we miss last year?"

**PG:** [laughing] That's right. To be fair, we do know of accusation of this happening among the Church Fathers. Often Marcion was accused of doing this. But some of the best recent scholarship has shown that in fact, even that case, in terms of actual textual changes (as opposed to canonical decisions), they're on the lighter side. I wouldn't say "insignificant," but he's sort of the exception that proves the rule even there. Does that make sense?

**MH:** Yeah. When I get into discussions about... I'm not a New Testament textual critic, but seems to me sort of a logical take on this is... Let's say you've got five or ten examples of this happening. Well, that can't possibly (and wouldn't possibly) account for everything said about a doctrinal or a doctrinal trajectory. So I'll give you that ten, Bart. What about the other twenty over here that has no evidence for that?

**PG:** That's right. It's very hard to find a really difficult variant that would significantly affect Christian doctrine. In fact, it's not only hard to find, it's impossible. And Bart actually is willing to admit this. He realizes that the Christian faith does not fundamentally change when we adopt this manuscript of the text.

**MH:** By his own arguments, yeah.

**PG:** I think that's important.

**MH:** That is important because on the one hand it's kind of easy to shoot at Bart for that argument and then overstate the argument. In other words, to make yourself an easier target—something that's easier to hit. So that's good to be fair. So have you guys gotten any push-back from anybody on the name of your blog—"The Evangelical Textual Criticism Blog?"

**PG:** Oh, yes we have! Now, on the subject of the blog, let me say first of all that I've been a fan for a long time. I read it as an undergraduate student, and that was one of the major things that influenced by interest in the subject. So I'm a lover of the blog, and I'm only happy to be a part of it now. I'm humbled to be so. But yes, I think Keith Elliot (who's a very well-known text critic, now retired) I think has sometimes asked, "What in the world does that name mean?" And it has been the subject of numerous blog posts by our own blog contributors as to what

we mean by it. Does it mean we are evangelicals who happen to do text criticism or does it mean we are text critics who do text criticism in an evangelical way?

**MH:** Right, like you're spinning everything in one direction.

**PG:** Correct. I think it mostly means (I hesitate to speak for all of our contributors [laughs]) we're evangelicals, and because of that we have a very high view of the Bible and therefore we think textual criticism is really important. It's worth doing.

10:00 **MH:** Okay. Well, as we wrap up, you wanted to ask me a question.

**PG:** Oh yes, I do!

**MH:** So go ahead.

**PG:** My question for you is that I had a friend who ask me recently if I knew you and I said I do, a little bit. And he said, "What should I read of his?" And now I have a confession to make because I have not read any of your books. I know your online presence, but...

**MH:** [laughing] Now you're really playing without a net here!

**PG:** So I wanted to ask you, if a person say, like me or one of your listeners said, "I've heard of this Mike Heiser guy, but where should I start because he now has a bunch of books out?" What's your sort of best entry point?

**MH:** If this is a person that has a decent amount of Bible under their belt and isn't put off by reading books with lots of footnotes, I would say *The Unseen Realm*. If it's a layperson who is sort of the average-person-in-the-pew kind of thing, I would say read *Supernatural*. *Supernatural* is the distillation of the core ideas of *Unseen Realm*, but without all the academic trappings of a book like that.

**PG:** That's good because I'm headed to the book stalls shortly. [laughs]

**MH:** *Unseen Realm* has done really well. It has sold close to 60,000 copies.

**PG:** Wow!!!

**MH:** If we throw *Supernatural* into the loop, we're pushing 90,000 total between the two.

**PG:** Nice, well done.

**MH:** It's got over 800 reviews on Amazon and it's still up to 5-star rank..

**PG:** Wow!

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**MH:** So there's been a big response to it. It strikes a nerve.

**PG:** I was going to say, what do you think that nerve is?

**MH:** I think the nerve is the subtitle. The subtitle is "Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible." So that implies that I think it's been lost and neglected, and I do. But the main idea that I try to push is we can talk about context all we want, but the fact is that the biblical writers (to steal one of John Walton's phrases)... "The Bible was written *for* us but it wasn't written *to* us." And so if we really want to understand it on its own terms in its own context, we have to be serious about that. We don't want to swap in a different context, whether it's the Middle Ages or Catholicism, the Reformation, the Puritans, Evangelical... whatever. So I want the Israelite or the first century Jew living in your head as you read scripture. Try to figure out what the writer meant in his own worldview context, and how would the readers of the same context have understood the material?

**PG:** Sorry I'm taking this over [laughter], but I have questions! Do you think we live in that same world, then?

**MH:** No, we are quite removed. I will say the occasional inflammatory thing in the book, like "we are selectively supernatural." I don't think the best interpretation is the most supernatural one. I do think that the best interpretation of a passage is one that is consistent with the worldview of the biblical writers and that works not only with the passage you're looking at, but when that passage bleeds into other passages it creates a coherent whole. Typically, what we do is we still (as moderns) filter our reading of scripture through a modern, rationalistic, post-Enlightenment... I'll use the word "skeptical" worldview. We're like evangelical skeptics.

**PG:** Without knowing it.

**MH:** Right, without knowing. And we fall into this because we think that it's somehow okay with the Enlightenment or we're somehow respectable if we believe in things like God, the deity of Christ, the Incarnation, and even the concept of salvation. But these things are inherently... they don't work outside of a supernatural worldview. So my question always is, "Why is that stuff, like, normal, and the other supernatural stuff that we don't want to think about is somehow off-limits?" That's very inconsistent to me. The reality is that basically everything we believe isn't going to conform to an Enlightenment worldview, and it's time we sort of own that.

**PG:** And be weird.

15:00

**MH:** Right. And try to come to terms with that and just understand scripture the way they did. Then we go through the same process of application and how this relates to us now. I think in many passages that we think are weird, or are frankly sort of indecipherable, if we just look at it from a pre-modern perspective like they were and we take it for what it is on their terms, all of these passages have a coherence. They have an inner coherence to them and they feed off each other, as well. We'd get more out of a number of passages of scripture and see the interconnectivity of lots of data points through both testaments.

**PG:** Last question, I promise. I don't promise. [laughter] But I'll try. What was the thing that... I assume like the rest of us, you grew up in a post-Enlightenment world—sort of anti-supernaturalist in some way.

**MH:** Chronologically, I fit there, yes.

**PG:** Was there something that sort of set you off on this and opened your eyes?

**MH:** I describe it in the first chapter of *Unseen Realm*. My watershed event was when a friend of mine who was in the Hebrew Studies department at Wisconsin... We went to the same church and we were killing some time before the sermon started. I don't remember what we were talking about, but I'll never forget how the conversation ended. He had his Hebrew Bible with him and he just opened it up to Psalm 82 and said, "You need to read this in Hebrew." And so I did. "God takes his stand in the divine council." And then the next part of the verse is, "In the midst of the *elohim*—in the midst of the gods—he passes judgment." I thought, "Boy, that sounds like a pantheon. What do I do with that?" And if you go out to the commentaries in the evangelical tradition you read that these are just titles. "Oh, the gods are just men!" Well, that doesn't work real well because when you get down to verse 6, he calls them *elohim* again—calls them "sons of the Most High." Well, it's not a brain-teaser who the Most High is, okay? [laughter]. So these are sons of God, and you take the council language and sons of God and you go to Psalm 89, where you get the same thing. And there the council is "in the skies." So the last time I checked my Bible, there weren't a bunch of Jewish elder guys ruling from the skies! It just doesn't make any sense. And God doesn't have idols in his employ. But that's how the evangelical tradition is going to handle that. And once I saw that it just doesn't work... Providentially, I had a second thought. [laughter] That was, "Hey, I'll bet Jesus knew this passage. I'll bet Paul knew it. I'll bet they all knew it!" And somehow this didn't undermine the belief in the uniqueness of the God of Israel. So the task that was dropped in my lap (that I couldn't let go) was, "How does that work?" That set me off. I eventually made it part of my dissertation and I've been sort of swimming in that stream for twenty years. That was my watershed moment.

**PG:** Fascinating.

**MH:** Well, our co-interview is done now! [laughter] Seriously, thanks for being with us, and thanks for telling everybody a little bit more about the blog and your recommendations.

**PG:** My pleasure. Thanks for having me!

**MH:** Absolutely.

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**MH:** Welcome back! We are in Denver for the Evangelical Theological Society meetings. We have with us a representative of ABR (and you'll tell us what ABR is): Henry Smith. Why don't you tell our audience who you are, what you do, what your areas of specialty are, and then a little bit about ABR?

**HS:** Yeah, sure! Well, my name is Henry Smith. I'm with the Associates for Biblical Research. We're in Lancaster County, PA.

**MH:** Sweet! That's basically where I grew up.

**HS:** Oh, is that right?

**MH:** I'm from Lebanon.

**HS:** Oh, okay! I know exactly where that is. We had a volunteer from Lebanon, in fact, that worked in our office for many years. So we've been involved in doing archaeological research and apologetic ministry for almost 50 years, since 1969. The main focus of our ministry is doing archaeology-proper, but we also talk about worldview issues connected to that, because you can't talk about evidence from archaeology without talking about your philosophy and the understanding of the biblical text. We've done three excavations in Israel—two trying to identify the site of Ai in Joshua 7 and 8. Khirbet el-Maqatir was the second excavation, and we finished that up a few years ago. Now we're digging at Shiloh, where the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were.

**MH:** Was it difficult to get permission?

**HS:** Well, through a series of Providential events and the relationships we have with the Israelis, they wanted someone to do more excavation at Shiloh. While we were wrapping up at Khirbet el-Maqatir, the door opened. It's a tremendous, tremendous opportunity for us because Shiloh is a very significant site from the Bible.

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**MH:** Sure.

**HS:** I'm the administrative director of the Shiloh excavation.

**MH:** I was wondering just because it's in disputed territory and all that if...

**HS:** No problems with that. It's secure; it's along a secure road. There are some political factions that oppose it in principle, but we haven't had any issues with security and all that, and they're very happy to have us there. We have a good relationship with the Israelis.

**MH:** You guys have a website, obviously. What else do you have? How do people know more about you?

20:00 **HS:** Yeah, go to [www.biblearchaeology.org](http://www.biblearchaeology.org). We've got hundreds of articles on our website. We actually have a television program called *Digging for Truth*. You can see videos of that on there. It has information about our dig. So if the people listening have ever wanted to be a volunteer on a dig, they could come join us. No experience required!

**MH:** Good. Now, do you host the show on the site or is it on YouTube?

**HS:** It's actually in a television station out of Bethlehem, PA (WBPH). Then after it airs in the greater Philadelphia area, they let us put it on YouTube. So we've done about 40 episodes so far. We're excited. We talk about all kinds of cool stuff related to the Bible and archaeology.

**MH:** Absolutely. The other thing I wanted to ask you about was you read a paper that... You were up against another paper that I wanted to hear today, so I don't know if I chose poorly or not. [laughter] Tell everybody what your paper was about and give us the synopsis.

**HS:** Well you know, you just quoted something from Indiana Jones. Remember the knight who was guarding the thing?

**MH:** "You've chosen poorly," yeah.

**HS:** He says, "You've chosen poorly!" [laughter] But you're not going to turn on us here, so we're good with that. So Canaan... Luke 3:36. He's in the genealogy from Jesus back to Adam, but it's complicated because he's in the LXX and he's not in the MT. He's not in the Samaritan Pentateuch. He's in some witnesses and he's not in other witnesses. It's a very complex kind of issue. So I presented on that today, trying to propose a solution to the Canaan problem.

**MH:** Is it a completely textual solution, or did you bring something else into play?

**HS:** Ultimately, it's textual. But the evidence for my overarching theory is influenced by external sources because some have Canaan in them and some don't. And so it appears to create a conflict. What's the deal here? Why is he in the LXX? Why is he in Luke? Why is he not in the MT? Theophilus does not use him but Augustine does—those kinds of questions.

**MH:** What was your conclusion?

**HS:** My ultimate conclusion is not found in the academic literature. My conclusion is that somewhere very early after the Babylonian Exile, Canaan must have dropped out of the original Hebrew text and created a textual mess, whether there was harmonization that took place... He's found in the Book of Jubilees and in the LXX, so he must have been in the Hebrew text that led to those sources but fell out of the text related to the Masoretic and the Samaritan Pentateuch. Sorry to go so deep into it.

**MH:** For a lot of these MT/LXX differences you can say, "That's LXX... that's the translators' technique." But this is a genealogy. There isn't a whole lot of room for technique there or flowery expression.

**HS:** No, it can't be that because the name is there. There's a begetting age. There's remaining years. It's not just one word. It's not a translational issue.

**MH:** You would have to think that the translator had a text that had that in there.

**HS:** Yeah. It's a bit complicated, but that's my proposed solution so I'm going to try to work that out and write an academic paper for it.

**MH:** Well, one more time, please give your website. Anything else you want to promote? Feel free.

**HS:** Well, I wrote an article in our magazine (*Bible and Spade*), which is a layman's level publication. You've written in it.

**MH:** Certainly something to subscribe to, yes.

**HS:** ABR has been around for fifty years. We're committed to a high view of the text of scripture. We certainly believe in the value of archaeology, but not to the degree that it would obliterate the meaning of the text or override it—that God has spoken and revealed himself in the books of the Bible. But archaeology is a powerful tool for us to be able to demonstrate that we can trust what God has said and ultimately trust the gospel.

**MH:** Well, thanks for spending a few minutes with us!

**HS:** It's great. Thank you. Glad to be here.

**MH:** Absolutely.

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**MH:** Well, we're back at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting here in Denver and we have another guest with us. This is Dr. Mark Ward. I'm going to ask him to introduce himself and then we want to talk about a book that I'm quite sure a number of you will be interested in.

25:00

**MW:** Yes, Dr. Mark Ward is my name. I work for Faithlife along with Dr. Heiser. I work for Lexham Press and for our original content department, which means that I produce some of the resources, like I edited the *Lexham Survey of Theology* that just came out in Logos 8. I'm sort of a pinch-hitter around the company. We're doing an authorized documentary right now. We're wrapping up shooting, which is really exciting. It's just been a great place of opportunity for me. The title of my dissertation was "Paul's Positive Religious Affections." It was a work of theological anthropology and of lexical semantics—examining agape and other emotion-language and trying to argue against what I call the standard view of agape love, which is "a rational choice to do what is best for someone else, regardless of how you feel." It doesn't work lexically; it doesn't work theologically. That's kind of my background. Then I did Bible textbook authoring, and now I'm here.

**MH:** On the high school level, right?

**MW:** Yes, that's right.

**MH:** Okay. Well, we want to talk about your book, *Authorized*, and we might as well try to hold that up. *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible*. Of course, it's available on Amazon or the Lexham Press website. So the King James... A lot of the people in my audience are going to be familiar with the KJV-only debate, but this book is about more than that. It's more than just a push-back. There's actually a bunch of positive stuff that you say. So why don't you give us an overview of the book?

**MW:** I spent my high school years in the very best of King James-onlyism in my understanding. They weren't jerks about it. It wasn't the only thing they ever talked about. I had godly and wonderful teachers in this Christian school. And so I've never been able to throw this crowd under the bus. If your only exposure to KJV-onlyism is in Facebook discussions [laughter], then you will be justified in thinking that way. I have always felt like I could appeal to the King James-only folks because I knew some who were willing and able to listen. But I started to perceive that the problem of KJV-onlyism isn't really unique to KJV-onlyism. There's a "one-version-onlyism" that I think is kind of a natural default if you haven't studied other languages—particularly (but not only) biblical languages. I

began to see... When the NIV 2011 came out I felt like there was a big backlash, like "I want to keep my 1984." And I was kind of surprised, but I realized it's just the same human tendency. So a positive and constructive element of this book, especially at the end, is a recommendation that English-speaking Christians use the embarrassment of riches that we have in English Bible translation. We don't just have one, we have all of these. They're all across the spectrum.

**MH:** What a novel thought! [laughs]

**MW:** Right. But the way I get there in the book is through this issue of people who insist that the King James is the best. I point out, "Listen, it was an excellent translation into an English that no one speaks anymore. It's a Venn diagram. Our English and their English do still overlap substantially, so you're not totally missing it. It's not a Vulgate. But I show that it's not just dead words (words we know we don't know), it's "false friends"—words we don't know we don't know. I give some examples of that in the book.

**MH:** Could you distinguish your book from D.A. Carson's little book quickly? Then there's something else I want to track on.

**MW:** The distinction is that I have a D.A. Carson endorsement on my book and he didn't endorse his own book. [laughter] He says, "highly recommended," which I was shocked to get and very gratified. The difference is that he and James White focus on textual criticism. I've realized for years that it's a very important topic to tackle and they did so excellently. I mean, Carson and White—they know what they're talking about. But it's essentially fruitless because unless you can read Greek, you can't really have a responsible conversation about this very arcane, complex topic. So what you end up doing is having a discussion about who's more trustworthy, my authority or your authority? And I say, let's just set that aside. I don't care. You want to use the Textus Receptus Greek New Testament? Fine! I don't think the differences are significant. I've looked at every single one of them for my KJVParallelBible.org project. But I just say to use a translation of the TR that is in contemporary English like the New King James Modern English Version. So I want to move everybody...

**MH:** So you're not debunking Westcott and Hort mythology, you're not doing textual criticism, all this kind of stuff.

**MW:** I wouldn't say it's pointless. It does have a place. But as for persuading actual pastors and laypeople who are convinced the King James is the only Bible we should use, it's gotten us nowhere. They haven't listened to D.A. Carson so they're not going to listen to me on that.

**MH:** Now on the Amazon page in some of the summary content, I'm wondering... There's a little section about how part of the book is trying to get readers to realize that the King James translators themselves were in favor of putting the

scriptures into the vulgar/vernacular. Is that an allusion to the Forward? A lot of people don't realize that there's this Forward to the King James Bible that the King James translators produced. It sort of endorses the enterprise of continuing the enterprise...

**MW:** Continual revision! Right. Yeah, they said, "We didn't make something perfect. Only apostolic men, favored with the Spirit of God, can do something that's perfect." They said, "We just tried to make a good thing better." And what's so interesting is they start off with this headline: "The best things have been columniated." People are criticizing the best things. They're very defensive. They did not expect to become the One Ring That Rules Them All. [laughter] They were fighting against the very same kind of conservatism (which is totally understandable and not wholly wrong) that says, "This is the Bible I grew up with. Why do you need to change it?" And they're saying, "We're just burnishing the bronze a little bit more. It was already very nicely shiny." That's an illustration that they used. But they felt that work of revision was necessary, and they felt that the translators of the Bishop's Bible (that they were revising) would thank them if they were alive.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, that's an important point because a lot of people who promote in a sort of antagonistic way the King James-only view don't realize that the King James translators would not agree with the status that these other groups are assigning to the King James. So that's a big deal. You mentioned D.A. Carson endorsed the book, but Mark Strauss did, as well. That speaks well of the content and what you're trying to do—the trajectory you take. I don't know how you'd characterize where Strauss sort of falls in translation philosophy necessarily.

**MW:** He's on the NIV committee.

**MH:** Yeah, and here we have a book that's not debunking using the King James at all but promoting "use a good translation." For him to sort of cross over (not really because he knows what translation is about), but for him to endorse "Hey, if you like the King James or love it, read it, realize what you can say about and what you shouldn't say about it..." For him to get behind it, I thought that was kind of a really important endorsement.

**MW:** I'm very grateful for that, too. I'm just shocked that real names of people I've admired for a long time would endorse the book. Dave Brunn... I don't know if you've seen his book: *One Bible, Many Versions*. It's really fantastic because he does what is so hard to do, and that is get in the weeds with examples without boring everyone. [laughter] He was a translator in Papua New Guinea for the Lamogai people and he's pointing out two major things. He says there are some things that just cannot go from Greek into Lamogai. You have to lose some meaning. And in some places you have to add a little bit—over-specify—because the language just doesn't allow for what's there. Is this a grain with husk on it or not? Greek or Hebrew may not work that way. And then he said he actually

looked at the New Living Translation, the New American Standard Bible—the standard spectrum of English Bible translations. He looked at their press—their advertisements—and he's pointing out that they don't live up to it. They're not lying, but the one that says "We're as literal as possible" (the NASB), sometimes he found places where the New Living Translation was more literal.

**MH:** That takes some investigative work right there. I mean, as sort of a casual acquaintance with NASB, I'm thinking there can't be many of those!

**MW:** I wouldn't think so, either.

**MH:** But to ferret those out, yeah—that's kind of impressive.

**MW:** He's just pointing out that if people don't even live up to their own press... Again, not that they're lying or disingenuous, but it's really impossible to make a 100% literal translation. And neither is the NIV or the NLT a 100% paraphrastic translation. So I've found over the years, Miles Coverdale (who succeeded William Tyndale in Bible translation work in English), Augustine, the King James translators—they've all said to use multiple translations and thereby you'll gain multiple helpful angles on the one text of scripture.

**MH:** Last question: The exact name of this escapes me and there's probably more than one... I don't know if it's the Concoring Translation.. There are a couple of translations that are out there that insist on trying to render the same Greek or Hebrew word with the same English word everywhere. Can you just comment on that? [laughs]

**MW:** Boy, that's one question I wish I could have had in advance because you and I both could have an example where that just becomes utterly silly.

35:00

**MH:** Right, just as a strategy. English doesn't work that way, so why would we approach Bible translation that way?

**MW:** It's a radical misunderstanding of language itself and of the capabilities of translation. It seems to me (and it's not just the King James-Only folks) that people are looking for a kind of certainty in their Bibliology and a particular aspect of their Bibliology that God just isn't offering. My dissertation committee advisor wrote an email to me that I begged him to turn into an article for the Logos blog. It was titled, "Should Differences in Biblical Manuscripts Scare Christians?" And he just pointed out that perfection is a quality typically ascribed to the next world, not to this one. Somehow we need to be able to be grateful for the extremely good Bible translations we have without sort of implicitly treating them as if this one is perfect, whether it's the King James or NIV or whatever.

**MH:** Yeah. Well, thanks for spending a few minutes with us. Again, *Authorized: The Use and Misuse of the King James Bible*. Highly recommended. I think you'll

enjoy it, so please give that a shout-out. It's a small book and it's a quick read, but lots of good content in it.

**MW:** And there's jokes.

**MH:** [laughing] That always helps!

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**MH:** Well, we're back at the Evangelical Theological Society meeting in Denver, and this interview is going to be a special treat. I am with Dr. Dave Burggraff, who is now in North Carolina, but Dave was my original pastor. When I came to the Lord as a teenager, this was the guy who taught me. So you are partly responsible [laughs]

**DB:** Nnnnnno.

**MH:** ... for the outcome.

**DB:** Partly.

**MH:** Why don't you just tell the story? We'll reminisce here a little bit.

**DB:** Alrighty. We've gotta go back to about the late 1970's—'79 or '80. We're going back to Dutch Country in the United States. Pennsylvania Dutch.

**MH:** Lebanon, Pennsylvania, yep.

**DB:** Lebanon, Pennsylvania. The Lord had opened the door. It was a restoration, but really a church plant. So starting with eleven people. Of course, then you remember my younger brother, who was just starting seminary. I had just graduated.

**MH:** He was my youth pastor.

**DB:** Yep. Wayne would come. So we were planting the church and brought Wayne along on Sundays and said, "You take the youth group." Your best friend at the time (Brian), his mom and family were one of those eleven people. So Brian invited you out to services, I think, because he was witnessing to you in high school.

**MH:** This is the fella that I had known since I was nine years old. His full name is Brian Scott Peiffer. And for those who have read my fiction, Brian Scott is named after this guy—after the guy that Dave's talking about.

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**DB:** Did you ever tell him that!

**MH:** I have told him that.

**DB:** Does he still like you?

**MH:** Yeah, he still likes me! [laughter]

**DB:** All right. Well, anyways, there's more to it. I don't know if a lot of your friends realize something, but Mike was an outstanding athlete. You were probably going to go on a full-ride football scholarship.

**MH:** I would have figured something out.

**DB:** Yeah, yeah well... the speed and the what-not, and a defensive player—linebacker. So you were probably being sought out by colleges and what-not. But all of that made you sort of a BMOC—Big Man on Campus—in the high school and what-not. Highly influential. Through Wayne working with you all, he started... you were holding Bible studies and doing some of that, and you invited, essentially, a lot of folks from your school.

**MH:** Yeah, a lot of friends from high school.

**DB:** Your younger brother and others. Then what we did... There's a variety of ways to do a church plant. You can go out and just promote it or whatever. We decided as a church plant (because both myself and my younger brother had an interest in working with teens) that we would reach teens. Through that, let's reach families. And that's what we did, through the youth group. On Sundays we would have eleven members. Thirty people would start coming out. But the youth group on weekends would run seventy! It was just reaching into the community. Needless to say, within a matter of 3-4 months, we were growing a church. And it was driven by the spirit and the dynamic of parents saying, "I don't know what's going on, but my kids are not the same!"

40:00

**MH:** And my parents thought I had joined a cult! [laughs]

**DB:** Your dad (or your step-dad) said to me, "I hate what you're doing" because his kids were coming home challenging him on...

**MH:** And it's a totally different story now.

**DB:** They didn't know the Lord at the time.

**MH:** No, and they were... Pastor Burggraff, my dad would refer to you as "Pastor Bug-off!" So they could be pretty antagonistic—just different stuff they did.



**DB:** He may have talked like that, but you should have seen the fire in his eyes when he sat with me! It was pretty intense. But your grandma was a major part and influence in your life. I think you called her "Booma."

**MH:** She was the mole in the house. When I went away to Bible college... I don't know if you remember the one year I had to stay in Minnesota because I got a call from her and she said, "I overheard your mom and dad say that when you come home they're going to take your car." So I wound up having to stay at Larry and Audrey's place for the winter. And there I am just sitting there in the apartment by myself [laughs] while everybody else gets to go home. It was just that kind of dynamic.

**DB:** The thing about it is, you weren't afraid. The thing that you and Brian and some of these others... You were not afraid to walk to the beat of a different drummer at school or whatever it was. When you developed convictions or ideas, you owned them, which was really important. One of the things that throughout my life has always fascinated me about you... I actually had a conversation at ETS yesterday about you with someone. They were asking about Mike. He wanted to know...

**MH:** Is this a friend or an enemy? [laughter]

**DB:** This was a friend! But the Socratic "why" question—you always wanted to know why. This stimulated almost all the discussion among the teens. So we ran an Operation Teenager on Friday nights, and that's how we grew that youth group. The first part was Wayne's games, and then we would have the time of Bible study, and then right after that we had a huge food thing.

**MH:** People should know, the youth group was a big deal. At one time we were 130 people in the congregation and 13 of us (so 10%) were away at Bible college or seminary.

**DB:** It grew to 26 at one time who went off to ministry.

**MH:** It was a really significant percentage. And the reason for that... Listeners and viewers should know it was your pulpit ministry. The reason the podcast has grown exponentially is we give people content. I operate under the assumption that the layperson is routinely underestimated. People just crave content. That is sort of a byproduct of... yeah, there's a personality thing going on there with me, but I grew up under a pulpit ministry that took scripture seriously. It was expository preaching. There was exegesis from the pulpit. I've been in several Calvary Chapel churches to speak and I would always ask the same question. These churches tend to be pretty large and have a real appetite for scripture, and so I would ask, "Why do these churches grow so much?" And I would get what I thought was a formulaic response: "We do verse-by-verse exposition." Since I

grew up with that (and every place we've gone those are the kind of churches we look for), I just thought, "Okay, well that's what happens in church, right?" And it's like, "No, no, no, no... nowadays not really." So I've sort of had to awaken to the fact that my situation was kind of unique. Within our orbit it wasn't unique, but if you just sort of expand your horizon a little bit... especially today I think we've drifted away from content in the pulpit. But I grew up with content in the pulpit. It was Dave's ministry and then Wayne afterwards. This was the norm for me. But nowadays, it's just not.

**DB:** Yeah, yeah. Thank you. I appreciate it. You're very kind. Part of the reason even for that was that you were in a public school. My background, in a sense, just being (I'll use the term) half a generation older, whatever, was similar to that. Because I didn't come to know the Lord until I was 21.

**MH:** Yeah, and you were a chemical engineer in college.

45:00

**DB:** Biomedical sciences. I got saved out of the University of Minnesota in my senior year. That was the first time I ever heard the gospel. So I did not have a Christian worldview at all. In my growth, I wanted proofs for everything. With an empirically-thinking mind, I needed to see that, and the only authority I had was the word of God. When we went to Pennsylvania, the community we were in (because of Hershey Medical Center and everything), everybody wanted proof—proof. We joked a moment ago about your dad, but that's how your dad and mom thought. Your dad was very much "I need to see concrete proof." You were that way. And nothing would be just accepted at faith-value at first. It was "show me in the Word of God." But we ended up with a congregation of people like that with heavy science backgrounds. I think all of us were journeying together, and that is, "What does God's word say?" You didn't come to hear nice stories from Dave Burggraff or something. I mean, look at me! Do I look like someone people would come and say, "Hey, we want to look like that guy!" No, they said, "We need to hear what he has to say." It was "show me in the Word." And so it was real.

**MH:** Yeah, it was very intentional. the content was very intentional. Before we wrap up, you should tell people what you're doing now. Dave has been a professor at a few seminaries, you were a president at one seminary for awhile. I think you were a dean. I mean, you've had administrative roles and faculty roles. So what are you doing now? Feel free to promote your school and what you do.

**DB.** Sure. Well, I had always wanted to be a professor. Going through my seminary training, I had always seen that as probably my role in life. But I had begged God before that... If I'm going to train preachers down the road in seminary, I really would love to pastor for awhile. Through that ministry in Lebanon and then after in Minnesota for a few years, I fell in love with the pastorate. It was the highest calling. But while in Minnesota, I was invited by the seminary that I graduated from in Pennsylvania to come on back and teach theology. That's when I made my way to Dallas Seminary then to do my PhD.

After that, the dean of that seminary developed Lou Gehrig's disease. So while I was in residency completing a PHD, I received the call to come back and not only prof, but be a dean. So I ended up in administration, which led down the road after 15 more years to be a president. And then for awhile... Much of the presidency is about fundraising. My handshake was an upside-down palm when I met people to ask for gifts and giving. I took a three-year at Clearwater Christian College to help be the theological rudder under the president there. Then through that I was invited as a conference speaker on numerous occasions, but I ended up in North Carolina with a ministry—Colonial Baptist Church—under Dr. Stephen Davey as a speaker, who was starting a new seminary. Lo and behold, the seminary they were starting (Shepherd's Theological Seminary), he was telling me that some of the men he was bringing (Dr. Pettigrew, Dr. Bookman)... They were all your heroes. If you remember when you were in college, those were the guys you admired. I had known them for... now it's 45 years—back in the Minnesota days. Stephen managed to get the band back together. In some ways we're like the Blues Brothers. We've got everybody back together. And now I serve in two roles. I'm a Professor of Theology and the Chaplain of Shepherd's Theological Seminary. It's a young school.

**MH:** That's like the perfect combination.

**DB:** Yeah, the perfect combination. And I'm the executive pastor of the church, and the church is (as you know) 4,000 people. So it gives you good ministry opportunity. But the thing about the seminary that is exciting... When Stephen was developing this seminary, it was birthed and when it came out of the womb it was a full-grown adult. All the profs (the first batch of us professors) all had either been chairmen, academic deans, presidents... In other words, we brought almost 300 years' experience of a faculty together initially. That's why at the first go-around we became fully ATS accredited. This year we grew by 30%.

**MH:** That's good. Again, that's not common.

50:00 **DB:** It's uncommon! But the Lord is orchestrating something. To grow 50 students a year in a day when most seminaries are flat-lining is something interesting. But again, that church there is exactly what you said a moment ago. Stephen planted the church with four people and it grew to 4,000—across the pulpit.

**MH:** Yeah, people want content. What we do with the Naked Bible Podcast, my books... There's no magic here. It's just content—giving people what they want. They're going to find you. You can do things to find them, but they're going to find you. You haven't been here the last couple years, so when I got your text it's like, "We've got to get you on the podcast!"

**DB:** Thanks for the invite!

**MH:** This is a little bit of Mike's history here, and a real important part. So thanks for spending some time with us.

**DB:** When do I get to tell stories about you? [laughter]

**MH:** Those will show up in the comments! We should do that at some point! [laughter]

**DB:** Next year we'll do stories! Preacher-boy program.

**MH:** We could have listeners send us questions that they want answer for.

**DB:** The most famous word in the Bible is what? [pause] "The."

**MH:** Yeah, okay. Let's not go there. [laughs]

**DB:** We can talk about the silliness, but in all seriousness, Mike, over the years God has used you in great, great ways. I'm proud of you. Just really, really proud of you.

**MH:** Well, I'm thrilled that we could get you here. Because people ought to know kind of where the trail started.

**DB:** Hey, thanks for the opportunity, brother.

**MH:** Thank you.

**DB:** Love you!

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**TS:** All right, Mike! Yeah, I enjoy Dave's stories. He definitely told a few off the record, but maybe I should have had the mic going because they're funny.

**MH:** He's got a whole pile.

**TS:** That's awesome! Well, that was fun. All right, Mike. Be looking forward to Part 2. We appreciate everybody tuning in and I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.