

An Appeal to Holly Pivec and Professor Doug Geivett to Separate Yourselves From the Hyper-Critics

In a response to my recent article “Dispelling the Myths About NAR (the New Apostolic Reformation),” Holly Pivec (on behalf of professor Doug Geivett) states that they, like me “want to see ‘constructive, fruitful interaction’” concerning “NAR” (the New Apostolic Reformation). She expresses concern that I have grouped them together with the hyper-critics (my term, not hers), and she believes my article was careless and inaccurate.

She writes, “He puts all critics in the same basket: they all misunderstand what NAR is. This can be seen in the way he opens his article. He gives a lengthy description of NAR from a critic of the movement. But he doesn’t identify the critic; he doesn’t produce his source. The implication is that this critic speaks for all NAR critics.”

Actually, I was quite surprised to read this statement. The *second word* of my article was hyper-linked to the critic in question. Of course I identified the critic and of course I produced the source. (In this case, it was Wretched Radio’s “Drunk in the Spirit” DVD.)

Some of her other concerns were equally flawed, and so, her entire article should be read with a large grain of salt. But rather than spend time addressing her other misstatements, it’s best that we move forward, since one of Holly’s biggest concerns is that I have grouped all NAR critics together.

In point of fact, I did not. I simply stated that *some* of the NAR hyper-criticism stems from the book she and professor

Geivett authored, and that “they included charismatic leaders who believe in fivefold ministry today (as I have, for decades) and grouped them together as part of NAR.” I added, “The book also painted a very negative picture, although I believe that the authors were sincere in their writing and sought to do solid research.”

So, I did not group Holly and professor Geivett together with the hyper-critics; I stated that “some” of the terminological confusion came from their book; and I stated my belief that they were sincere and sought to do solid research. Based on that belief, let’s address some concrete concerns.

Holly offers this useful description of NAR: “The core NAR teaching is that the church must be governed by present-day apostles and prophets. The key word in that definition is ‘governed.’ By governed, NAR leaders mean that apostles and prophets must hold formal authoritative offices in church government. This definition has two important corollaries: 1) These apostles and prophets claim extraordinary authority, and 2) they claim to bring new revelation the church needs to advance God’s kingdom.”

Based on this definition, I don’t think I know a single leader who is part of NAR. Not one. I don’t know a single “apostle” or “prophet” who claims “extraordinary authority.” If I did, I would challenge them to their face.

Do I know apostolic leaders who exercise “authority” over their network similar to that of a denominational head? Yes, I do. In those cases, the churches that look to them do so voluntarily, asking for oversight and accountability, similar to what happens in traditional denominations.

Do I know any who claim some kind of “extraordinary authority” similar to that wielded by the Twelve? Absolutely not. Again, if I did, I would challenge such leaders to their face.

Have I heard of so-called apostles who were abusive in their

use of authority? Absolutely, and I have renounced this clearly. But I've heard of pastors doing the same thing.

Authority can be easily abused. I have a whole chapter about that in my latest book, where I also address the misuse of the term "apostle" today.

Holly makes reference to Heidi Baker, and then asks, "Besides Baker, how are others viewed by their followers? What about Bill Johnson or Che Ahn or Rick Joyner? We make the case in our book that many of these leaders are not viewed merely as church planters. They're viewed as apostles possessing extraordinary authority and revelation."

But this, again, illustrates one of the problems I have with Holly's methodology. Does she have concrete evidence that Heidi Baker claims "extraordinary authority and revelation," or is she asking how Heidi is viewed by her followers? If the latter, which followers are those?

What if some of Holly's followers viewed her as a hyper-critic? Would that make her one? What if they wrongly viewed her as anti-charismatic? Would that be true? Certainly not.

While I can't speak for Heidi or Bill or Che or Rick in any official capacity, I can say that I've never heard any of them speak of themselves the way Holly depicts.

To be clear, I've only been in a few meetings with Heidi and had a few conversations with her. The same with Bill. I worked more closely with Che from the late 1990s into the early 2000s, and I've been in many leadership meetings with Rick and had many conversations with him.

Yet in all my time with Che, he presented himself as a servant of his apostolic network of churches and a servant of his fellow-leaders. (This is how we related for the few years when I was part of his "apostolic team." It was all about serving others.)

As for Rick Joyner, ironically, he was the unnamed “well-known charismatic leader” whom I referenced in my article. I had asked him recently, “What’s the first thing that comes to mind when you think of NAR?”

He responded immediately with, “It was a good attempt by Peter Wagner, but I strongly differed with him on a number of key points, which is why I never joined it.” (For the record, he was quite shocked when I told him that, according to the critics, he was also a major NAR leader.)

Yet here he is, being listed as one of those who: 1) believes “the church must be governed by present-day apostles and prophets”; and 2) affirms that apostles and prophets wield “extraordinary authority.” Is this constructive or fruitful?

Again, it’s this kind of imprecision that concerns me. If these men and women believe what Holly claims, let them answer for it. I would tell them plainly I disagreed. (Rick and I are well-known for having some strong disagreements while remaining good friends and fellow-workers.)

If this is not what they believe, then let the false charges be dropped. How else can we be constructive and move forward?

The truth be told, Holly and Prof. Geivett have never been my primary concern. I was sent copies of their books by the publisher as soon as they were released and looked at them immediately to understand the gist of their concerns. (I didn’t read them cover to cover, but I did get acquainted with the contents.) I was actually going to contact them to come on the radio but then other things came up and I moved on.

All that to say, to my knowledge, in the past, I never made reference to their books in a negative way nor did I respond to them publicly. I only got into the NAR debate when I began to hear some of the hysterical, hyper-critical, conspiratorial attacks on this alleged worldwide, demonic movement. And then, when I was falsely accused of being one of the leaders of NAR,

I debunked that nonsense head-on.

So, for the sake of clarity, please take this article as an open invitation to you, Holly and Doug, to join me on the air to talk through the relevant issues, not to debate or argue. Can we do it?

I do believe there is a place for “governing” apostles and prophets in some cases, just as I believe there’s a governing role for evangelists, pastors and teachers, in the right setting and context. I do *not* believe they have “extraordinary authority”; I do *not* believe they are bringing new revelation that the church must follow; and I do *not* believe that every church needs some kind of “apostolic covering.”

In any case, these are the kinds of things we can discuss with maturity and grace. Will you two join me on the air? We can then discuss whether the Bible distinguishes between apostolic “offices” and “gifts,” and, if so, why that distinction is important. (I agree with what my friend professor Craig Keener has written on apostles; see [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).)

Let me also use this article to call on you, Holly and professor Geivett, to distance yourselves from the hyper-critics, since you say that you, too, are “saddened” by some of their rhetoric.

Let’s start with the categorical statements by Wretched Radio that, “The world’s fastest growing sect of Christianity is not Christian at all.” And, “The New Apostolic Reformation worships God drunk in the spirit and they teach scant amounts of truth.”

Will you state clearly that those are not your sentiments?

Also, since I was never listed in your research, and since I do *not* affirm what you present as the core tenets of NAR—in other words, based on your definition, I’m not part of NAR—will you distance yourself from websites like this and

this and this which list me as a “NAR apostle”?

And will you state clearly that you do not believe that the Jesus of NAR “is not *the* Jesus”—in other words, that the alleged leaders of NAR are not believers at all and are preaching a false gospel? This is some of the rhetoric that concerns me.

But I ask you to do this for your sake, not mine. When critics wrongly attack me, it only encourages me to keep honoring the Lord and His Word. But I would hate for you and professor Geivett to be grouped together with them, and to the extent I was guilty of implying in that in my article, I certainly apologize. Again, if you look at the wording, I think you’ll see that was never my intent.

So, let’s continue this conversation on the air as brothers and sisters in the Lord, and let’s bring clarity to God’s people as best as we can. Do we have a deal?