

Ongoing Drama Ensues After Christian Radio Host Accuses Mark Driscoll of Plagiarism

Over the past few weeks, pastor Mark Driscoll has found himself embroiled in a controversy involving plagiarism.

The drama started on Nov. 21, when syndicated Christian radio host Janet Mefferd interviewed the Mars Hill Church pastor on her show. She accused him of quoting Peter Jones without proper citation in Driscoll's book *A Call to Resurgence*.

"In this book, I took [Jones'] big idea and worked it out through the cultural implications, but I wasn't working specifically from his text," the Seattle pastor responded.

The interview continued as Driscoll defended himself and Mefferd berated him with comments and questions.

"Tyndale House Publishers was provided a recording of the show by representatives of Pastor Driscoll. A number of people at Tyndale reviewed the tape and were stunned, not only by the accusations, but by the belligerent tone of Ms. Mefferd's questioning," Tyndale's Todd Starowitz said in a statement provided to Religion News Service columnist Jonathan Merritt.

"Tyndale has taken immediate steps as in the process of reviewing the section of Pastor Driscoll's book that has been called into question. Pastor Driscoll has also reached out to Mr. Jones," Starowitz continued.

But the accusations did not end there. Mefferd posted on her social media pages photocopied evidence that Driscoll borrowed material from D.A. Carson's *New Bible Commentary*—word for word, without proper citation—in his book *Trial 8: Witnesses from 1 & 2 Peter*.

In a second column from Merritt, Carson's assistant, Daniel Ahn, was quoted, saying, "At the moment, Dr. Carson does not want to comment on these accusations of plagiarism against Mark Driscoll."

Merritt also shared this statement from Jones' ministry, TruthXchange, provided by Jones' assistant, Joshua Gielow: "At this time, Dr. Jones and TruthXchange will not be making public statements, but we do pray for reconciliation among all parties involved."

In addition, Tyndale provided another statement: "Tyndale House takes any accusation of plagiarism seriously and has therefore conducted a thorough in-house review of the original material and sources provided by the author. After this review we feel confident that the content in question has been properly cited in the printed book and conforms to market standards."

As Merritt points out, Driscoll has been outspoken in the past on the matter of plagiarism. In his book *Vintage Church*, Driscoll wrote, "Do not speak anyone else's messages. Doing so amounts to plagiarism, unless you get permission. Worse, it subverts God's work in and through you. ... If you use the work of others, you are not a teacher, and you should quit your job and do anything but speak."

The story took an interesting turn Wednesday when Mefferd announced on her radio show that she removed the interview with Driscoll from her website, as well as the visual evidence she later provided.

"A few weeks ago, as many people know, I conducted an interview with pastor Mark Driscoll," she reportedly said. "I feel now that in retrospect, I should have conducted myself in a better way. I now realize the interview should not have occurred at all.

"I should have contacted Tyndale House directly to alert them

to the plagiarism issue. And I never should have brought it to the attention of listeners publicly. So I would like to apologize to all of you and to Mark Driscoll for how I behaved. I am sorry.”

She added, “Unfortunately, I didn’t anticipate that the story would go viral online the way it did and creating such dissension with the Christian community was never my aim. And so in an effort to right things as best as I can, I have now removed all of the materials related to the interview off my website, and also off my social media.”

In the latest development, Ingrid Schlueter, a part-time assistant producer for Mefferd’s show, reportedly resigned over the controversy, said Merritt in a third column.

“I was a part-time, topic producer for Janet Mefferd until yesterday when I resigned over this situation,” Schlueter wrote in a comment tread originally found at Spiritual Sounding Board that has since been removed.

She continued, “All I can share is that there is an evangelical celebrity machine that is more powerful than anyone realizes. You may not go up against the machine. That is all. Mark Driscoll clearly plagiarized and those who could have underscored the seriousness of it and demanded accountability did not. That is the reality of the evangelical industrial complex.”

Merritt wrote Friday that he called Mefferd and asked her to confirm whether Schlueter had resigned. She responded, “No comment.” Later in the day Mefferd tweeted, “My producer has not resigned. My part-time assistant producer has resigned.”