

Kingdom Through Culture: The New Apostolic Reformation And Its Cultural Appeal

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Drawing popular scrutiny during the 2012 presidential election,¹ the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) embraces the largest non-Catholic segment of world Christianity; it is also the fastest growing segment, the only segment of Christianity currently growing faster than the world population and faster than Islam.² “The NAR represents the most radical change in the way of doing church since the Protestant Reformation. This is not a doctrinal change. We adhere to the major tenets of the Reformation: the authority of Scripture, justification by faith, and the priesthood of all believers. But the quality of church life, the governance of the church, the worship, the theology of prayer, the missional goals, the optimistic vision for the future, and other features, constitute quite a change from traditional Protestantism.”³ The New Apostolic Reformation is remarkably noteworthy, globally influential, and should be understood in context.

The modern continuationist movement emerged in three distinct waves. The first wave arrived in the form of Pentecostalism in the early 1900s with the teaching of Charles Parham and William Seymour’s Asuza Street Revival (1906–15). The Charismatic movement of the 1960s constituted the second wave, during which Word of Faith and prosperity theology found their way into churches previously untouched by Pentecostalism. In the early 1980s, the third wave added an emphasis on

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signs and wonders resulting from the work of the Holy Spirit, along with renewed prophetic and apostolic ministry in the church. Especially influential were John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement and C. Peter Wagner and his teachings and writings.⁴ The third wave evolved, especially through Wagner, into a movement some have considered a fourth wave, identified by Wagner as the New Apostolic Reformation.

As opposed to being a denomination or membership group, the New Apostolic Reformation is a movement with distinctive theological beliefs and practical applications, alleging a second apostolic age. Wagner acknowledged that he “might be seen as an ‘intellectual godfather’ . . . might have been the first to observe the movement, give a name to it, and describe its characteristics as [He] saw them.”⁵ In a watershed 2011 article, Wagner explained how in 1994 he arrived at the term: “‘Reformation’ because the movement matched the Protestant Reformation in world impact; ‘Apostolic’ because of all the changes the most radical one was apostolic governance . . . and ‘New’ because several churches and denominations already carried the name ‘apostolic,’ but they did not fit the NAR pattern.”⁶ Wagner envisioned the New Apostolic Reformation as a world-changing movement with staying power: “The New Apostolic Reformation is an extraordinary work of God that began at the close of the twentieth century and continues on. It is, to a significant extent, changing the shape of the Protestant world.”⁷

The New Apostolic Reformation has been associated with charismatic influencers such as the Latter Rain Movement (1948), the Toronto Blessing (1994), Cesar Castellanos’ G12 Movement, Bill Johnson (Bethel Church), Brian and Bobbie Houston (Hillsong Church), Cindy Jacobs (Generals International), Mike Bickle (IHOPKC),⁸ Rick Joyner

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(Morningstar Ministries), Brian Simmons (Stairway Ministries), Todd Bentley (Fresh Fire), Lou Engle (formerly of The Call), and many others.

Six Theological Distinctives

While there are a number of theological nuances attributed to the New Apostolic Reformation, according to Wagner, there are six definitive distinctives. (1) Apostolic Governance: “Most of traditional Christianity accepts evangelists, pastors, and teachers, but not apostles and prophets. I think that all five are given to be active in churches today.”⁹ Wagner loosely defines an apostle as a, “Christian leader who is gifted, taught, and commissioned by God with the authority to establish the foundational government of the Church within an assigned sphere of ministry by hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches and by setting things in order accordingly for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.”¹⁰ Cottle and Kelly provide a more comprehensive description and definition, of apostles as “ambassadors, generals-governors, and patriarchs.”¹¹ In developing this threefold characterization, Cottle and Kelly connect the authorities exercised by those referenced in the New Testament as *apostolos*, with the authoritative ambassadorship of the Old Testament *sheliach* (e.g. Gen 24:2; 15:2). Logically, such leaders must be imbued with the miracle-working authorities of the apostolic age. (2) The necessity of the present-day office of prophet is assumed by the definition of *apostle*; and, thus (3) the legitimacy of extra-biblical revelation and (4) supernatural signs and wonders are necessary extrapolations for the empowering of apostles in this age.

The New Apostolic Reformation is a theological reformation in the sense that while the Protestant Reformation emphasized *sola Scriptura*, the New Apostolic Reformation claims a second apostolic age, returning the church to days of extra-biblical authority. The Reformers espoused a cessationist view, in part to counter Catholic claims of miracles as confirmation of unorthodox doctrines. To their credit, the Reformers, in accordance with *sola Scriptura*, sought to ground their arguments exegetically. Luther was resolute in his cessationist stance, asserting, “Once the Church had been established and properly advertised by these

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miracles, the visible appearance of the Holy Ghost ceased.”¹² Calvin’s perspective on healing is similar: “But that gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the new preaching of the gospel marvelous forever.”¹³

The Reformers were convinced of cessationism, recognizing the connection between apostolic authority and signs, miracles, wonders, and new revelation. B. B. Warfield later observed an important nuance of that connection, when he noted that miracles were “The characterizing peculiarity of specifically the Apostolic Church, and it belonged therefore exclusively to the Apostolic age. . . . These gifts were not possession of the primitive Christian as such; nor for that matter of the Apostolic Church or the Apostolic age for themselves; they were distinctively the authentication of the Apostles. . . . This does not mean, of course, that only the Apostles appear in the New Testament as working miracles, or that they alone are represented as recipients of the charismata. But it does mean that the charismata belonged, in a true sense, to the Apostles, and constituted one of the true signs of an Apostle.”¹⁴ New Apostolic Reformation leaders likewise recognize the apostolic-verification aspect of the charismata, and view that present day apostles are needed, because new revelation is needed. Therefore, the Scriptures are sufficient to an extent, but more is needed and provided in this New Apostolic Reformation era. Bill Johnson expressed why the Scriptures are no longer sufficient.

All Church history is built on partial revelation. Everything that has happened in the Church over the past 1900 years has fallen short of what the early Church had and lost. Each move of God has been followed by another, just to restore what was forfeited and forgotten. And we still haven’t arrived to the standard that they attained, let alone surpassed it. Yet, not even the early Church fulfilled God’s full intention for His people. That privilege was reserved for those in the last leg of the race. It is our destiny. As wonderful as our spiritual roots are, they are insufficient. What was good for yesterday is deficient for today. To insist that we stay with what our fathers fought for is to insult our forefathers. They risked

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all to pursue something fresh and new in God. It’s not that everything must change for us to flow with what God is saying and doing. It’s just that we make too many assumptions about the rightness of what presently exists. Those assumptions blind us to the revelations still contained in Scripture. In reality, what we think of as the normal Christian life cannot hold the weight of what God is about to do.¹⁵

To complement additional and ongoing revelation is an “expansive, fresh, fiery translation of God’s Word,” ¹⁶ that has been endorsed by a number of leaders recognized as New Apostolic Reformation (first and foremost of which is Bill Johnson¹⁷). Brian Simmons’ The Passion Translation (TPT) asserts that “words can become poor containers for revelation,” ¹⁸ and that “the essential meaning of the passage should take precedent over the literal form.”¹⁹ Consequently, the translation includes roughly 50% more words in certain sections than other translations. Andrew Shead²⁰ wondered, “Where do all these extra words come from?”²¹ Shead answered his own question: “Double translation is Simmons’s principal translation technique, but his constant addition of images and ideas into the text is not confined within his double translations. Sometimes he creatively alters the Hebrew . . . elsewhere he creates stand-alone additions, or attaches them by hyphen to a word in the text.”²² Shead noticed the additions often aim at one goal: “Additions aimed at stirring up ecstasy are unsurprisingly prominent in TPT’s praise psalms.”²³ Shead concluded, “Simmons makes a false claim when he states that TPT will ‘re-introduce the passion and fire of the Bible to the English reader.’ It’s the

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other way round – Simmons is trying to introduce the ‘passion and fire’ beloved of his own culture into the Bible. He is trying to make the Bible value something that we value – the feeling of being overwhelmed by a strong emotion – in spite of the strong stance the Bible consistently takes against this exact thing.”²⁴ Notice how statements of positional truth (translated in the NASB) are rendered as experiential in The Passion Translation.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life” (John 6:47, NASB)

“I speak to you living truth: Unite your heart to me and believe—and you will experience eternal life!” (John 6:47, TPT)

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12:7, NASB)

Each believer is given continuous revelation by the Holy Spirit to benefit not just himself but all (1 Cor 12:7, TPT)

Also notice how Peter’s plain sense hermeneutic is changed to a mystical one. Moreover, the aorist punctiliar (“was ever made”) is replaced with the present tense.

Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20–21, NASB)

You must understand this at the outset: Interpretation of scriptural prophecy *requires the Holy Spirit*, for it does not originate from someone’s own imagination. No true prophecy comes from human initiative but is inspired by the moving of the Holy Spirit upon those who spoke the message that came from God (2 Pet 1:20–21, TPT)

Paul’s past tense (perfect active indicative) reference to seeing Jesus is augmented with the present tense.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? (1 Cor 9:1a, NASB)

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Am I not completely free and unrestrained? *Absolutely!* Am I not an apostle? *Of course!* Haven’t I had a personal encounter with our Jesus face-to-face—and *continue to see him?* *Emphatically yes!* (1 Cor 9:1a, TPT)

These few examples illustrate the license taken to alter the meaning of the text so that specific concepts can be introduced and highlighted. In light of this emphasis on experience, present tense, and emotion, it is fitting that leaders of Bethel, Hillsong, and Jesus Culture, endorse the

translation. Simmons further reveals his own emphasis on the supernatural and experiential in his account of being translated to the library of heaven and seeing a book entitled *John 22*, and in his delivering of a prophetic word for healing.²⁵

(5) Postmillennial dominionism is the New Apostolic Reformation's distinctive eschatological perspective and helps define its culture-changing emphasis. "When Jesus came, He brought the kingdom of God and He expects His kingdom-minded people to take whatever action is needed to push back the long-standing kingdom of Satan and bring the peace and prosperity of His kingdom here on earth. This is what we mean by dominionism."²⁶ Wagner rejects the escapist eschatology of pretribulationist premillennialism in favor of what he calls "dominionist eschatology."²⁷ He described the present activity of the church as "aggressively retaking dominion, and the rate at which this is happening will soon become exponential. The day will come when "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever"²⁸

Bill Johnson, senior leader of Bethel, described this dominionist premise, having stated, "It was God's intention that as [Adam and Eve] bore more children, who also lived under God's rule, they would be extending the boundaries of his garden (His government) through the simplicity of their devotion to Him. The greater the number of people in right relationship to God, the greater the impact of their leadership. This process

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was to continue until the entire earth was covered with the glorious rule of God through man."²⁹ While Wagner does not advocate the advancement of the kingdom through political force, he envisions, "a country in which a critical mass of its citizens are followers of Jesus Christ and thus agents of the kingdom of God . . . these people using whatever influence they may have to promote kingdom blessings and kingdom values as much as possible throughout American culture."³⁰ Lance Wallnau described this kind of cultural impact as impacting seven mountains – religion, family, education, government, media, arts, and business.³¹ The New Apostolic Reformation is much broader and more comprehensive in its efforts than its predecessors.

Finally, (6) the New Apostolic Reformation is a relational rather than legal structure. There are no denominational guidelines or external accountabilities; because of this, some consider the leadership structures of some of the New Apostolic Reformation churches to be cultic. For example, Bethel Church lists Bill and Beni Johnson as "Senior Leaders" while Eric and Candace Johnson hold the title of "Senior Pastors."³² The unorthodox leadership structure does not offer anything to dissuade those who might have suspicions of cult of personality. Bill Johnson further exemplifies the concern, when he suggested that signs are necessary because, "He wants to take us farther, and we can only get there by following signs. Our present understanding of Scripture can only take us so far . . . signs and wonders are a natural part of the Kingdom of God. They are the normal way to get us from where we are to where we need to be."³³ The subjectivity is emblematic of the New Apostolic Reformation in thought and practice. There are no external rules and no objective interpreters of these signs; consequently, followers must simply trust the self-appointed apostles of the movement.

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Practical And Liturgical Distinctives

Beyond the theological distinctives is a movement that has been incredible successful at influencing (especially) evangelical culture across the globe. The influence has not been accomplished primarily through internal church growth efforts. "Ironically, this group isn't really focused on building up big congregations. Their ideas are spreading through other means, like high-profile conferences and the media products that they are selling. . . . These apostles are able to access a lot more money, because they are operating with a pay-for-service model, rather than relying on people's donations and their goodwill. Congregations bend over backwards to keep people happy and keep the butts in the seats; people don't have to pay unless they feel like it. But this is a completely different financial model, and it tends to generate much more money."³⁴ While there are tangible theological differences from earlier movements, perhaps the biggest *practical* difference between earlier waves of charismatic movement and the New Apostolic Reformation is the effectiveness of the music and multimedia packaging to extend beyond traditional sectarian boundaries. Employing powerful contemporary artistic, musical, and aesthetic tendencies to skillfully envelope the experientialist and postmillennial dominionist message, the music of churches like Hillsong and Bethel provides a most compelling vehicle.

Bethel's diverse ministries, for instance, reflect a commitment to leading by example in fulfilling a cultural mandate, particularly through education. These ministries include Bethel Supernatural School of Ministry (BSSM), Bethel Christian School, WorshipU, Bethel Conservatory of the Arts, Bethel Leadership Program, and the Bethel School of Technology.³⁵ The schools are designed to train revivalists – change agents who will be able to impact the culture for the advancement of God's kingdom on earth. The education programs are unapologetically continuationist, as illustrated by the curriculum objectives of the Bethel Supernatural School of Ministry: "Students will learn how to read, understand, and 'do' the Bible, how to practice His presence, to witness, heal the sick, prophesy, preach, pray, cast out demons and much more."³⁶

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While the influence of these programs is increasing, the most impactful program for Bethel remains the worship program, characterized as being "passionate about God's manifest presence"³⁷ and existing "to ignite individual hearts until Heaven meets Earth. We gather to encounter God's presence. . . ."³⁸ "God's presence" is manifest now, and is accessible through worship, which "creates a space for us to experience the tangible presence of our good Father."³⁹ Worship then should "lead people into a profound experience with God that transforms lives. . . ."⁴⁰

Bethel's perspective is that the worship (in music) experience *is the transformative force*, which is consistent with the experiential theology of Bethel and that of other New Apostolic Reformation programs. "[C]reating an environment goes beyond the abilities of playing an instrument or leading a team,"⁴¹ and it is that environment that creates the space for the transformative experience. The continuity between Bethel's theology, praxis, and liturgy is emblematic of the New Apostolic Reformation's comprehensive program for the advancement of the kingdom through the dominion of culture.

Seven Implications For Consideration

(1) The *Bible Plus* View of Revelation – employing the Catholic understanding of revelation, the New Apostolic Reformation has departed from the progress of the Protestant Reformation, favoring Roman Catholicism’s *Bible plus Tradition* approach. Much of evangelicalism flirts with this approach (doctrine of illumination, Holy Spirit speaking today, etc.), along with liberties taken in Bible translation (formal equivalence versus dynamic equivalence⁴²).

(2) The Hermeneutics of Dominionism – the New Apostolic Reformation employs several hermeneutic models: theological,

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Christocentric, redemptive, and allegorical, all supporting continuationism and dominionism. The Genesis model⁴³ for hermeneutics and the New Testament use of the Old Testament suggests the literal grammatical historical model.

(3) The Theology of Dominionism – the New Apostolic Reformation is impacting culture effectively both through and to this theology. Evangelical theology has not effectively dealt with the cultural mandate undergirding dominionism.⁴⁴ Passages for consideration include Genesis 1—3 and 9, Matthew 5—13, and Revelation 19. Understanding a biblical perspective on interacting with Wallnau’s seven mountains (religion, family, education, government, media, arts, and business) is also important.

(4) Experience and Sentiment over Reason – creating a false dilemma of subjectivity versus objectivity, with emphasis on the Psalms over Pauline literature, for example. Has the church dealt sufficiently with epistemological foundations: understanding the impact of Thomas Aquinas, Rene Descartes, David Hume, and Friederich Nietzsche?

(5) How to Consider the Music – previous postmillennial efforts have been primarily to affect government; this one has been aimed at culture through media and music, and thus is more grassroots, and more effective. On the one hand, there are songs that are theologically sound and effective in teaching truth. Conversely, some former insiders have seen a major deficiency not only in some of the theology, but in the praxis of worship itself. “I saw what I was doing as a band member as not leading people in worship, but participating in ‘conjuring’ the Holy Spirit to ‘come down’. The Holy Spirit being defined as

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the euphoric feeling that the droning music creates.”⁴⁵ In examining the songs, it is evident that they are of differing quality and deserve consideration individually and on their own merits. There are three logical ways to approach this.

- a. Reject anything produced by New Apostolic Reformation advocates (beware the boycott syndrome).
- b. Accept anything produced by New Apostolic Reformation advocates (beware the need for discernment).
- c. Reject some and accept others, exercising discernment.

The effectiveness and popularity of the music provides an occasion to examine the method and metrics by which believers will assess the art, which presents an important aesthetics question that should be answered biblically.

Examples

Consider the subtle dominionism of “Who Is Like the Lord”⁴⁶ by Highlands. The song speaks of current and earthly reign of Christ, and seems to confuse the roles of the Father and Son in the current age.

You’re seated on the throne of mercy
Your glory shining bright for all to see
Oh God I will praise you

Magnificent with grace unending
You rescue us with love that never fails
O God I will praise You

Who is like the Lord strong in battle
Who is like the Lord mighty to save
Who is like the Lord King forever
Jesus reigns Jesus reigns

I know that You are always with me

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Your presence goes before and goes behind
Oh God I will praise You

You reign in all the earth
You reign in all the heavens You’re holy
You’re seated on the throne
Nothing can stand against You You’re holy

On the other hand, notice the biblical-revelation focus of “Show us Christ”⁴⁷ from Sovereign Grace, a continuationist church that “encourage[s] churches to sing biblically informed, heartfelt, historically mindful music.”⁴⁸ Though there is some ambiguity in the song, it is attempting to draw attention to the value of the Bible.

Prepare our hearts O God
Help us to receive
Break the hard and stony ground

Help our unbelief
Plant Your Word down deep in us
'Cause it to bear fruit
Open up our ears to hear
Lead us in Your truth

Show us Christ show us Christ
O God reveal Your glory
Through the preaching of Your Word
Until every heart confesses Christ is Lord

Your Word is living light
Upon our darkened eyes
Guards us through temptations
Makes the simple wise
Your Word is food for famished ones
Freedom for the slave
Riches for the needy soul
Come speak to us today

Where else can we go Lord
Where else can we go
You have the words of eternal life

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Cory Asbury of Bethel Music sings of "The Reckless Love of God." ⁴⁹ The chorus of the song emphasizes the love of God but uses a questionable term (reckless). Is this merely poetic license, or is it misrepresenting the character of God?

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine
And I couldn't earn it, I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God, yeah

Bethel Music's "King of My Heart" ⁵⁰ extols the faithfulness of God and the believer's response to Him (as a subject to a king). The song is satiated with repetition and is light on theological depth. Does the repetition of the lyrics and dynamism of the music itself complement the simplicity of the message of trust, or does it represent a liturgical deficiency?

Let the King of my heart
Be the mountain where I run
The fountain I drink from
Oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart
Be the shadow where I hide
The ransom for my life
Oh, He is my song
'Cause You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh
And let the King of my heart
Be the wind inside my sails
The anchor in the waves
Oh oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart
Be the fire inside my veins

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The echo of my days
Oh oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart
Be the wind inside my sails
The anchor in the waves
Oh oh, He is my song
Let the King of my heart
Be the fire inside my veins
The echo of my days

Oh, He is my song
'Cause You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
And You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
Oh 'cause You are good
You are good, oh oh
'Cause You are good
You are good, oh oh
'Cause You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let

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You're never gonna let me down
You're never gonna let
You're never gonna let me down
'Cause You are good
You are good, oh oh
You are good
You are good, oh oh

Hillsong United's "Another in the Fire"⁵¹ illustrates another common technique of bringing Old Testament imagery (in this case, the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3) to the believer's present experience. Is this an appropriate use of the Old Testament, that helps a believer grow in their trust of God based on his previous works (like the Psalmists would refer to earlier works of God), or is it a misapplication that supports supersessionism and continuationism?

There's a grace when the heart is under fire
Another way when the walls are closing in
And when I look at the space between
Where I used to be and this reckoning
I know I will never be alone
There was another in the fire
Standing next to me
There was another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding
Of how I've been set free
There is a cross that bears the burden
Where another died for me
There is another in the fire
All my debt left for dead beneath the waters

I'm no longer a slave to my sin anymore
And should I fall in the space between
What remains of me and this reckoning
Either way I won't bow to the things of this world
And I know I will never be alone
There is another in the fire
Standing next to me
There is another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding

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What power set me free
There is a grave that holds no body
And now that power lives in me
There is another in the fire, oh
There is another in the fire, whoa
There is another in the fire, whoa
There is another in the fire, oh
I can see
And I can see the light in the darkness
As the darkness bows to Him
I can hear the roar in the heavens
As the space between wears thin
I can feel the ground shake beneath us
As the prison walls cave in
Nothing stands between us
Nothing stands between us
There is no other name but the name that is Jesus
He who was and still is, and will be through it all
So come what may in the space between
All the things unseen and this reckoning
And I know I will never be alone
And I know I will never be alone
There'll be another in the fire
Standing next to me
There'll be another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding
How good You've been to me
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be
I can see the light
And I can see the light in the darkness
As the darkness bows to Him
I can hear the roar in the heavens
As the space between wears thin
I can feel the ground shake beneath us
As the prison walls cave in
Nothing stands between us
Nothing stands between
There'll be another in the fire
Standing next to me
There'll be another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding
How good You've been to me

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I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be
Count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be, sing it again
I'll count the joy come every battle

'Cause I know that's where You'll be
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be

(6) Some Positive Aspects of the New Apostolic Reformation – the theology of the New Apostolic Reformation is in some cases significantly different from what is represented by the plain sense of Scripture, and that must be addressed. At the same time, there is value in addressing the negatives while learning from the positives – three of which are identified by this writer.

- a. The New Apostolic Reformation expends great effort and resource to maintain consistency between theology, praxis, and liturgy.
- b. The New Apostolic Reformation is attempting to be comprehensive in efforts to positively impact the culture.
- c. The New Apostolic Reformation demonstrates commitment to excellence in the “product,” showing some cultural leadership rather than simply mimicking tools employed by secular influencers.

Perhaps one should challenge New Apostolic Reformation advocates in core epistemological foundations, hermeneutic and exegetical method, and certain theological conclusions (all while appreciating that they are demonstrating *some* methodology in reaching the present generation).

(7) The Tenor of the Discussion – the differences and distinctions should not be ignored, particularly where there is divergence from the Scriptures. Moreover, one should keep the end goal in mind. Michael Brown (considered by some to be part of the New Apostolic Reformation, though denying it himself) suggested five ways to address the discussion constructively. Though one might disagree on some aspects, the concerns and recommendations he made are thought worthy.

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- a. First, get rid of the extreme rhetoric (“not Christian”; “aberrant movement”; etc.). You’re slandering your brothers and sisters.
- b. Second, drop the general term NAR. It’s ambiguous at best and misleading at worst and should only be used with reference to the organization once led by Peter Wagner.
- c. Third, don’t put widely disparate groups under the same heading. That only leads to confusion.
- d. Fourth, identify the beliefs or practices you question, be sure you rightly understand them from an insider perspective, then respond to them based on Scripture and fruit.
- e. Fifth, recognize the wonderful things the Spirit is doing around the world today.⁵²

Conclusion

God is certainly working today, and the Holy Spirit is undoubtedly very active, but He gets to define that activity, and He gets to decide how and to what extent that activity is revealed. The views and efforts of the New Apostolic Reformation provide believers an important occasion to revisit the core, foundational understandings of the basis of authority in their lives. How can one answer the question of who God is, and how can one be certain he or she has answered the question correctly. The Bible asserts that it is and provides the answer. The New Apostolic Reformation returns one to a time when the question of methodology was answered *by going beyond what is written*. The New Apostolic Reformation confronts believers, through the seriousness of its contemporary apostolic and prophetic claims, with the simplicity of the question of foundational truth. How one answers that question will set the course of his or her understanding of God and of what He expects of his people.

¹For example, see Grace Wyler, “Meet the Radical Evangelical Army Behind Rick Perry” [article online] (*Business Insider*, 21 July 2011) available from <https://www.businessinsider.com/rick-perry-the-evangelicals-behind-the-response-2011-7-21>.

²C. Peter Wagner, “YEAR In REVIEW: The New Apostolic Reformation Is Not a Cult” [article online] (*Charisma News*, 24 August 2011) available from <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/31851-the-new-apostolic-reformation-is-not-a-cult>.

³Ibid.

⁴Christopher Cone, *Gifted: Understanding the Holy Spirit and Unwrapping Spiritual Gifts* (Fort Worth, TX: Exegetica Publishing, 2018) 26.

⁵Wagner, “New Apostolic Reformation.”

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ted Haggard, *The Life Giving-Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001) 14.

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¹¹Ibid.

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