

Open Letter to C. Peter Wagner of NAR

Prof. Johan Malan, Mossel Bay, South Africa (2011.08.24)

Dear Peter

I address this Open Letter to you in response to your article, *The New Apostolic Reformation: an Update* (Aug. 19, 2011).

Evangelical Christians everywhere, but particularly also here in South Africa, have to take issue with you for deceptively presenting the NAR as a movement which subscribes to “all the standard classic statements of Christian doctrine”, for creating false expectations of introducing God’s kingdom on earth by, among others, using an unbiblical form of strategic spiritual warfare, for completely negating biblical prophecies on the end-time, and also for associating a Christian reformation with the African Independent Church Movement.

I will briefly substantiate these four objections:

No true Christian orthodoxy

You make your claim of Christian orthodoxy by way of the following statement: “We adhere to the major tenets of the Reformation: the authority of Scripture, justification by faith, and the priesthood of all believers.” If this was truly the case, you would not have relied so heavily on new revelations by so-called “apostles”. In the Wikipedia article, *Five Solas*, the authority of Scripture is defined follows: “*Sola Scriptura* is the teaching that the Bible is the only inspired and authoritative word of God, is the only source for Christian doctrine, and is accessible to all – that is, it is perspicuous and self-interpreting.”

But, much like the pope in the RCC, you hold that apostles may add to the Bible. You say, “[God] also reveals new things to prophets”, and that these new revelations “add to the Bible”. How can you possibly brush aside the last and very serious warning in the Bible to those who disregard the rule of *Sola Scriptura*? “If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18; cf. Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6).

Apart from the questionable new revelations to so-called apostles, the very office of apostles and prophets in the period after full revelation of God to humanity through His Word is also in question. You cite Ephesians 4:11-12 as justification for these offices, but that only applies to the early church when the Lord did not yet speak to them through the full written Word. You may do well to read the comments of Harold W. Hoehner on this scripture in *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, (eds. John Walvoord & Roy Zuck; p. 634-635). He says, among others:

“The apostles include the Twelve, who had the office of apostleship by virtue of being with Christ [not Christy] (Acts 1:21-22) and having been appointed by Him (which would also include Paul; 1 Cor. 15:8-9; Gal. 1:1; 2:6-9). But ‘apostles’ also included others who were recognised as apostles, such as James (1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor. 9:6), Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7), possibly Silas and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:7), and Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6, 9). This latter group had the gift of apostleship but not the apostolic ‘office’ as did the Twelve and Paul. ... They ... revealed God’s will to the church when the biblical canon was incomplete. Since the apostles and prophets were foundational, they did not exist after the first generation of believers.”

To institute such offices now only leads to false, extra-biblical revelations, and such revelations obvious raise false hopes on the physical revelation of a Christian kingdom on earth during the present dispensation.

False expectations on a kingdom

The NAR produces very clear evidence of deviating from the biblical scenario for Christian life, which is to shine as lights in the midst of a rapidly deteriorating world [not word]. Being hated and persecuted by the world is not the experience of powerless Christians, who are without a kingdom vision, but rather the experience of dedicated Christians who live in the

power of the Holy Spirit and do not hesitate to expose the evils of a depraved world and a deceived church. Those who expect a situation of heaven on earth, as you clearly state in your article, are completely at variance with the biblical account of the hostile world in which the church is to fulfil its calling right down to the end.

To what avail is it to stir up wild expectations that Satan's strongholds can be pulled down by applying certain methods of spiritual warfare, thereby liberating entire cities, countries, and eventually the whole world, from evil influences? What happened subsequent to all the misleading campaigns to conduct such operations? What about your own tour to Turkey many years ago, to pull down the stronghold of a false religion, and then declaring that country as a liberated base from where vast regions of Asia would soon be evangelised?

Many such efforts were also made in South Africa, but nothing has changed. There is indeed no alternative to the hard work by pastors, missionaries, as well as ordinary Christians, to proclaim the gospel of salvation to a lost world. We should always have faith to expect results, while also being mindful of the fact that the narrow way will remain narrow and that most people will continue along the broad way because they love darkness more than the light.

The negating of biblical prophecies

Another important point of criticism against the NAR is that biblical prophecies, particularly those on the end-time, are completely disregarded, while effectively trying to prove them wrong. Why doesn't the NAR clearly face issues such as the increase in apostasy, including spiritual apostasy which is driven by false prophets who do great signs and wonders to deceive even the elect? The obvious reason for this neglect is that the NAR embraces the signs and wonders of these false prophets.

Many other themes in biblical prophecy are ignored – among them, the emerging antichristian world order which will culminate in a fully-fledged kingdom of Satan on earth before the second coming of Christ. This kingdom will be ruled by the Antichrist and the false prophet, and no form of spiritual warfare can prevent their revelation. The only way to escape their reign of terror is to prepare to be spiritually worthy to escape the tribulation period by way of the rapture (Luke 21:36).

Do you hold out to believers the promise of the rapture? I doubt, because you unambiguously state that you do not entertain a negative future scenario which will end up in the great tribulation. If you do not squarely recognise the fact of an apostatising world, you are not only out of touch with the Bible, but actually endeavouring to rewrite it by way of misleading extra-biblical revelations.

For your own sake, and also for the sake of those who follow you, please reconsider your position, return to the Bible and honour the rule of *Sola Scriptura*. The kingdom reforms which you have in mind, are only promised for the coming dispensation of Christ's millennial reign on earth – not for the church dispensation.

Christ is the only one who can destroy the Antichrist and false prophets, and also order the binding of Satan so that he can no longer deceive the nations. But that will only happen in the day of the Lord, which is the time appointed for divine judgements. Right now, we are still in the time of grace, when the vile will become viler, but the holy are called upon to become holier (Rev. 22:11).

Your association with independent African churches

I was greatly surprised to read your statement that, among others, "the roots of the NAR go back to the beginning of the African Independent Church Movement in 1900..." How can you possibly claim to be biblical in doctrine and practice if your roots go back to a movement which very clearly compromises with aspects of pagan African culture? One only need to Google the name of this movement to gain access to a wealth of information. In its article *African Initiated Church*, Wikipedia says the following on this movement:

"An *African Initiated Church* is any of a number of Christian churches independently

started in Africa by Africans and not by missionaries from another continent, in which they sometimes hold to one or more African tribal belief systems syncretised with Christianity.

“Some scholars argue that independent churches or religious movements demonstrate syncretism or partial integration between aspects of Christian belief and African traditional religion, but the degree to which this happens varies... Often these churches have resulted from a process of acculturation between traditional African beliefs and Protestant Christianity...

“The charge of syncretism suggests an ‘impure’ and superficial form of Christianity used to maintain older cultural practices and beliefs...

“During the colonial period, many black converts to Christianity were unable fully to reconcile their beliefs with the teachings of their church leaders, and split from their parent churches. The reasons for these splits were usually either: political – an effort to escape white control... or cultural – the result of trying to accommodate Christian belief within an African world view.

“Some AICs with strong leadership have been described by some researchers as Messianic... The churches that have been called Messianic focus on the power and sanctity of their leaders; often the leaders are thought by their followers to possess Christ-like characteristics. Denominations described as Messianic include... the Zion Christian Church with headquarters in South Africa’s Limpopo Province.” (End of excerpt).

From firsthand experience I can endorse these findings. If any rapidly growing church movement is accepted by the NAR in its bid to represent, change, and ultimately [not ultimate] rule the entire world, the door is widely opened to doctrinal compromise and false prophets of all sorts, who also use various sources of revelation, including ‘spiritual wisdom’ which is not Christian at all.

Hopefully, there are still many evangelical Christians out there who will not jump on the bandwagon of the NAR. This wagon is heading in the wrong direction and does not offer a safe ride to anybody.

Peter, the years are catching up with both of us. Perhaps sooner than later, we will stand before the judgement seat of Christ to give account of our lives. We will be judged in terms of God’s Word as revealed to His prophets, of which there was no one after John, when he had the vision of end-time events on the barren isle of Patmos. Although biblical revelations ended in the year 95 AD, they are still as relevant as ever.

Standing of the Rock

Prof. Johan Malan