

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 452

Counterfeit Kingdom

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Guest: Holly Pivec (HP)

Guest: Dr. R. Douglas Geivett (DG)

Episode Summary

Back in 2017 (Episode 179) apologetics researcher Holly Pivec was our guest to talk about the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), a movement that claims new revelation from God and new apostolic authority that is binding on followers of Jesus everywhere. In this episode of the podcast we catch up with Holly and her co-author, Dr. R. Douglas Geivett, via a discussion of their latest book on the NAR, *Counterfeit Kingdom: The Dangers of New Revelation, New Prophets, and New Age Practices in the Church*.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 452: Counterfeit Kingdom with Holly Pivec and Doug Geivett. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

MH: Well, I'm glad to say I feel a little bit better today than I did a week ago. So I kind of had a rough week, but we're back in chemo and so we have to cope with that. But I feel pretty good today, actually.

TS: Well, good. Glad to hear it. The holidays are coming up. We hope everybody here in the states are going to have a good Thanksgiving and good holidays.

MH: Yeah, absolutely.

TS: Mike, we have an important serious topic today and we're going to revisit it. It's about the NAR that we had Holly on several years ago. And her and Doug Geivett just released another book called *Counterfeit Kingdom*. And you're going to be able to get that book on a little bit of a discount from their publisher website. And that link is at our nakedbiblepodcast.com website. So go there, get the link, and you can get the book. We had Holly on five years ago. I can't believe it's already been that long! But we had her on, I think it's Episode 179 if you want to go back and listen to that. Then right after that, we had Dr. Michael Brown on (Episode 180) to kind of give the other side of the coin. So here we are five years later still having the same conversation. And by going back and checking those

two episodes out, you will have a little bit more context probably to this interview, and we recommend people do so. Mike, what's the topic again, if you will remind everybody about what the NAR is and what we're going to talk about?

MH: Yeah, NAR stands for New Apostolic Reformation and it's a movement—really a sweeping movement over and into and through churches that would be broadly evangelical that insist that there are new modern-day apostles and prophets that the rest of us (that all believers) should be in alignment with, should be obedient to their teachings and so on and so forth. So a lot of the NAR discussion is about authority and power over other believers, but the conversation ultimately gets taken into things like spiritual gifts and music and what not. Again, we on this podcast know our audience. We know that there are wonderful listeners in our audience who are part of Pentecostal churches, part of charismatic churches. You're not who we're aiming at here. This is something related to those traditions because of the emphasis on signs and wonders, but it's also a little bit different. I would say it's qualitatively different, because what makes it different is this sort of thirst—this hunger—for having authority over other Christians on a global scale. So that's what we want to talk about today.

As Trey mentioned, we had Holly Pivec (one of the authors) on several years ago about one of their initial books, and so we're glad to have both authors on today to talk about the NAR and where their research has taken them to this point.

MH: Well, we're blessed again to have Holly Pivec on the podcast, and this time we have Holly's co-author, Doug Geivett, on to discuss their book *Counterfeit Kingdom*. Some of you who have listened to the podcast for a long time know that Holly and Doug have collaborated before on books about the NAR (the New Apostolic Reformation), and their latest on that topic is out. So that is what we want to talk about today, this new book entitled *Counterfeit Kingdom*. The subtitle is *The Dangers of New Revelation, New Prophets, and New Age Practices in the Church*. And to start off (as we typically do with interviews), I'm going to ask both of our guests to introduce themselves real quickly—who you are, where you teach, that sort of thing, what your experience is, and then we'll just jump into the book. So Holly, let's just start with you.

5:00 **HP:** Sure. So my name is Holly Pivec. I've written multiple books about the New Apostolic Reformation movement with Doug Geivett and I've also run a blog focused on this movement for many years now at hollypivec.com. And I have a Master's degree in Christian Apologetics from Biola University, where I worked for nearly a decade. I was the managing editor of *Biola Magazine* and also served as the university editor there. And it was actually during my time there that I first learned about this movement.

MH: Doug, how about you?

DG: Well, I'm Doug Geivett. I've been at Biola University and the Talbot School of Theology now for just about 30 years. I recently retired from my post teaching philosophy there. So I'm an Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Biola and Talbot and I do quite a bit of work in straight philosophy from a Christian point of view—lots of work in Christian apologetics on various topics. This week recently I was just lecturing on the topic of near-death experiences and how much evidence they provide for things that we believe, if anything, and so I do things like that as well. I've got a family of two grown children, both daughters who are married, but they haven't produced any grandchildren for us yet.

MH: [laughs] Well, I'm sure they'll get around to that.

DG: We will see.

MH: Yeah, we'll see. Well, thank you both for introducing yourselves just that little bit. And, boy, I guess the easiest place to jump in here is how you do it in the book, because you both start off explaining your attachment to this whole subject. So if you could real briefly explain to the audience what the NAR is (New Apostolic Reformation) and how you got involved in discussing this movement.

HP: So our book, *Counterfeit Kingdom*, sounds the alarm about a popular fast-growing movement of Christians who claim God is giving new revelation through new apostles and prophets. And these apostles and prophets say they are giving strategies the church requires for all Christians to learn to work miracles, even greater miracles than Jesus worked, and “to bring heaven to earth” is how they say it. This movement is called the New Apostolic Reformation because its leaders teach that a new reformation (much like the Protestant Reformation but even more significant) is happening in the church. And this reformation is bringing authoritative, governing apostles back to the church. And all others, including pastors, they say, must align themselves with these apostles. And “align” is really a gentler way of saying that they must submit to them; everyone must submit to these apostles including pastors and other church leaders. Those who follow the apostles and prophets will develop miraculous powers like prophesying and healing the sick and will play a pivotal role in the unfolding of God's end-time plan for the work. And those who don't will really sit on the sidelines as mere spectators. And so these teachings are obviously divisive and they've caused a lot of damage in the lives of individuals, families, and churches. So that's a reason we wrote this book—to give those people a voice and to protect others from getting ensnared in this unbiblical movement. Many people are being influenced by this movement without knowing it, so really this book is a wake-up call.

MH: So how did you get drawn into it?

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HP: Right. So I mentioned I first learned about NAR when I was working at Biola University. Actually, a reader of *Biola Magazine* sent an email. I would often receive emails from readers, and she was describing this movement which she was very concerned about that she said was taking over the churches in her city. As she described this movement led by apostles and prophets, it piqued my curiosity because I had never heard of it before, and I was actually a researcher of cults and off-key groups. I was doing my Master's degree in apologetics and I was surprised I hadn't heard of the teaching she was describing, and so it was just kind of curiosity for me in the beginning to learn about this movement. It sounded like it was something I should be aware of. But then I didn't know that I actually knew anybody who was a part of this movement, but I quickly realized that was not the case. I shared a story in the book about my dating relationship with [the man] who is now my husband before we were married and how he was involved with NAR and the tension and division that caused in our own relationship. Then once he left NAR, we experienced strained relationships among extended family, including one family member that was really into the teachings of Bill Johnson at Bethel Church in Redding and these other apostles and prophets. And she was receiving prophecies that she wouldn't die of cancer and she clung to those prophecies until her dying day. And really, people around her weren't even allowed to acknowledge that she had cancer for fear that that would jinx these prophecies and her healing from occurring. So I've really seen the fallout in my own family and extended family of the harm that these teachings can cause and the division it can bring within families.

MH: Doug, how about yourself? How did you get drawn into this?

DG: Yeah, so I learned of this movement through Holly. She had done extensive research already and prepared a draft of the manuscript, reflecting the results of her research. She sent it to me and asked me if I would consider collaborating with her and bring some of the tools of my own trade to bear on the analysis of this movement because I'm trained philosophically, I teach apologetics, I minister to college students in local churches in the Northwest and in Southern California, and I've written on the subject of miracle—the concept of miracles—how would you recognize a miracle if one occurred? And of course, miracles figure prominently within the movement as a manifestation of the spirit of God to vouch for the authority of these apostles and prophets. So that was how I first learned of it. And then when I learned more about it and talked with Holly about the research she had done, I became personally concerned about its influence, which was obviously very extensive. I felt that maybe I could make a contribution here and so that's how our collaboration began.

Jesus said in John 17 as he prayed to the Father in his... well, it's sometimes called the high priestly prayer. He said, "Father, sanctify them [speaking of his disciples] in the truth." Then he says, "Thy word (or your word) is truth." Truth is the spirit-ordained means of sanctification, how we come to be holy and like

Christ. We need a knowledge of the truth for that to happen. That is a primary reason why we have to call out error when it shows up in the church, which is supposed to be the pillar and bulwark of the truth, like Paul says to Timothy in his first letter. So we must ignore these pleas that people make against causing division by exposing error. My view is that making excuses for persistent error in the church is a hindrance to sanctification and to a knowledge of Jesus Christ in accord with his revelation. Teaching the truth tends towards the salvation of those who listen. Paul said to Timothy in the next chapter of his book, “You should pay close attention not only to yourself, but also to your teaching. For as you do this, you ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

MH: Yeah, those in my audience are going to recall that we’ve had Holly on before. This was way back in 2017 (which it is hard to believe it has been that long ago), but we were talking about the book that was prominent back then. Then we spent an episode discussing the NAR. Then we also subsequently had Mike Brown on, who knows a lot of these people in the NAR. I don’t even know how to describe what his status within the movement is. He’s just somebody who knows people in this movement and some other movement that we would call charismatic and in some other movement we would call Pentecostal and some other movement we would call something else. But he seems to be kind of a figure that has friendships in a lot of these different groups. So one of the reasons I had him on after Holly was because I had never heard of this and I could tell from the book that it wasn’t something conflatable completely. I mean, I’m sure there is some Venn diagram here, some way to talk about the overlaps, but this is not to be equated with all Pentecostals or all charismatics. This is something different that even people within the charismatic movement and Pentecostal churches, you’re going to find people in there that are pretty disturbed by the NAR. So could you talk about that a little bit? Like how is this the same or yet different than talking about the charismatic movement? How would you articulate the playing field, as it were? Who are the players and how do they relate to each other?

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HP: Yeah, we have really tried to stress that point repeatedly in our books and interviews that we are not critiquing Pentecostal/Charismatic teachings about the miraculous gifts—things like the gift of prophecy or speaking in tongues or healing. We acknowledge the Cessationist/Continuationist debate in our books and we point out that our critique of NAR is compatible with both positions, and so a lot of people have really appreciated that. The thing that separates NAR from historic Pentecostal/Charismatic teachings is that NAR is saying that there are these authoritative governing offices of apostle and prophet that must lead the church today and pastors and all others must come under their authority. So Pentecostals and Charismatics historically have not believed that the governing authoritative offices are for today. They may talk about apostles in the sense of missionaries or church planters or something like that, or prophets being people with a spiritual gift of prophecy, maybe giving prophetic words to individuals or

just to local churches but not holding these authoritative governing offices. So really, it's about a system of church government that must include apostles and prophets, and it's critical because these are the ones that are allegedly bringing new revelation the church requires so they must hold these authoritative roles in the church. So really it's these governing offices that set apart NAR from the other.

MH: Yeah, let me just chime in a little bit about that. One of the reasons I wanted to have you back on is it's overdue. I mean, it was back in 2017, so it's been five years. But the other thing is after I had you on before and then I had Mike Brown on... It was after that, but I'd say maybe two or three years ago at least (it was before we moved to Florida, so I'm going to put it at around the three-year mark)... I had a brief email exchange with somebody, and I mean, I'd have to go search the email and I'd be lucky to find it because it only lasted two or three exchanges. But there was somebody in a very large church in the South that wanted me to (for lack of a better word) endorse the church in exchange for this church endorsing my own book, which was *Unseen Realm*. *Unseen Realm* is sort of what I'm known for more widely because it's a best seller, but it has nothing to do with NAR. It has nothing to do with the charismatic gifts or anything like this, but it attracts Charismatics because there is angelology, Israelite religions, and all this sort of [audio breaks up]. So I naturally get a lot of attention from these wings of the church.

But like I said, I got this email one day and it just felt kind of weird because my answer to the email was, "This certainly doesn't make any sense. Why do I need to endorse you in some public way? And I don't need you to endorse me because if somebody wants to read my book, there's Amazon." I mean, I can just go up and get it. If a pastor wants to recommend my book to his congregation, all he has to do is stand up in front of the congregation and say so. Why does it have to feel like I'm joining a family or something or joining some entity or attaching myself to it? Because in the time that has elapsed since *Unseen Realm* came out back in 2015, there have been a number of books that sort of rip off the title—that rip off the content—that are in this area, like the people in the publishing houses that would produce NAR material, for instance. And I wanted to have you back on because I want it to be clear. It's clear to my own audience, but you always get new people that listen. The audience reinvents itself all the time. I want it to be clear that I'm not NAR. Like you were saying, I'm also not anti-Cessationist; I'm not anti-Continuant. I'm in the group that ETS would refer to as "cautiously open to the gifts," but I need data. I'm a nuts-and-bolts Biblical scholar guy, and that's what I want to see. Can you defend this exegetically from the text? If you can't, well, then I'm not real interested. I just have to be honest.

So I wanted it to be clear that I'm not on the NAR side. It felt a little weird to get this email and to go back and forth a couple times about this "relationship" that was going to take me to the next level. It's like, I'm not interested in levels. The

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book's there. If you want to read it, read it. If not, then don't. So we don't need an endorsement party or whatever this was, and that's sort of where it died. But I imagine that is probably more familiar to some of you. I'm not a networker. I'm kind of a poor example of how to do that. If we're networked with anybody here, it's usually going to be the work of Trey or somebody else that knows what they're doing [laughs]. It's not going to be me. But it just felt weird. I don't know how else to describe it. And the emphasis on authority was troubling. I mean, I knew enough about the NAR at that point, having read through your earlier book, to be suspicious of how this was presented to me because it just didn't make any sense.

But let's get back to the book. I don't want to rabbit trail too far on this, but I do have some sort of peripheral relationship to the NAR, I guess, in that way. I'm not like you two. The reason I wanted you two on is you've spent serious time... You've devoted serious time and space to producing content in this area. That isn't me, but I wanted to have you back on in the wake of, again, helping me, I guess, position myself as, "I'm just a Biblical scholar who does a podcast. I write books. I'm a boring nuts-and-bolts guy." I'm not trying to court relationships here or a public persona or anything like that. And that's just the way it felt—that I was supposed to be some front man for something. And it's just like, "No, it's not going to happen."

But anyway, let's go back to the book. Very early in the... I love the title of the chapter, "Hogwarts for Christians." In chapter 3, can you get into the content of that chapter and your experience (I believe it was Holly) when you went to this school—this school of ministry that is associated with the NAR?

HP: Yeah, so Bethel Church in Redding, California is the most popular and well-known church in NAR, even though they would not readily say that they are part of NAR, but they hold to these core teachings that we talked about (about governing apostles and prophets being restored to church government). So they have a school called Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry where thousands of students have gone. They go there to learn to be miracle workers, and actually other schools of supernatural ministry using the curriculum from Bethel or their own curriculum have been popping up in churches. But the students there have fondly referred to their school as "The Christian Hogwarts," and so that's why we titled our chapter "Hogwarts for Christians."

But my trip to Bethel... When I visited Bethel, I attended the Fire Starters adult Sunday school class. It's a 12-week course designed to create modern-day revivalists. Maybe for people who can't attend the full Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry program, they can take this 12-week course. And on the day I attended, that day they were teaching people how to prophesy. So when I visited the class, I observed unusual phenomenon while I was there, like drunkenness in the Holy Spirit—people passed out during the classes if they

were drunk on the Holy Spirit and that kind of behavior. But the most disturbing thing I observed that day was how they were trying to “activate” people (that’s a NAR buzzword) in the gift of prophecy. Because they teach that all Christians... It’s kind of like we all have these latent supernatural powers in us that need to be activated through activation exercises and that kind of thing.

So that day what they did was they called up four volunteers who had never prophesied before to come to the front of the room, and individually these people would come up and they would tell that person to choose someone in the room they didn’t know (it was a room of about 60 or 70 people) and then just say whatever popped in through their minds as a prophetic word for that person. So for example, one person said they felt like God gave them a specific name and gave them a specific date and then they asked the people in that room if anybody had that name or if that date meant anything to anybody. So someone spoke up and said, “Well, that’s my birthday.” It wasn’t his name, but it was his birthday and so she saw that as a sign that she was supposed to give a prophetic word to that person and just say whatever popped into her head as a word for that person. And the thing is, they were teaching people not to worry if they were wrong, not to filter the thoughts that came to their mind, but just to give them as prophetic words. They said it was okay to make mistakes, which was very troubling to me because of the many warnings in scripture about false prophets and about testing the truthfulness of prophecies, right?

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MH: Yeah, how would you judge false prophecy if you’re not allowed to judge it?

HP: Right, right.

MH: It doesn’t make a whole lot of sense.

HP: Right. So we talk about this in the book, but during my trip I observed that the activation of supernatural gifts in individuals like at Bethel and in these NAR churches has more in common with New Age occult practices than with Biblical Christianity. Because in the Bible, it is taught that spiritual gifts are not powers that can be activated in any Christian who desires them. Instead, they’re gifts given by the Holy Spirit to individuals as He alone decides. We know that from 1 Corinthians 12:11. So we talk in our book about how students from Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry sometimes will pose as psychics and they’ll go to psychic fairs, where they will give what they call “spirit readings.” And they’re practicing using the prophesying strategies they have learned at Bethel, but they avoid using religious terminology. So they don’t like to use terms like “Jesus” or “God” or “Holy Spirit,” but instead they will refer to God as something like “the spirit of creation.” Or they’ve gone to psychic fairs with an organization called Christalignment and use destiny cards, which are essentially Christianized tarot cards—cards that have been used to answer questions for people. Like, “Have I chosen the right career for me?” or “Will I have any more children?” This kind of

thing. So those are some of the kinds of things we talk about. And we have a whole chapter on New Age practices that are infiltrating the church through NAR.

MH: Again, having read the books, it still sounds so bizarre to my ear that... Maybe my problem is I've read a lot of occult stuff, because one of the peripheral interests is what we would call just parapsychology—paranormal stuff. It runs across the board from cryptozoology to NDEs or whatever it is. I mean, I've read a lot of material in all these areas, so having read through your earlier book and then this one, it's easy for me to sort of spot that. But what you're just describing is just people doing cold reading. Anyone who is gifted at doing cold readings of an audience can... I have a friend who is a cold reader and this guy used to go to events and what not and his ministry was to try to convince people that he wasn't a psychic. [laughs]

DG: Mm-hmm.

MH: To sort of lay it there. Like he would do cold readings for people and they would swear that he had psychic abilities, and he was like, "No, no, I'm not a psychic at all. This is how we do this; this is how I reach this conclusion." And they wouldn't buy it. They wanted to believe so badly that this guy could read their minds that he couldn't disabuse them of the notion that he was just utilizing techniques that magicians and other cold readers have used for decades and centuries. These are well-known techniques. So I've read enough of this stuff to think, "How in the world can anybody be deceived by this?" But yet here we are.

DG: Yeah.

MH: How do you guys parse that? I mean, why do people get so drawn up into this and they can't seem to decipher it? They can't seem to sort of stop and take a serious look about some of the passages that Holly just referenced—these things you would think that should just naturally occur to Christians to ask—stopgap questions or critical thinking at a very basic level. It just doesn't seem to happen. What do you think is going on here?

DG: Well, that's a great question and it's difficult to say in general terms what is going on for most people. I'm sure there are different reasons for individual cases why they find this attractive or persuaded by it. We live in an emotion-driven culture. That is true of the church no less than the rest of the world, and critical thinking is not valued. In fact, some don't trust it. They think that that inhibits the work of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the Spirit in your life and it shows a lack of faith if you're trying to reason critically about the details of your faith. If you demand evidence of something, then that might be considered a lack of faith. So some grow up in a church tradition that emphasizes emotion as a means of determining what is true, but emotion is no indicator of truth. You need evidence for that and that's foreign to the experience of many people. It's not that they've

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heard it many times and coming up through school it is automatic for them to engage critically, and then suddenly they encounter these phenomena and all that gets chucked. I think for many people, they just have no practice with that and so they're more vulnerable because of it.

MH: I'm on the other side of this. Because I've read so much of it, it's kind of spoiled...

DG: Mm-hmm.

MH: I could run up against a true manifestation of the Holy Spirit and because I've read so much for... Let's take speaking in tongues.

DG: Mm-hmm.

MH: I mean, I know biblically what speaking in tongues is supposed to look like, but I can see myself getting into a situation where this is actually what happened, but because I know that this can be self-contrived or mimed in certain pagan religions, I wouldn't know what to do with it. I would be sort of paralyzed by the fact that this could be phony and how would I ever know? So I'm kind of on the other side of that. I've been spoiled by... It always takes my mind back to the "Much learning hath made thee mad," the line when Paul was on trial there.

DG: Yeah.

MH: But it almost feels like that because there isn't anything that goes on in the book of Acts that can't be counterfeited and hasn't been and has not been well-documented in creating very non-Christian contexts. But again, that's something I just happen to know because I've spent some time reading in it, but I think you're right. It's this emotion-driven sort of situation where there's a vacuum there and it doesn't get filled.

DG: And that's coupled with expressed teaching not to trust reason because it can inhibit the manifestation of the Spirit and make you overly critical and displace the need for faith—so the combination of cultural conditions about the life of the mind on the one hand with this kind of teaching that is sometimes just represented as the truth of Christianity about the role of the mind. But it's a double whammy for anybody who would say, "Well, can we just hit the pause button here and take a look and at least see what the evidence is?" One of the things that we say in the book, Mike, is that unfortunately people will give just about anyone the benefit of the doubt if he claims to be a prophet and able to work miracles, especially if all outward appearances are that he is part of the community of faith, and so "Why wouldn't we just take his word for it?" Then you wonder, well, if you're going to approach things that way, at least hesitate when you see that a prophecy that is made does not come to pass. But even then,

people go on believing. So we talk about that. But we say that on the very front end... The most crucial test on the front end is what evidence does anybody who purports to be a prophet offer in support of his or her claim to be a prophet? What is the evidence that they offer? And one way to check up on a prophet's claims: a prophet is supposed to be an expert in revelation from God. And if they're not capable at handling the written word of God which already has been revealed and it is available to all of us and if they're casual or haphazard or careless in the way that they teach the scriptures, well, that would be a reason to be cautious and distrust their claim to be offering new revelations.

MH: Well, even the scriptural pattern of... I mean, Paul was thrilled when people would search the scriptures to validate what he was saying.

DG: Yeah.

MH: And Paul was certainly... He could work signs and wonders, too, but he nevertheless encourages... He took people back to the Old Testament. I mean, how many times do we have to read in the epistles where... I'll speak to my audience here. Just the next time you read through anything that Paul wrote, hopefully you have a Bible that even the typesetting will tell you that what he is mouthing comes from the Old Testament. I mean, there's a locus of authority and it is not him. The locus or authority is the Word of God, it's the Old Testament. And as he is faithful to it, then you should be listening to Paul because Paul is taking you back to this source of truth. It seems so simple and so fundamental, but yet how did we get here?

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DG: Well, another reason, I think, is that people want revelation to come packaged for them personally with their name on it. God reveals certain truths that have general application for all of us, and Paul tells Timothy, "Look, it's adequate. You master these truths of scripture and you'll be able to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord and that's what it's about." That gets back to the point about how truth sanctifies. But people aren't content to receive general truths and principles that they then have to apply in their own unique circumstances. They would prefer to have a revelation from God that says this is what God is going to do in your life if you do this or that. So it's personalized and, of course, this dovetails with the general narcissistic trend within our culture as well. We want intimacy with God on our terms and sometimes we forget maybe you don't experience that unless it's on his terms, and what does that look like? We need revelation for that and we have that in scripture. But it's that personalization, it's the focus on me and what God can do with me personally and how he intends to use me and guide me and direct me along a very specific path, and people don't feel competent to make those determinations on their own. They want an authoritative source for that, and revelation from a prophet is the handy means of doing that if you trust that individual.

MH: Well, Doug, you just used the phrase “authority figure.” So in chapter 4 which is the one, of course, right after “The Hogwarts for Christians” chapter... You entitle that “Jesus’ overlooked warning.” So what is that overlooked warning? I mean, you would think that Jesus would be the essential authority figure we need to cite on this. So what does he have to say? I mean, what ground do you cover in that chapter?

DG: Well, one point of reference for that is Matthew 24, especially verse 24 where a burgeoning of the prophetic and the miraculous was actually predicted by Jesus as a sign of the times—that as we approach the end of the age when we could anticipate his coming (whatever season that might be, even if we don’t know the day or the hour), one thing we could watch for would be a virtual explosion of false christs and false prophets who would arise and perform “great signs and wonders,” as he puts it, “so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect;” that is to say, those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

MH: So the warning is that you can have people who claim falsely to be speaking for God, they can actually do things? They can actually perform signs and wonders.

DG: And they can actually do things.

MH: Yeah. Everybody knows about Deuteronomy 18, like don’t do necromancy and all this other stuff, but you’ll actually get that in Deuteronomy 13 as well—that sometimes you have people who can do this or that sign or wonder and you shouldn’t listen to them. [laughs]

DG: Right.

MH: In Deuteronomy 13, the standard is if they speak something that is contrary to God’s word, don’t listen to them regardless of what they performed. So is that what you’re getting at in that chapter?

DG: Yeah, that’s what I’m getting at. If Jesus himself, right, our Lord and Savior, is predicting... He’s saying, “Look, this is prophetic. This is going to happen. There will be people claiming to be prophetic and have miraculous powers and they’ll even do things that will seem to have the power of the Spirit in them, but they’re not to be trusted. And they will be so persuasive that even the elect are vulnerable, even believers. The faithful are at risk here of falling for the fakery and the fraud and the trickery if they’re not careful.” So that’s a powerful warning to us and he is saying this will happen as we get closer to the end of the age.

Now here’s a question: If we see an increase in obsession almost with the miraculous and with certain things that are called manifestations of the Spirit—this appetite for the prophetic and the demand for more revelation... If we see

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that intensifying around us, we should at least ask the question, “Are we seeing the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise here?” Other things that he also promised that would be signals of the end times may be converging while this is also happening. And he’s telling us that good people (careful people, people that are thoughtful about what is the truth) will very possibly fall for this sort of thing. One thing that you’ll hear NAR leaders say in defense of failed prophecies, they believe that New Testament prophecy is different than Old Testament prophecy—that it can fail, that a prophet can prophesy something to happen and then if it doesn’t happen, they are not disqualified as prophets. They can still qualify as prophets of God. And of course, they need to say that if they’re going to be followed because they don’t have a very good track record. It’s a very sketchy track record. So that’s important to their whole project. But sometimes they’ll say there’s a difference between a prophet of God who gets it wrong sometimes and a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” like Jesus warned about (I think it’s in Matthew 7). And they draw this distinction that... It’s a distinction that Jesus himself does not draw. But they say, “Who’s going to have the temerity to call out a NAR leader and say, ‘Well, that person because his teachings about these things are false and his prophecies are not coming true...’” Who’s going to call that person a wolf? And so I think it’s tactical for them to say there’s a difference between a genuine prophet who sometimes gets it wrong and a real false prophet who is a wolf in sheep’s clothing, and they draw a distinction between those that you don’t actually find in scripture.

MH: Yeah. Some in our audience are going to know that there are prominent evangelical theologians who will take that view that you just described—that it is possible for New Testament prophets to say something wrong. Like Wayne Grudem, I know he takes that view, but he more or less has to take that view for other reasons. That question gets entangled with what he is trying to articulate overall as far as the gift of prophecy in the New Testament. But yeah, I’m on the other side of that one. That doesn’t make a whole lot of sense to me because it removes any ability at all to judge prophecy. I don’t know how else you would be able to judge a false prophet if not by what they teach. How else are we supposed to do that?

DG: Well and not only that, but what practical good is it to receive prophecy from a prophet who says, “Oh by the way, I could be mistaken.” And that’s what they’re saying, in effect, when they acknowledge that they sometimes get it wrong. So if you were a prophet and you were to say to me, Mike, “You can expect this to happen either on a national level, a global level, or in your personal life, Doug,” and it doesn’t happen, now I’m thinking, “Well, what am I supposed to do the next time you come along and tell me what to expect?” I ask the question, is it actionable prophecy? Actionable prophecy is prophecy you can act on because it is authentic revelation from God that is supported by good evidence to that effect. So then you can confidently move forward into the future on the basis of what you’ve learned, what you’ve come to know. That just doesn’t happen and

doesn't work if the prophecy is coming from someone who is a demonstrably unreliable prophet. So it's of no practical value. And that would be true even if they happen to get it right now and then.

MH: What about when the failures are just dramatic? I mean, I'm thinking I know you have examples of this interspersed in the book, but like in the last Presidential political cycle, you know, the whole controversy of the Presidential election. Did Donald Trump really win or did he really lose? And you had people come and prophesy that he was going to still be the President. And that's a pretty spectacular fail. Does it matter how big the fail is or not? What's your experience there?

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HP: Yeah, those Trump prophecies, you know, dozens of prophets in NAR prophesied that Donald Trump would be re-elected to a second consecutive term there, and afterwards some of them came out and issued apologies and admitted that they were wrong. Like Kris Vallotton is the kind of leading prophet at Bethel Church in Redding. He said he missed it, but he also said it doesn't make him a false prophet and Doug explained why he would say that.

MH: But to any thinking person, the follow-up question is, "Why? Why not? Why doesn't that make you a false prophet?"

HP: Right. It's kind of like they say, "Well, because false prophets have evil hearts" basically is the gist of it. "And we don't have evil hearts."

MH: So we're back to the New Age thing of looking internally for truth. That's the consistent pattern—that this truth comes from within.

DG: Yeah, and even if that were true, I don't have access to that person's heart.

MH: [laughs] Right.

DG: Right?

MH: Right, yeah.

DG: Except his telling me I'm totally innocent, I have sincere motives, and so forth. Well, yeah, but you also told me something that was supposed to come from God and it didn't.

MH: So what I hear from Holly is she's saying this doesn't really even phase people. Is that fair?

HP: It doesn't... Many of their followers unfortunately do not seem to be phased. You know, when Kris Vallotton posted what he did about missing it, a lot of

people came on, “Oh, you’re so humble,” “You’re so humble for admitting that,” and “That’s actually like a sign of a genuine prophet,” and things like that. So many people in NAR really seem to double down in the face of evidence that should cause them to question. Yeah, but really those prophecies really cause damage to the reputation of the church. Those false prophecies make it harder for people to share the gospel going forward. Prominent atheists like the Friendly Atheist, you know, he has hundreds of thousands of followers online. He was using those failed prophecies as an opportunity to mock all Christians. So those prophecies have caused a lot of damage for the church.

MH: Well, let’s talk about damage and damage control here. You spend a good amount of time in the book talking about spiritual abuse. Can you give us examples of what you’re getting at there? I mean, to me, I don’t understand the hunger for authority and maybe that’s just me because I’m one that I’d rather be a good Indian than a chief, okay? I don’t understand this hunger for authority and why people would let other people lord it over them. So what’s going on with this dynamic here? Let’s talk a little bit about either the potential for spiritual abuse or some of the unfortunate cases you’ve seen.

HP: Well, we point out in the book that spiritual abuse can obviously happen in any church. It happens in churches that don’t have apostles and prophets, but we say that the potential for abuse is much greater in NAR churches because apostles and prophets claim to be speaking directly for God. They also claim much greater authority than pastors do because pastors are supposed to submit to them and because apostles and prophets often oversee thousands of churches in their network, whereas a pastor typically would oversee a single church.

So the authority that NAR apostles and prophets are claiming runs both deep and wide, and we give specific examples in our books. We share some stories—for example, a couple who felt like they couldn’t make any major life decisions like whether to move, whether to have children, whether to... (those kinds of major life decisions) without first consulting a prophet or the apostle of the church, and the ways that the apostle in that particular church would take advantage of this couple and demand submission and excessive hours working for him and things like that. We also talk about how when people question the apostles and prophets, they are often called names. It’s a practice we call name-calling. They’re called Pharisees or it is said they have a Jezebel spirit or a critical spirit or they’re Pharisees. And so questioning the apostles and prophets can often lead to spiritual abuse in the form of name-calling. We share the story of one lady this happened to who was at a church she loved for 23 years and one of the apostles, Lou Engle, was brought in to speak to her church. And she started warning people about that and it was said she had a Jezebel spirit and she and her husband were shown the door. So there’s really an abuse of power. Really, even the claim to be an authoritative apostle *is* an abuse of power if

you're claiming to have authority you don't actually have and that you haven't provided evidence that you do have. And so those are some of the things that we talk about in the book.

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DG: We haven't said anything yet about prayers of declaration, either. These dovetail with the whole prophetic as well because it's a manner of praying, either in corporate worship or individually, where you make declarations rather than issue petitions asking God for things and submitting the outcome of things to his will in humility. You simply declare what God should do, and that prayer is functioning more or less like leverage to get the Spirit to do things in the world. And if you can get more people on board, participating in the same prayer declarations collectively, that increases the chances... You can see almost the superstition involved here. It increases the chances that what you have declared is going to happen, and now you've taught people a whole way of praying that is foreign to scripture. It isn't prayer after all, and if that's what you think you're doing when you're... Well, I should say, if that's what you think prayer is, then there's a very real possibility that you're actually living a prayerless life because you've exchanged one thing—the real deal of prayer—for declaration prayer.

So anytime authority is used to redirect people into error, whether it's theological or practical error like how you pray, that has negative consequences in the lives of those people. And I think, too, that this fosters a kind of culture of fear that even people embedded in the culture in the life of such a church don't recognize as fear. But we've talked to people who come out of the movement who have said, "We're supposed to be experiencing liberation in Christ and now we're activated in all these powers and these capacities. But the truth is, we feel inadequate to make decisions on our own. We want confirmation of that from an authority figure. And then we don't know if we make a false step. If we're told that something is going to happen and we pray prayers of declaration in line with that expectation and then it doesn't happen, we're made to feel like it has something to do with a lack of faith on our part." So that's the sense in which I think you actually can foster a kind of fearful, almost cringy, experience.

MH: I would think it would be terribly discouraging because how could you look someone in the eye and say, "I'm sorry, but what I really think here is that your prayer doesn't have any chance of being answered unless you get a certain number of people with you." How is that not self-defeating or just defeating?

DG: And even if they don't say it.

MH: Yeah, even if they don't say it.

DG: Yeah.

MH: What if you're a Christian who doesn't have access to big networks or big prayer groups and just numbers? It's a numbers game. Well, then you're out of luck.

HP: And another thing, you know, Kris Vallotton teaches (I think it's in his book *Heavy Rain*) that people who are not under the authority of an apostle cannot expect to have their prayers or their prayer declarations answered and that people who are under the authority of an apostle can expect to have their prayer declarations answered. So that seems spiritually abusive to me, that teaching.

MH: Yeah.

DG: I would even say that if you purport to be a prophet and you're not or you purport to be a prophet and you don't pony up with evidence and you get things wrong, that's almost... That's inherently a form of an abuse of power because you're projecting an authority that you don't actually have unless God has bestowed that, and here we have evidence that God has not.

MH: Let's move to chapter 6. In chapter 6, you take on revival claims within the NAR. And I know whenever we get into this topic, the people that I've talked with, they're going to reference something for validation. Oh, there was this revival, there was that revival. And whether it belongs linked to the NAR or not, they may link it to that. I mean, who knows? But in that chapter, what would you say is counterfeit about NAR revival claims? What are you trying to enlighten the audience with in that chapter?

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HP: Well, so we talk about when it comes to revivals found in scripture that proclamation of the Word of God and confession of sin are the dominant features, like the hugely dramatic revivals led by King Josiah and Ezra in 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah. In Nar, though, the focus really is on flashy miracles, it's on apostolic rulership over society. And so actually in our chapter, we give 13 signs of counterfeit NAR revival and how you can tell if maybe you're unwittingly getting roped into a counterfeit NAR revival. So we talk about things like in NAR revival there is really this heavy emphasis not on teaching of the Word of God, but on the ministry time usually at the end of a message when they do things like fire tunnels where people will run through. You have people putting their hands up and creating a tunnel and people will run through the tunnel and supposedly they have these dramatic encounters with the Holy Spirit during that. They can be pretty chaotic times.

MH: It sounds like a football game.

HP: Yeah, the emphasis during ministry time is really on prophetic words, on healings, on fire tunnels, on these kind of things and not on the teaching of the Word of God. In NAR revival, there is a lot of talk about new strategies that

apostles and prophets are allegedly giving the church, and these are like new revelations that are required in order to build God's kingdom. So you might hear things about the "Seven Mountain Mandate" as a new revelation God has given for taking control of the seven major societal institutions like media, government, education, etc. Prayer declarations... We talked about that already as a real sign of NAR revival—when people are praying in declarations and it's not petitionary humble prayer asking God to do things but it's saying that he will do such and such—heal someone, or release finances or something like that. In NAR revival, there is something called "strategic level spiritual warfare." So they engage in things like warfare prayer and prophetic acts, and these are things that are believed to take on these territorial spirits that are believed to be ruling over societal institutions or over certain cities and nations. And they're taking on these spirits and seeking to cast them out and engaging in these prophetic acts like pouring anointing oil around the perimeter of a city building or things like that that are supposedly supposed to help cast out these territorial spirits. There is a real emphasis on encounters with angels. There's a lot of talk by NAR leaders about their own encounters that they claim to have had with angels and how we should seek such encounters with angels, and there are also courses and books and things like that teaching people how to have these encounters with angels. So there's a lot more we talk about, but those are some of the things.

MH: That's some of the stuff that mystifies me because, again, I spent a lot of time in these subjects biblically and I don't have an example of where we're supposed to solicit angels. I mean, it's something so obvious that you'd think if this was part of revival or part of your Christian life or part of your sanctification, somebody in scripture would mention this and would say, "Oh, yeah, and here's a practice you can engage in, some spiritual practice to solicit the input of the ministry of an angel," or something like that. Again, I'm just sort of dumbfounded by the obvious questions that I think should pop into somebody's mind when they're told this kind of information, but that don't pop into anybody's mind. So I mean if it bothers me, it must just really perturb you two. [laughter] You just deal with it all the time and I more or less get it in an email once in a while challenging me on something I said in the book. On what basis? "Well, my angel told me this." Well, that's just too bad because I don't accept that as an authoritative voice. We don't look within for truth; we look to scripture for truth.

Anyway, I've seen enough of this kind of thing. Again, some of these examples are more familiar than others to me, and I'm sure in this audience you're going to get a lot of that, but again, your normal charismatic... I didn't hear about any of this kind of really strange stuff until I ran into your book and started reading it and, of course, looking up the footnotes and what not, looking at people online, and so on and so forth. It's astonishing to me. It's astonishing to me that we can have such a gap between claims and people's knowledge of scripture to evaluate claims, but yet we do and it's really disturbing.

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Let's switch gears a little bit to The Passion Translation. Now, again, I don't get a whole lot of interaction with the NAR, but I'll often get... maybe not often. I've maybe gotten a dozen emails over the course of a few years about The Passion Translation. So what can you tell us about The Passion Translation? What is it and how has it been evaluated by Bible translators?

HP: Well, it's a very popular so-called translation made by the NAR apostle Brian Simmons. Simmons claimed that in 2009 Jesus Christ visited him in his room, breathed on him, and commissioned him to write a new translation of the Bible. And Simmons claimed that by blowing on him, Jesus gave him the spirit of revelation and would give him secrets of the Hebrew language. Part of the reason this translation is so popular is because it has been endorsed by many very influential NAR leaders including Bill Johnson, Bobby Houston, Banning Liebscher from Jesus Culture, and many others. And there are a lot of problems with this translation. We talk about three in our book. One is that Simmons is not qualified to produce a translation. He admits he is not a scholar of Biblical languages. (We could talk about each of these.) But number two is that it adds to God's Word. Throughout the translation, Simmons says freely sprinkled words, phrases, sentences, and concepts that aren't found in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Then the third reason we talk about the problem with The Passion Translation is that it smuggles in NAR teachings and that actually gives the appearance that these NAR teachings and practices, like ones we've been talking about today, are actually supported by scripture.

MH: Yeah, this to me is the most insidious thing that the movement does. And I tell people you should never trust a translation that is produced by one person. I mean, there are reasons why publishing houses produce committee-based translations. It's so that you can have your work judged by your peers, judged by a field of experts, layer after layer after layer after layer of having your work judged and evaluated until you produce the end-product translation through editorial levels. Whereas if you have just one person doing it, who's going to evaluate that other than that person? It becomes very idiosyncratic and very, very inwardly driven, if I can use that. It's idiosyncratic. It's very self-styled. So this one nugget that you had about the Hebrew language—that was new to me when I came across that. But exactly what did Simmons claim about learning Hebrew? Because it makes me feel like I wasted an awful lot of time in graduate school.

DG: [laughs] Yeah.

HP: Well, he said is not a scholar of the Biblical languages. He does claim, though, to have translated his Bible using original Aramaic manuscripts and has suggested that there have been recent discoveries showing that the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic, not Greek, as scholars have long believed. But the thing is, there have been no such discoveries.

MH: Right.

HP: There are no original Aramaic manuscripts. And so Mike Winger actually commissioned a group of scholars to review The Passion Translation, including Darrell Bock, Douglas Moo, Craig Blomberg, and others. And they found that it had so many hazards. Actually, Craig Blomberg suggested that The Passion Translation should come with a surgeon general's warning.

MH: [laughs] Yeah, I mean, what little I've seen of it... I mean, I've read portions of it. It reminded me of the Amplified Bible. I don't know if you guys remember that, but it was just what it sounds like. It wasn't really a translation. It's that somebody would start with an English Bible and then add lots of words to it, add lots of content to it, and it was very interpretive. It was highly interpretive, where you could take a block of scripture that in any normal translation might be between 100 and 150 words and you've got 300 words here in the Amplified Version because they keep adding and accruing interpretive layering to it. So that was my impression of it. But you're right, again, in what I've read of it, it is very stilted toward reinforcing specific theological items within the NAR in this translation that have nothing to do with what you would read in the original text. I'm sorry, but if you're going to produce a Bible translation, you need to know the Biblical languages. And you're absolutely right, there isn't a single manuscript of an Aramaic New Testament that has ever been found that is contemporaneous with the Greek material or first-century or anything like this—anything apostolic. As in, zero. There is no primary source material to support this at all. What you get later... Hundreds of years after the fact, you get the Greek New Testament translated into Syriac or into some other Aramaic dialect. You get that, but that's hundreds of years removed from the actual New Testament. So to me, this is either ignorance at a very deep level on Simmons' part or it's pure deception. I don't know which one to pick. Is it incompetence or malice? I don't know, but to me, like I said, this is the most sinister thing of the whole movement. And I'm probably sensitized to it because of my own training, but it just seems like, again, how could we possibly swallow this? But yet so many people do. What can you say? What can you do?

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DG: Yes, and it gets endorsements from people who really don't have the credentials to evaluate it. Bill Johnson will say, "This is a stunning development," "a great development in Bible translation," and he's recommending this book. When I visited the Bethel Church in Redding, California and went to the gift shop and the bookstore that is just right off the main sanctuary, most prominently featured was a huge rack displaying The Passion Translation. It was being promoted very vigorously, but Bill Johnson has no training for the evaluation of a translation of the Bible. So what criteria is he using when he says, "This is a brilliant piece of work?" On what basis is he saying that?

MH: Yeah, I might as well pick up a Chinese translation and say, “This is a stunning new work,” and I don’t know a word of Chinese.

DG: That’s a good comparison.

MH: Well, but that’s what you have going on here. He has no chops. He has no background or ability or training to make this evaluation, but yet he does.

DG: Mm-hmm.

HP: Well, thankfully, Bible Gateway has removed The Passion Translation. They no longer feature it. And I think some of the other apps have been removing The Passion Translation as well. So that’s good.

MH: Well, that’s interesting. I didn’t realize that they had removed it.

DG: We give examples of passages that are handled irresponsibly in this so-called translation in the book so people can have a look at a couple of things. 1) How was a passage of scripture actually rendered and how far from a good standard translation is that rendering? But another thing is that as he has been challenged with regard to some of his interpolations, he has made some revisions. So there are new editions of this coming out periodically reflecting changes because of the scrutiny that he has been subjected to. So here we have one of the most widely revised translations that is virtually given to us by the Spirit of God in his original claims about how this came about. That is kind of a marvel in itself—that it should require any kind of modification in such a short time span.

MH: Right. Right. Yeah, what happened to the Holy Spirit there?

DG: It’s a concession.

MH: Yeah.

DG: Mm-hmm.

MH: Yeah that... Boy, we could go on and on about that. But I want to veer toward wrapping up here because there are a lot of things we could talk about. The audience should know that in the rest of the book you do talk about Bethel music, which I’m sure a lot of people in this audience would want to hear something about. So if you want to chime in with that, feel free to do so. But we have a chapter on the worship music and another chapter on “Is it Always God’s Will to Heal?” and then “Deception-Proofing your Children” and then a conclusion about joining the resistance. So in the time that we have, I’m going to leave it up to you. Feel free to bring up something that you really feel is important for this

episode of the podcast to include as far as your work—this particular book, *Counterfeit Kingdom*.

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HP: One thing is the music is really important because most churches in America are using Bethel music and music produced by very overtly NAR influenced churches. So really a lot of people have told us that they were drawn to NAR or to Bethel Church initially because of the music. We've heard that a lot and people like the song and then they start, "Oh, where'd that song come from?" And they research it and learn more about Bethel and the next thing you know, they're drawn in. So with the music we talk about how NAR theology is really laced through the lyrics of the music, but a lot of people don't pick up on it because they don't know the NAR teachings and they don't know the buzzwords and so they don't catch it. But once their eyes are open to it, then they can see it. Also, we talk about how the leaders at Bethel Church... Like Bill Johnson, for example has openly stated that he sees Bethel music as a tool to export the teachings of the church and the practices of Bethel throughout the world. So they're very open about that and so we really urge people and churches to consider their use of NAR music and the ways that they may inadvertently be allowing people in their congregations to be drawn into NAR through this music.

DG: Yeah, Bill Johnson has said music bypasses all of the intellectual barriers and when the anointing of God is on a song, people will begin to believe things they wouldn't believe through teaching. So it's a deliberate attempt to subvert the exercise of reason—evaluating teaching by trying to penetrate at an emotional level using music and breaking down their barriers.

MH: Right, well, again, I'm a music idiot, but I was raised with brothers who weren't and I can see how the music that they listened to influenced their behavior for sure. We were all children of the 70s so we don't need to go any further than that [laughter], but I understand how that can work at least mechanically. Again, that sounds very... I don't know if I could use the word "deceptive" because if they're being so open about it, it's not an overt deception. But tactically it does feel deceptive.

HP: Yeah, and another important thing we talk about in the book are the tactics that the NAR leaders use to keep people from questioning their authority—the things that suppress critical thinking. And one thing we really want to point out is the euphemisms that are used. So a lot of people that are part of the New Apostolic Reformation will even deny that they are a part of the New Apostolic Reformation. For example, you can go to the International House of Prayer website right now (the International House of Prayer KC led by Mike Bickle) and they have a statement on there denying that IHOPKC is part of NAR. But the thing that is really important to realize is, do they hold to the core teaching? Do they believe there are authoritative governing apostles and prophets for today? That's the thing. And a lot of NAR leaders have realized that the word "offices" is

problematic to people—the idea... They've told us directly that they've stopped using the word "offices" and they are leaning more towards using words like "functions" or "ascension gifts" or "five-fold ministry" is another term that is used. So people really need to be aware that there are a lot of word games going on and euphemisms that are being used and different words to mean the same thing as referred to by NAR as governing apostles and prophets. So people really need to be alert to that.

MH: Last question here. What do you tell people, especially let's say people who are in the Pentecostal tradition and they love their church and their pastor does a good job and he's not a spiritual abuser? Or people who are charismatic? Again, people in these groups are going to have concerns, as you point out in your books. You don't make this a secret. I mean, your books are very fair in that, again, there are these other groups. We don't want to lump everybody into the same ball here, but what do you tell someone who is in one of these churches and suspects or begins to hear some of the buzz words or begins to hear talk about this kind of authority extending over their church and they can see that it's gaining some traction in their church? What do you tell them? What's your advice to them?

DG: Yeah, we begin our final chapter in the book with a passage from the book of Revelation verse 2 of chapter 2.

² "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

Jesus commands careful scrutiny of miracle claims and prophetic claims in this day and age and he commands churches collectively that are given to this kind of discernment and care to be faithful to scripture. So we encourage that, of course. We also know that there is a tacit comparison that goes on in the minds of many people between their home church, their own church, and a church like Bethel or another NAR-influenced church. And they see a discrepancy sometimes between what they think is the liveliness and the vivacity and the spiritual manifestation so palpable at a place like Bethel, and then they compare it with their own church and they say, "Gosh, we're missing the boat here. We're practically a dead church in comparison with all that excitement." I can't tell you, Mike, how many times I have had people say to me almost verbatim these words, "God is clearly doing a great work at Bethel Church. I might disagree with certain things that are going on there, but clearly the Spirit of God is at work." They're comparing a church where miracles and the prophetic, as they like to say, are so dominant as features and themes within the church and the life of the church that... Your own church just looks like... It just pales in comparison. And we don't think those are the right indicators of life and growth in a church or in the life of an individual. We want to see *moral miracles*—transformation of the lives of individuals, people that

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are being faithful, they're giving sacrificially, they're overcoming sin and temptation in their lives. You should be looking for these fruits of the spirit in your church and not be distracted by all of the fireworks that are associated with NAR.

MH: Right there. Right there. A simple observation like “the fruit of the spirit is not the gifts of the spirit.”

DG: Right.

MH: These are two different things. Yeah, you should be looking for repentance. I often (and I'm sure I asked it before way back in 2017)... But where is the role of suffering here—you know, overcoming adversity as part of sanctification? These sorts of processes that we read about and that Jesus warns his disciples are going to happen, that they're going to be reviled and persecuted and so on and so forth like he was? There seems to be no emphasis at all. Are you seriously telling me that a church in the Sudan where they have to deal with genocide, they have to deal with famine—any number of problems. And yet you have churches growing there, you know, numerically people who are not shipwrecking their faith. They don't have any of this NAR stuff going on. So you're telling me that's a weak church? That just seems astonishing to me. I mean, what have you got in the NAR churches that approximates what we see in these countries where the church is heavily persecuted, where it is really under extreme duress? I mean, it seems to me that is what the New Testament church had to cope with and they did it well.

DG: Right. So we have to apply the right criteria for evaluating the vitality of the church and to be able to recognize the actual work of the Spirit in the church. And signs and wonders, as Jesus warned, are not themselves a reliable indicator of the active work of the Holy Spirit in your midst. Not to say that they don't happen, you understand.

MH: Yeah.

DG: This is not to say that they don't happen.

MH: Right.

DG: But it's to be discerning about what is authentic and what is not, and that is not really as hard as people might think.

MH: If you're judging it by scripture, yeah.

DG: Right. So Bill Johnson teaches that when Jesus says in John 14:12, “The works that I have done you will do also and greater works than these,” Jesus is talking about miracles, and that is how The Passion Translation interprets the

passage. It uses the word “miracles” for *ergon* which is the Greek word for “works,” which has a much broader range of significance.

MH: Oh yeah.

DG: And you have to be very careful with the interpretation. You can’t just stipulate, “Oh, he’s gotta be talking about miracles.” I like to say these words were spoken to Jesus’ disciples in the upper room and you want to look for the facts in the book of Acts when you want to know what these words actually pertain to. And they don’t perform works that outstrip in grandeur the miracles of Jesus. He raised people from the dead, for goodness’ sake, and yet if that’s the benchmark for miracles today (that we’re supposed to be working even greater miracles than Jesus did), it shouldn’t be too hard to identify cases of miracles like that.

MH: Right. You would think they’d be obvious.

DG: And yet, the track record if really just not there.

MH: Yeah. Yeah, you would think it would be much more obvious than it is.

DG: Yeah, you would think it would be kind of like what happened with Moses and Pharaoh, right?

MH: Yeah.

DG: Sort of unmistakable, one of the miracles of Jesus.

MH: Or even miracles and the Canaanites. I mean, the Canaanites had heard about what happened with Pharaoh and so on and so forth. I mean, word spread.

DG: Mm-hmm.

1:20:00

MH: Well, this is a good place to wrap up. I want to thank you both for being on the podcast because I think, again, this is an important book. It’s an important topic. It can be very confusing. Emotions can run high here because what you’re not doing is you’re not lumping everybody into the same group, but there is sort of a substratum of certain ideas that are rippling out through evangelical churches of all stripes that are really starting to have a dramatic effect on the church at large. So again, I just want to thank you both for being on and for sharing this with us.

HP: Thanks. Thanks so much, Mike, for having us on. And I want to say, too, if people... I’ve done these interviews enough to know that afterwards people will say, “Well, they didn’t address this,” or “They didn’t address that,” and “We’re not

convinced yet.” I really encourage people to go read the book, *Counterfeit Kingdom*, and our earlier books because we go into great detail. We have extensive documentation and we deal with a lot of passages of scripture. So if we didn’t address those things during this interview, they may find us addressing those things there.

MH: Yeah and by the way, I’m glad you mentioned that. “Extensive documentation” here not only refers to things like commentaries, okay, where you’re doing work in the text to say, “No, the scripture means this and not that,” but you have an extensive documentation set and an extensive data set on your website—on your blog. I mean, these are tremendous resources, and a lot of the documentation comes directly from NAR source material. So that is part of the documentation that you’re talking about.

HP: That’s right.

DG: Yeah, thank you for mentioning that. And yet this new book, *Counterfeit Kingdom*, we believe reads well. I mean, it’s accessible. Even though we document things, the documentation is not obtrusive, it’s not highly technical.

MH: Mm-hmm.

DG: The discussion, we think, is one that people will be able to move through at a pace that is comfortable for them, and we hope, of course, illuminating as well.

TS: Okay, Mike, another great conversation. You know, my opinion is, you know, it’s about emotion. You know, these people love God so much that they suspend reality, but then God is beyond reality so that kind of gives them a path to believe and be able to be abused and taken advantage of. But it’s innocent people who have good intentions, but then again, we all know what the road to hell is paved with.

MH: Yeah.

TS: You know, that’s just my two thoughts. That people are highly emotional and will believe this and want to believe it, of course. Mike, you know, I have a really close personal childhood friend who is a director of one of those supernatural schools. And we have a few friends (my wife does) that actually went through the supernatural school and what not and these people have, you know, the most generous heart and good intentions. These people who are practicing this stuff, even running some of these churches, you know, they don’t have a bad bone or ill will or bad intentions to deceive and what not. So, I mean, I kind of got

firsthand experience with this. I guess it's financial gain. I mean, what's the end goal with Bethel and why would they want to do this? Is this for finance or power or what is it?

MH: I think, to me, it always seems to go back to power and influence.

TS: Yeah.

MH: I'm sure they have plenty of the other with record sales and what not. I don't know how any of that works, but it always seems to just be about influence and power.

TS: Yeah, well, alright. Well, again, you can get a link on our website, nakedbiblepodcast.com, to the book. And again, that book is called *Counterfeit Kingdom*. And we appreciate Holly and Doug coming on. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.