

# IHOP Postmortem, Part 1

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 06 April 2025

Preacher: Chris Oswald

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     . . .

. . .

are probably not hyper-charismatics. I'm going to engage in a polemical podcast today. By polemical, I mean I'm actually going to spend this podcast correcting errors extant within a particular subset of the visible church, and that being the hyper charismatic movement. Before I begin into those critiques, I first want to talk a little bit about this idea of polemical preaching, polemical teaching, and so forth. We don't get much of it these days, and I don't really know how much is enough. I don't think it's a steady diet kind of thing, but I will say that some of the greatest preaching in the history, greatest preaching and teaching in the history of the church was polemical in nature. I'm thinking, for instance, of Irenaeus's work against heretics. Spurgeon did this when he opposed Marxism, and one of the best sermons I've ever heard was preached by the Baptist great W.A. Criswell, who preached a sermon at the

Southern Baptist Convention, gosh, probably late 70s, aimed directly at theological liberalism. That guy was one of those examples. Adrian Rogers fits into this category as well. The expository formula does not work for them. They don't preach that way. But man, it's hard not to be edified when you listen to some of those old Southern Baptist preachers. Adrian Rogers, in my opinion, is a seriously overlooked guy when it comes to—if you're a person who wants to learn how to preach, I don't know how you don't spend time listening to Adrian Rogers' sermons. He does have his failures, his weaknesses, but boy, man, he does a great job. That was a completely unintended rabbit trail. Sorry about that. My point is that polemical preaching does have value. It is not always, per se, value in correcting the opponents themselves, but certainly in safeguarding the sheep from the errors that exist in a particular movement. It's got its value. Today, I'm going to be polemical. I'm going to be critical, corrective, admonishing toward what is commonly considered the hyper-charismatic movement. Specifically, what I mean by the hyper-charismatics are those churches and movements related to what is known as NAR, the New Apostolic Reformation. IHOP was a part of that, as is Bethel, and there are many other groups that are loosely connected to this movement.

It appears to me that this is a movement that is dying out, but it is still much stronger today than it used to be. So, for instance, take this for what it's worth. I don't know how accurate these statistics are, but in 2015, we do have a fairly firm number that about 3 million American Christians were connected to NAR churches, New Apostolic Reformation churches, and some estimates put that at 33 million in the past. And we're going to be able to do that. And we're going to be able to do that.

[ 4 : 5 0 ]     Certainly, as we look into our own particular context, a lot of the folks associated with this movement either live in Kansas City or have had some connection in the past to Kansas City. Due to the IHOP stuff, a lot of them are rethinking all of this. So, in one sense, my aim is to just help you and protect you.

But in another sense, I want to talk in such a way as to care for these folks. I have had a chance to talk to a few families who were attending the IHOP church, and I've been very open with them about how I believe that they had certain blind spots due to their own sin that allowed them to remain in those places. But I definitely did that as I've talked to these families in a way that was like, hey, we all sin. We all have blind spots. Your blind spots have been revealed. But that is not to say that I don't have blind spots and so on and so forth. So, I actually am aiming to communicate these things in such a way that you would feel comfortable, because I'm sure many of you have friends connected to that world. I want to communicate this in a way that you would feel comfortable sharing this podcast with them, because I genuinely do care for them. I know, based on some firsthand conversations, that a great number of people who were involved in IHOP in particular are not attending church anywhere now. And that breaks my heart. I do believe that they need to, in order to kind of recover from that experience, confront some of their own sin, the sins that would have made it seem like that was ever a good church. But I also want to communicate that in a way that is gentle and understanding. So, there's probably three things about polemical preaching teaching that you should think about. First of all, it needs to be firm and clear. Titus 2, 11 through 15 says,

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. And then Paul tells the young pastor Titus, Declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

So, polemical preaching needs to be firm. Secondly, it needs to be gentle. 2 Timothy 2, 24 through 26 says again to a young pastor, And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will. So, you won't be hearing anything that is particularly spicy. I will be direct, I will be firm, but I will not be hyperbolic or bombastic, even though these are parts of my personality naturally. I turn those dials down in this conversation intentionally. And thirdly, related to polemical preaching, the point is to use the error as a way of offering contrast with the truth.

While we do hope that people involved in the error receive correction and repent, I think the main value of polemical preaching, kind of like the main value of apologetics, is to sure up the faith of those who are not currently in error.

[ 9 : 27 ] With polemical preaching and teaching, you have this way of being able to say, not this, but that. And that winds up actually clarifying key truths and further edifying believers who aren't themselves in error. So, that's kind of a guide that I'm working through in an attempt to follow as I talk about the various errors at work in the new apostolic reformation movement.

And I guess fourthly, it of course needs to be biblical. If you're going to be firm, you have to be firm based on some sense of authority, and that authority can't be yours.

It has to be the authority of the Holy Scriptures. And so, you know, we have to work through this biblically. And for me, John 14 through 16, though not by any means the only place the Bible talks about the Holy Spirit, offers sufficient clarity about the Holy Spirit that can be used to address this issue in a political fashion.

So, I'm going to actually just try to stay as close as I can to what Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit in his farewell discourse in John 14 through 16. And for those of you who may have been handed this podcast by someone else, this isn't like I was...

This isn't like I was just coming up with this idea of correcting Gnar stuff out in thin air. This is tied into our sermon series, which is working through the book of John and this Sunday, the most recent Sunday I was in, John 16.

[ 11 : 14 ] But in reality, I've been thinking about the Holy Spirit really extensively through 14 through 16 because Jesus talks about it so much in these passages. So, I'm going to try to limit this to three particular critiques of the hyper-charismatic movement in relationship to their understanding and practice with the Holy Spirit.

And the first, the three critiques would be, number one, within that movement, there is a failure to distinguish the discontinuity between the apostolic age and this current age.

And I'll explain what that means in a moment. Number two, there is a division between the Spirit and the Word.

And when we look in the Word, we'll see that there is no way to create that division. The Spirit and the Word go hand in hand. And finally, a general failure to emphasize Christ.

So, those are the three critiques I'll be bringing. Let's go ahead and get into the first one related to a failure to distinguish the apostolic age from the current age.

[ 12 : 33 ] Now, those of you who know me know that I, from a very young age, have come to the Scriptures with a lot of questions.

I tend to wonder, I tend to ask questions behind questions behind questions. And kind of one of the classic experiences of my childhood was I was the annoying kid in Sunday school who kept asking why.

I asked too many whys. At one point, this very sweet couple who taught our Sunday school class when I was probably 11 or something like that. And this is, you know, in a Southern Baptist church.

They gave books out to all the kids who, and the books were like these little children's books about certain Bible characters. And they gave them according to our personalities.

And I remember this one kid in my class who I think now is actually running for political office. He got the thief on the cross because he was just a butthole.

[ 13 : 43 ] He was just an arnery kid. And I got Doubting Thomas. I got a little children's book about Doubting Thomas. And it was explained to me by this sweet couple.

Like, Chris, you just have a lot of questions and you are kind of always wondering the why behind the why. And I remember kind of feeling ashamed at the time by that.

Not because of the couple. They were very nice about it. But I remember asking the kid, like, hey, do you want to switch books? And he's like, yeah. I don't think either of us were ready to deal with the essential nature of our personalities.

So we switched and I came home with the thief on the cross book and he came home with the, he went home with the Doubting Thomas book. I ask a lot of questions when I read the Bible.

And to me, these questions kind of feel like elephants in the room. You know, it's like, is anyone else seeing this particular problem with this passage and so on and so forth?

[ 14 : 48 ] So I don't, I don't know any pastor in particular that is more like naturally doubtful than I am in terms of, I just tend to focus on the weak points of an argument.

And one of the things that has stood out to me for a very long time as kind of an elephant in the room is when Jesus is talking to the apostles, how do I know that he's talking to me?

Does that make sense? It's like, and this goes to the Great Commission. I don't know if you know this, but some people actually feel as if the Great Commission is not for all Christians, that that was word given explicitly to the apostles.

So I dabbled in that question and wondered, well, is that true? And you would, you would be probably quite disturbed by the number of questions I've explored over the years. The nice thing for you is, if I'm your pastor, is that you're probably not going to bring any doubt up that I've not had myself.

So, you know, you read through the Gospels and Jesus is saying all this stuff, but he's saying this stuff to a particular group of people in sort of the natural way.

[ 16 : 05 ] You rarely hear preachers ask this question, like, is this for all of us or just for them? And that's going to really come up in John 14 through 16 because he's making all these promises about power and about the power of the Holy Spirit.

And you begin to wonder, okay, is this for all of us or is this just for them? Now, the simple, and I would argue, you know, overly simplistic way of handling that is to just say, well, they're just like we are.

And so it all applies across the board. And that's true to some extent. The apostles are just like us. I mean, Paul himself says, I am the chief of sinners.

Peter himself calls himself a fellow shepherd. The apostles routinely refer to themselves as brothers and co-laborers with other Christians. So in one sense, they are like us.

And definitely in this sense, we all enter through the same door. We were all enemies of God. We were all dead in our sins and trespasses following the course of the prince of the power of the air by nature, children of wrath.

[ 17 : 24 ] That's just as true with Peter as it is of me. And so there is a sense in which they are just like us. And so we can read the Bible that way to some degree.

But there is another sense in which they were special. They were given unique apostolic authority and anointing. They did perform miracles of unique quality, quantity, and predictability.

And most importantly, they wrote the scriptures. So the apostles are like us in the way that we are all saved by faith in Jesus. That not of works, lest any man should boast.

But they are unlike us also. They held a unique place in the development of the church. This question is related, is a subset of a broader question related to continuity and discontinuity.

it is a place where a lot of errors occur, including, I would argue, the error of paedobaptism. And the error is always something like, the error, the question behind the error is always something like, what has stayed the same and what has changed?

[ 18 : 45 ] or the Presbyterians. The error, I believe, they are committing is that they emphasize too much continuity between the covenants.

And so they look for a replacement sign of circumcision and call that baptism. So there's a lot of controversies that emerge out of this question of how much have things changed and how much have things stayed the same?

The cessationists who believe that there was a very particular period of time in which God worked in a particularly miraculous way, they are very firm on the discontinuation or the discontinuity side of things.

They're like, this was a very special time and the early church was a very special time and this particular period of time that we're living in is very different from that time.

The hyper charismatics do the exact opposite. They're on the opposite extreme. They see no difference between the early church age and our age.

[ 19 : 58 ] That's where one of their errors lies. The apostles were special. They were given unique apostolic authority and anointing and like I said, they performed miracles not only of unique quality but of unique quantity and predictability.

And again, most importantly, they wrote the scriptures. So they're like us in one way. We are all just sinners saved by grace. But they were appointed to a unique position at a unique moment in the history of the development of the church.

That's what I believe anyway. The apostles were a unique group of men who existed for a specific period of time and they had two qualifications that no longer really work.

The first was that they had to be eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ. Acts 1, 21-22 is your proof text for that. And 1 Corinthians 9-1 includes Paul in that equation.

And secondly, they were directly commissioned by Jesus to speak and write the scriptures and were treated as foundations.

[ 21 : 18 ] Here we would turn to Galatians 1-1 and 2 Peter 3-2. I'll include all these texts in the show notes. So Galatians 1-1 deals with this, 2 Peter 3-2.

And important, I think most importantly, Ephesians 2-20 where the church is said to have been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. So I think the proper view is to see that foundation as being laid once and for all in the centuries leading up to and continuing into the first century of the church.

That there was a foundation laying period. And I think that's the most natural way to think about what Paul is talking about in Ephesians. The apostles were part of the foundation for the church, and the foundation has been poured, and it's been set, and we don't go back and mess with the foundation.

So this view of a discontinuity between the apostles and the apostolic age, I guess you could say, and the rest of church history, is pretty significant in his farewell discourse.

Here's how I would propose that you think about this. When Jesus is talking to the apostles, he is providing them particulars.

[ 22 : 50 ] But when he's talking also to us through the apostles, and there he's providing patterns. here's a good example of that. The Great Commission.

The apostles literally did go from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the outermost parts. So there's a particulars. Now, that passage does apply to us, but not in that particular way.

That passage applies more in a general pattern. Right? I think pretty much everybody, including hyper-charismatics, understand that they don't have to start Jerusalem, and then go to Judea, and then go to Samaria, and then go to the outermost parts.

I think pretty much everybody understands that that passage, the Great Commission in Matthew 28, was a particular thing for the apostles, but more of a pattern thing for us.

And so for us, it would be something like start where you live, and move into your broader city, and then into regional things, and then finally into the outermost parts.

[ 23 : 58 ] Here's another example of this particulars versus patterns kind of thing. Again, what I'm arguing is that the apostles were special, and that when Jesus was speaking to them, what he said had something to do with their particular upcoming experience, but Jesus was also speaking to us through them, only the particulars fade away into something more like patterns.

One example being the Great Commission, another being John 16, 1-9, the Gospel of John 16, 1-4, Jesus says this, I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me, but I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.

That literally happened to the apostles. But it didn't literally happen to us. It figuratively happens to us when we are excluded or persecuted, see Matthew 5, 11-12.

Here's another example. In John 16, verse 12, Jesus says this, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

[ 25 : 23 ] When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Now, when directed toward the apostles, this promise predicts the formation of the New Testament. They received direct revelation from the Holy Spirit that allowed them to write the books of the New Testament.

They were, as the scriptures say, carried along by the Holy Spirit, writing, inspired, inerrant, and divine revelation. So for the apostles, Jesus' words, starting in John 16, 12, are particular.

There's also something there for us, but it's more like a pattern. When directed toward us, the idea moves from revelation, the writing of New Scripture, to illumination.

[ 26 : 32 ] For the apostles, the Holy Spirit gave them the words of Christ to write as Bible. We are beneath the apostles in this regard, and instead of revelation, the Holy Spirit provides illumination of what the apostles and the prophets before them wrote.

Illumination means that the Holy Spirit opens our spiritual eyes to the existing scriptures to help us understand and apply them in a way that pleases God. And so one of the critiques I would have for the New Apostolic Reformation is that they failed to make the distinction that involves understanding some level of discontinuity between the Apostolic Age and this current age.

This will lead to many errors. Number one, it will give guys just like me who do not, do not deserve the title of Apostle, people.

It will give guys just like me that have a certain level of leadership, natural leadership capacity and charisma, who know how to put themselves before people in a way that, you know, seems winsome and credible and so forth.

It will give guys like me more authority than guys like me should have. So this is one of the things you'll see in the New Apostolic Reformation.

[ 28 : 03 ] people literally just like me, both as impressive and unimpressive as me, suddenly become, in the eyes of the people, apostolic.

they throw the title Apostle around as if it is up to them or someone else, I don't know, to assign who an Apostle is.

And this creates a unique level of authority for people who should not have that kind of authority. What filters downstream from that is, of course, an abuse of that authority.

There is a way in which the New Apostolic Reformation, one of the most toxic aspects of it, is this sort of concentration of credibility on people who shouldn't be viewed with as much credibility as they have, as they're viewed with.

And that's a really big problem we see. These guides literally, guys, they're just at their beginning in particular, I don't know how many of these guys were noxious, evil wolves to begin with.

[ 29 : 26 ] It seems to me that many of them were not that way to begin with. But due to, in particular, just natural giftings, if I wasn't a pastor, if I wasn't a Christian, my brain would still be the same way, I could still take Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, well, that was Tolstoy, right?

Dostoevsky. Boy, I always get those confused. I could take some novel and I could exposit it in a way that opens up things that people wouldn't normally see.

That's my natural brain to some extent. That's a set of natural giftings. I'd probably still be running things in somewhere. I have a natural leadership gift.

It's not an especially pronounced one, but it's not the worst one either. And I'd probably still naturally, even if I wasn't a Christian, be leading things. The tendency in the NAR and the New Apostolic Reformation is to take guys just like me who have some elevated giftings in particular areas and give them way too much power and credibility and authority.

And that ruins them and also winds up ultimately leading to all sorts of temptations that guys like me would not normally have.

[ 30 : 49 ] I'm realizing I'm already 30 minutes in and I'm, there's a few things going on here. One, I don't think it's going to be useful for you to listen to a 90 minute podcast about this.

And also, it's Sunday afternoon and I want to take a nap. So I think I'm going to, I'm just going to talk about this aspect of it, the continuity discontinuity issue with the Apostles and then, you know, make a few concluding comments on this and then end here and come back with these two other criticisms in either another podcast or another two podcasts.

So I think it's important to understand that as I've shown you, there are clear examples where there is a kind of particularity to the Apostles.

They are foundational and the most natural way to think of a foundation is it's set and then the stuff that happens after that is stuff built on top of the foundation. We don't keep adding to the foundation.

And I've shown you a number of examples where Jesus' particularities apply to the Apostles and the patterns apply to us. And my point is that one of the key issues associated with the hyper-charismatic movement is an over-investment of authority into people who should not have it.

[ 32 : 09 ] Whether or not they are technically called Apostles, the hyper-charismatics have failed to distinguish the uniqueness of the apostolic season in the history of the Church and therefore tend to grant leaders, just like me, more authority than is safe, wise, biblical, true, or good.

And this has contributed to a lot of problems. So that's my first argument, my first critique of the new apostolic Reformation and the hyper-charismatic movement.

There is a sense, now to be clear, I'm not a cessationist. I don't believe that certain gifts ceased during the age of the Church, but I'm a continuationist, and technically I would fall in the charismatic side of things, but I don't believe that there's any argument to be had, to be successfully waged to suggest that what was happening in the first century was not unique.

It was unique. It was unique. It was a handoff between the Old and New Covenant. It was the establishment of Christ's visible and invisible Church.

It was unique, and it was uniquely guided by unique men who walked with Jesus, witnessed the resurrected Christ, and had authority to write the Scriptures.

[ 33 : 43 ] And that leads me to my last critique associated with this, and it will kind of serve as a hinge into the next critique. You know, the confusion in the New Apostolic Reformation between Scripture and prophetic words, it's a profound confusion.

And I'm going to say the most spicy thing I'll probably say in this whole series, and that is this. It would have not taken me three minutes of listening to a Mike Bickle sermon to understand that a man who abuses the Word so carelessly as he did will abuse anything else.

If you don't have a holy fear and caution as you teach the Word, and you feel willing to routinely introduce your own prophetic quote-unquote insights in a way that winds up being practically speaking equal to Scripture, well, if you'll abuse the Word, of course you'll abuse women.

Of course you will. Of course you'll abuse other things. There's a kind of narcissism that emerges out of this failure to distinguish.

It's a flattening of hierarchy suggesting that somehow there wasn't something unique and special and superior going on in the apostles' lives and there wasn't ours.

[ 35 : 21 ] That flattening of hierarchy winds up creating all kinds of problems and one of the crazy things it does is that in some ways it actually builds a false hierarchy where these quote-unquote anointed leaders wind up with more authority than they should have ever had and more trust than they should have ever had.

I'll close this section by telling you a quick story. Someone kind of familiar with the IHOP stuff that was considering joining our church texted me one day and a series of texts and it just had me totally confused.

And the basic idea of these texts was something like, tell me how you counsel women alone. Tell me how that works.

and I was confused because everybody knows you don't do that. Everybody knows that. Except the people in NAR, apparently.

Everybody knows you don't do that. There's no reason to do that. It is unwise. It is unsafe. There's absolutely no way I would do that. Let alone do that down the hall in a room with no windows with a door that locks.

[ 36 : 35 ] It just literally would not, happen. And friends, if I tried to do that in our church, I would be called on the carpet in two seconds by about a hundred men.

Why? Because they don't see me as that special. As that exempt from the temptations of the flesh. As that holy that somehow I'm above all this.

And they would think, well, that is insane. Why would Chris ever do that? It would never be allowed. Because I'm not an apostle. And I wouldn't be viewed as an apostle.

Just to be clear in arguing that the apostles were counseling women alone. a broad point I'm making is that one of the toxic elements of the new apostolic reformation is this sense that there's these really, really special guys with this really, really special spirituality and we can trust them.

Well, that's just... I don't think that the people who were involved in the movement understand how ahistoric, unusual, and unique that is.

[ 37 : 48 ] nobody has treated pastors that way until recently. John Calvin wasn't treated that way. Martin Luther wasn't treated that way. Jonathan Edwards wasn't treated that way.

These were just men in the eyes of their congregation. Exceptionally gifted? Yes. Some of them gifted in exposition, some of them gifted in leadership, so forth. But just men, non-apostles, and not even really apostolic, per se.

So that's my first critique. There is a failure within this movement to acknowledge there is some discontinuity between the apostles and us.

And the next time I'll start talking a little bit more about how there is a division between the Spirit and the Word within the New Apostolic Reformation.

But for now, that's it. Hope you have a great day. And hey, listen, if you are kind of floundering out there, you went to one of these churches and now you're just kind of floundering, hey, chin up, you know, there are people like me who are praying for you and have been since this all broke out.



[ 38 : 59 ] And I'm not praying for you in some kind of judgmental way. I literally just want you to find a sweet church with a normal, frumpy pastor who doesn't counsel women in a locked room with no windows.

There is a future for you. I know this is really hurting and confusing you, but listen, man, you're going to be okay. Just lean into God's Word.

His Word is the only thing we have that really keeps us safe. And maybe you went through a season where the Word was minimized in a way you didn't even know it was. but maybe this podcast can be helpful to you.

I hope it is. You're always welcome to come to Providence and I will tell you, like, listen, there's going to be some judgment you feel not coming from us to you, but from you to us.

Because one of the insidious little things that's been happening in the NAR movement is that churches like ours that are really sweet, really loving, and surprise, tend to expect actual holiness in association with the Holy Spirit.

[ 40 : 11 ] You know, we've been portrayed by your leaders as the spiritual dead Pharisees, and so there's going to be, you know, some adjustment for you. But, you know, just like any other error, there's a period of deprogramming, and I would encourage you to come to Providence and spend some time with us and just kind of suspend the old ways that you evaluated things and try your best to just consider that possibly what you were told about these regular average churches that don't have 24-7 prayer rooms and apostolic anointing, try to consider that maybe all along we were the ones who were alive and not the whitewashed tombs with the rotting bones inside.

All right, peace out, be well. smooth smooth smooth The Army Blues!

Thank you.