

The Hermeneutics of The New Apostolic Reformation

Introduction

Dr. Georgia Purdom described The New Apostolic Reformation as “the fastest-growing counter-Christian movement most haven’t heard of.”¹

Dr. Gary Gilley wrote, “The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is one of the largest, broadest and most powerful movements within Christianity today, yet it flies largely under the radar. Even those involved often do not understand the movement to the extent that they may even deny they are part of it.”²

How can someone deny being part of a movement that they are involved with? Lack of a clear definition is part of the problem. Therefore, we will begin by defining the New Apostolic Reformation.

Definition

The New Apostolic Reformation, or NAR, has been described as a loose coalition of churches and organizations (mostly Pentecostal or Charismatic) united by a particular set of biblical interpretations. The faulty hermeneutics of NAR is particularly evident in their interpretation of New Testament texts related to roles of church leadership and miraculous sign gifts. As a result, they have a warped idea of the role and power of church leaders, they have an unhealthy approach to spiritual warfare and they wrongly promote the involvement of the church in the world’s affairs regarding politics and social change. NAR is a “Kingdom Now” movement holding to Dominion Theology. They claim that God is currently restoring the lost offices of church government, namely Prophets and Apostles.

Since the movement has no central control, many of its followers are not even aware that they are part of this loose-knit group. And yet, thousands of churches and millions of believers follow the teachings of the New Apostolic Reformation.

¹ Dr. Purdom, Georgia. "Answers in Genesis -- Georgia Purdom Blog Updates." [answersingenesis.org. https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/georgia-purdom/2017/01/25/na-fastest-growing-counter-christian-movement/](https://answersingenesis.org/blogs/georgia-purdom/2017/01/25/na-fastest-growing-counter-christian-movement/) (accessed Jan 2, 2018).

² Dr. Gilley, Gary. "Think on These Things." <http://tottministries.org/>. <http://tottministries.org/the-new-apostolic-reformation-an-examination-of-the-five-fold-ministries-part-1/>

Doctrine and Beliefs

Since NAR is a loose coalition of churches and organizations without any official control center, there are certainly differences in doctrines that they teach. Nevertheless, there are some common denominators that all would accept. Individuals, churches and organizations that could be identified as part of the NAR movement would accept the following beliefs:

Restoration of Apostles and Prophets

Leaders in the NAR movement claim that they are restored apostles who have been called and ordained by God in order to begin the process of setting up His kingdom on earth. For years, many Pentecostals and Charismatics have taught that the office of prophet is relevant for today. However, in recent years NAR church leaders have claimed the same for the office of apostle. These restored apostles are alleged to be the foundational government for the emerging “New Order” church. As God-ordained apostles, they stress strict obedience in all matters and submission to their prophetic proclamations. They claim that as prophets and apostles, they alone have the power and authority to execute God’s plans and purposes on earth. The goal of NAR leadership is complete control over the church and subjugation to their teachings.

In contrast, most conservative Bible scholars have taught that both offices of apostle and prophet ceased at the close of the New Testament canon. The purpose of these offices was to lay the foundation of the church, and that was accomplished with the completion of the New Testament books (Eph. 2:20).

Restoration of the Sign Gifts

In conjunction with the restoration of apostles and prophets, NAR teachers claim that all the sign gifts have been restored as well. These sign gifts are expected to be evident in the lives of Christians today. However, we must question if these sign gifts are really meant for believers today.

Signs, wonders and miracles do have a basis in Scripture. However, NAR teachers often overlook their frequency and purpose.

As to their frequency, we find three periods of time in which miracles were common in biblical history. First was during the ministry of Moses. Prior to Israel’s exodus from

Egypt, we find miracles as being common occurrences. During Israel's wilderness wanderings they also occurred periodically. After the death of Moses, when Joshua took over the leadership of Israel, God also performed miracles periodically. A second period of miracles occurred during the prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha. A third period of miracles occurred from the time of Jesus' ministry as well as during the subsequent ministry of the apostles. We find very few miracles from the time that Elisha passed from the scene until Jesus began His ministry. Miracles simply did not occur regularly throughout biblical history. They were pretty much confined to these three periods of time. The reason for their limited frequency is related to the purpose of signs and wonders.

Of course, God can perform miracles any time He wishes. But throughout the ages He has chosen to do so through various individuals for a particular reason. Miracles serve to authenticate the lives, ministries and message of these individuals who were sent by God. Moses called down judgments on the Egyptians to demonstrate that Jehovah was superior to all the gods worshipped by the greatest nation on earth at that time. The Jews also realized that Moses was God's chosen man to lead them to the Promised Land. Elijah and Elisha rebuked the Jews for their apostasy. The miracles they performed confirmed their message to a wayward people. When Jesus began His public ministry, no one had performed a miracle in centuries. Likewise, no prophecy had been given by God since Malachi. For approximately 400 years God's voice had been silent. The ministry of Jesus was marked by numerous miracles. Jesus gave irrefutable evidence that He was God in the flesh, and that He was the only means of salvation. The miracles that Jesus performed were not just random acts of power. They confirmed His claim of being the Messiah of Israel and His message of salvation to the entire world. Likewise, the book of Acts records many signs and wonders which took place through the apostles. God was confirming their message as well as putting His stamp of approval on the church which was to carry the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

Contrast the biblical view of miracles with what is taking place within NAR today.

Nowhere in scripture do we see God's chosen instruments being taught how to perform miracles. Yet NAR leaders claim that miracles are a skill that can be taught. For example,

Bill Johnson's Bethel Church's School of Supernatural Ministry boasts 2000 students who have been taught how to perform miracles.³

Some of these so-called miracles by NAR leaders are absolutely bizarre. According to *Christianity Today*, Johnson's wife and some other Bethel leaders "have been said to practice 'grave sucking' or 'grave soaking,' purportedly a means of absorbing the spiritual anointing of deceased Christians by lying atop their graves."⁴

When reports of NAR signs and wonders are compared to scripture, we find a serious disconnect. The miracles and healings of Jesus and the actual apostles in the Bible, were immediate, complete and undeniable. This is in sharp contrast to the claims of NAR healing ministries today. Jack Deere, a charismatic theologian, attempts to defend this inconsistency. He says, "It is wrong to insist that the apostolic ministry of signs and wonders is the standard for the gifts of healing given to the average New Testament Christian."⁵ Deere understands that the so-called healings of NAR today are clearly different than the healings we read about in God's Word. Clearly the signs and wonders of NAR cannot be compared to what we see in Scripture.

Dominion Theology

NAR leaders think that they are in the process of setting up the Kingdom of God on earth. They teach that Adam lost dominion of the earth to Satan, and now it is their job to take it back. According to NAR, there are seven areas in the affairs of this world that they need to gain dominion over: government, arts, finances, education, religion, family and media. They call this their "Seven Mountain Mandate." When these seven mountains are brought under the dominion of NAR, then the Kingdom will be brought to earth, then Jesus will return. This teaching is known as "Kingdom Now" or "Dominion Theology" which is often found in postmillennialism.⁶

Teachers of Dominion Theology use a nonliteral approach to Bible interpretation. Many believe that most of Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled in Christ and the ongoing

³ Martyn Wendell Jones, "Kingdom Come in California, *Christianity Today* May 2016; p. 33.

⁴ Ibid., see also: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wKPjf1mjb8).

⁵ Nathan Busenitz, *Right Thinking in a Church Gone Astray, Finding Our Way Back to Biblical Truth* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2017), p. 240.

⁶ R. Douglas Geivett and Holly Pivec, *God's Super-Apostles, Encountering the Worldwide Prophets and Apostles Movement* (Wooster, Ohio: Weaver Book Company, 2014), pp. 51, 81, 87-88.

expansion of His Kingdom. Typically, they teach some form of Preterism saying that Christ's second coming was fulfilled in 70 A.D. with the fall of Jerusalem. They say that the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a special nation. In doing away with Israel, they transfer the blessing of the Kingdom from Israel to the church. This teaching is typical of "Replacement Theology" in which the unconditional promises made to Israel have supposedly been transferred to the church because of Israel's disobedience. If Israel lost her "national salvation" because of disobedience, then what right do we have to expect that God will keep His promises to us regarding our "individual salvation"? Many "Replacement Theologians" teach a doctrine known as "perseverance of the elect." They insist upon the security of elect saints as it pertains to their eternal destiny. Yet they claim that the unconditional promises that God made to Israel were somehow revoked and transferred to the church. The inconsistency of "Replacement Theology" is astonishing.

The Authority of Scripture

One of the major problems with NAR is that it undermines the authority of scripture.

Sola scriptura was the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. The phrase *sola scriptura* is Latin meaning *scripture alone*. *Sola scriptura* means that Scripture alone is the authority for the Christian's faith and practice. The Bible is complete, authoritative, and true. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Roman Catholic Church placed tradition above the authority of God's Word which resulted in practices contradictory to the Bible. The Reformers called the people of God back to the Scriptures as their sole authority for their life.

In some ways, NAR has reverted to the Roman Catholic position of undermining the authority of Scripture. It places greater emphasis on dreams, and visions than they do on the Bible. They claim that their own teachings and experiences have as much authority (if not more) than God's Word. They claim to hear directly from God, and some say that Jesus visits them in person. They say that their trips to heaven, face-to-face conversations with Jesus, and visits with angels cannot be disproven by the 'old' Scripture.

The fact is that man is fallible. Not only is the Pope prone to error, so too are the so-called Apostles of NAR. The Scripture alone speaks today from the authority of an

inspired, God-breathed, text. God's complete revelation as found in Scripture is more than able to make us "adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Nothing needs to be added to the completed canon of scripture.

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