

## How the Beliefs and Practices of the New Apostolic Reformation Differ from Those of the Vineyard Movement

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There is a movement that has spread across the globe, especially in South America, Africa, and parts of Asia. The umbrella organization that helped to launch this movement is sometimes known as the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), founded by C. Pete Wagner. The NAR has had widespread influence on many charismatic and independent churches, regardless of whether the pastor has ever heard of the New Apostolic Reformation or whether the church formally identifies with it. This movement, that I will describe in a little more detail, has roots in the Latter Rain movement of 80 years ago.

### Leaders of the Movement

In terms of key leaders in this New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), no one is more important than C. Peter Wagner. Wagner had been a friend and sometimes partner of John Wimber in the early days of the Vineyard until Wimber decisively split from Wagner in the early 1990s. Wagner had been a missionary in South America and then became a seminary professor at Fuller Seminary before becoming the guiding figure in the NAR. Other key figures, whose books Charismatic Christians may or may not have read, but whose ideas they certainly have encountered, are Cindy Jacobs, noted especially for her work on strategic-level spiritual warfare and spiritual mapping; Che Ahn, who leads a huge network of churches across the globe; Lance Wallnau, who is the promoter of

the Seven Mountain teaching; and Dutch Sheets, who is an intercessory prayer leader. Their influence has gone around the globe.

## **Major Teachings of the Movement**

The New Apostolic Reformation movement has spread very rapidly through global charismatic networks, TV ministries, books, podcasts, and conferences. Even though Wagner died 10 years ago in 2016, the movement continues to spread the ideas of:

1. The restoration of the office of apostle and prophet and the fivefold ministry,
2. The practice of strategic-level spiritual warfare,
3. Societal transformation via dominion theology (the Seven Mountain Mandate)

### **1. Restoration of the Office of Apostles and Prophets and the Fivefold Ministry**

The first major feature of the NAR is the restoration of apostles and prophets and the so-called fivefold ministry. Under this paradigm, pastors are not the ultimate governors of their churches, nor are elders, presbyteries or denominational leaders. Adherents of the NAR believe that God wants apostles and prophets to have translocal authority over the church. In one of his books, *Church Quake*, Wagner argued that in 1999, Christianity was undergoing a “new, apostolic revolution.” A central tenet of his teaching was that 2001 marked the beginning of the second apostolic age in which God was restoring apostles and prophets which had been lost for centuries.

Unlike denominations, the NAR operates through networks led by apostles who are the governing leaders over networks of churches and prophets who receive and communicate direct revelation from God to guide apostles and their networks.

## **2. The Practice of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare**

A second key idea of the NAR is its emphasis on spiritual warfare and particularly, strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW). SLSW is the belief that Christians can and should confront and defeat territorial or institutional demonic powers that influence cities, regions, or social systems. Wagner promoted SLSW, including the practices of spiritual mapping and prayer campaigns against demonic strongholds.

## **3. Societal Transformation via Dominion Theology (Seven Mountain Mandate)**

The third key element of the NAR is societal transformation via what is sometimes called dominion theology, or the best-known example of dominion theology known as the Seven Mountain Mandate. Wagner also wrote about this in his book *Spheres of Authority* in 2002, and another book in 2008 called *Dominion! How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*. The Seven Mountain Mandate teaches that Christians are called to dominate these seven areas of life::

1. government,
2. education,
3. media,
4. arts and entertainment,

5. business,
6. family,
7. religion

## **History: The Latter Rain Movement**

Where did the idea of the restoration of the office of apostle and prophet come from or the notion of the so-called fivefold ministry? The history of these ideas can be traced back almost 80 years ago, to a revival that started in Canada which became known as the Latter Rain movement. This movement began in February 1948 at the Sharon Orphanage and Bible School in North Battleford, Canada. Early leaders at this orphanage and Bible college withdrew from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and began fasting and praying for revival. During meetings, in February 1948, they reportedly had prophecies and Holy Spirit experiences. Several doctrinal issues emerged from this movement, but the two key doctrines that emerged were

1. The idea that God was restoring a fivefold ministry based upon Ephesians 4:11, especially apostles and prophets as governing offices in the church,
2. The idea that God was raising up an end-time army. In other words, the church would mature into a triumphant force, dominating governments, the global economy, and culture to prepare the earth for the return of Jesus.

These ideas were rejected by the Assemblies of God denomination. The Assemblies were very concerned about the authoritarian direction that these so-called apostles and prophets were taking. Prophecy was treated as binding revelation. Many people who

were influenced by the Latter Rain movement began to be more directed by prophetic words than by Scripture, The Assemblies were also concerned about the Latter Rain view of apostles, which was a departure from historic Pentecostal teaching.

Pentecostals historically taught that there is no biblical basis for understanding the office of apostle as having current governing authority in the church. In addition, the Assemblies were concerned about spiritual abuse by these trans-local “apostles” and their lack of accountability or oversight.

But this movement that was expelled from the Assemblies continued to grow in influence. Its ideas influenced the shepherding movement of the 1970s, in which five men from the United States claimed apostolic authority over networks of churches, over which they exercised oversight - and not only over churches, but over individual lives. In many places impacted by the shepherding movement, individuals were told whom they may marry and whom they may not marry. People were told what ministries they should be participating in, where they should move, whether and where they should go to college and so on. John Wimber opposed the shepherding movement for taking over the personal decision-making authority which God gives to individuals for their own lives.

The Latter Rain movement also deeply influenced the Kansas City Fellowship led by Mike Bickle. Vineyard had a relationship with Kansas City and its leaders in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Bickle embraced almost all of the doctrines of the Latter Rain movement, including the restoration of apostles and prophets, and the doctrine of the

manifest sons of God. According to this doctrine, a perfected army of believers would arise at the end of this age, who would exercise enormous authority over the earth before Christ's return. Wimber became increasingly concerned about the Kansas City teaching, and eventually Kansas City left the Vineyard.

## **Doctrinal Elements of the New Apostolic Reformation**

The Latter Rain movement strongly influenced the NAR. So let's consider the individual parts of the NAR, and why the Vineyard has such trouble with these teachings. On the surface, it may seem that NAR doctrines are consistent with Vineyard's historic teaching.

1. The NAR believes in spiritual gifts, and so does the Vineyard.
2. The NAR believes in apostles and prophets and, to some degree, so does Vineyard.
3. The NAR believes in spiritual warfare and so does the Vineyard.
4. And the Vineyard believes in influencing society, and being salt and light.

Why, then, would Vineyard have such strong objections to NAR teaching and practices?

### **1. Fivefold Ministry**

Let's begin with the NAR teaching about the so-called fivefold ministry. We read in Ephesians 4:11 "So Christ himself gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers." In the original Greek, this verse reads, "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers." The grammatical structure of

Ephesians 4:11 suggests that the roles of pastor and teacher are not two separate functions, but rather one.

To be more specific, every item in the list has its own “the” except the last two, “pastors and teachers,” which share a single Greek article, (*tous*) “the.” In Greek, when two nouns are connected by “and,” (*kai*) and the article “the” (*tous*) appears only before the first noun and not the second, it strongly indicates that the two nouns relate to a single class of person or unified role - not two separate roles. This means that, perhaps, we should not even be speaking about the “five-fold” ministry but instead a “four-fold” ministry of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher.

Apart from the grammar of Eph. 4:11, it's very clear that in the New Testament, the fundamental job of a pastor was to teach. In fact, teaching is the only function that the Apostle Paul lays out as a prerequisite for being an elder in the church. Paul says that elders need to be competent to teach. Every other prerequisite for being an elder in 1Timothy 3 and in Titus 1, are character qualities. Teaching is the only thing that Paul mentions as a necessary ministry skill for eldership. John Stott put it well when he wrote, “a pastor who does not teach and a teacher who does not pastor are incomplete pictures of the one role Paul has in mind.”

What, then, is the problem the Vineyard has with the so-called fivefold ministry? Beyond the grammar of Ephesians 4:11, Paul lists gifted persons, he doesn't speak about ruling offices. The text emphasizes functions given to the church, not an enduring hierarchy.

Regarding apostles specifically, Acts 1:21, 22 ties apostleship to being a witness of the resurrected Christ. Paul was an exception, and he explicitly defends that exception in 1 Corinthians 15:8. There are other apostles, such as Barnabas in Acts 14:4,14 or James, the Lord's brother, in Galatians 1:19, or Andronicus and Junia in Romans 16:7, But, these other "apostles" seem to have had a different level of authority than the original twelve plus Paul. These others functioned more like missionaries or representatives of the churches, not authorized agents of Jesus Christ.

Many Pentecostal and charismatic teachers have said that we really need to be careful about our use of the title Apostle, an opinion that I share. We don't have anyone today who is called to the function of the early apostles who were able to give revelation from God that was binding on the whole church. We do have missionaries who break new ground. To support this distinction between the original 12 and other apostles, some scholars have distinguished between apostles of Jesus Christ and apostles of the churches. Paul seems to have made that distinction in 2 Corinthians 8:23 where he speaks about apostles of the church, but with respect to himself, Paul always claims that he is "an apostle of Jesus Christ."

Another criticism of the idea of modern-day apostles is that apostles and prophets were foundational ministries. Ephesians 2:19b-20 says: "...you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone." Apostles belong to the foundational stage of the church, and their role was connected to receiving and

transmitting revelation. But there is nothing in the history of the church, nor in the New Testament that says that the office of apostle and the office of prophet are ongoing offices. And while we had individuals throughout the history of the church who were responsible for starting new movements, those individuals were not called apostles. They were called church planters or missionaries, but not apostles.

John Wimber had great difficulty with the restoration of the apostolic office and he always rejected the title of apostle for himself. Here are some of John's criticisms of this Latter Rain teaching and specifically of Wagner's view of modern-day apostleship.

1. John said that the office of apostle ceased with the death of the apostles. The function might continue, but modern-day apostles are better labelled as groundbreaking missionaries.
2. John emphasized that in the Vineyard, we did not have governing apostles over churches. Authority in the Vineyard is always local. It's always pastoral, and it's always accountable.
3. John discouraged the use of titles in the Vineyard. John said we are a movement of pastors, not apostles. Vineyard rejects apostolic government. The NAR institutionalizes it. In the NAR, apostles oversee networks. They appoint leaders and define the vision, and titles are always emphasized.
4. In the Vineyard, we also have had a different view of prophets. For John, prophecy was always fallible. John regularly said, "We miss it sometimes. We don't always get it right. We get it wrong sometimes." In the New Testament, prophecy was also meant to be pastoral, and prophets primarily had the role

described in 1 Corinthians 14:3 as strengthening, encouragement, and comfort. John believed that prophecy was always to be weighed by scripture and by the church community.

5. John did not believe in binding revelation for the direction of churches. For the NAR, prophetic words are not primarily about the 1 Corinthians 14:3 functions of encouragement, or exhortation, or edification. Rather, for the NAR, prophetic words are meant to be strategic. Prophets in the NAR offer direction for church movements and they're closely aligned with apostolic authority. In contrast, Vineyard generally limited prophecy to personal and church edification.

In sum, Wimber was very concerned about the structuring of the NAR because of its teaching about the fivefold ministry, and particularly their emphasis upon the offices of apostle and prophet. For the Vineyard, the local church was central. Networks exist for support and training and relationship. Wimber did not like, and frequently spoke against, authoritarian structures that required submission to these governing authorities. In contrast, the NAR rejects the local church as being central. Rather, what is central are apostolic networks and strategic coalitions. Loyalty in the NAR is to movement leaders, not to local church pastors or to congregations. The key difference between Vineyard and the NAR is that Vineyard is relationally connected, and the NAR is hierarchically structured.

## 2. Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare

A second key aspect of NAR teaching is SLSW. The notion that Christians should identify and confront territorial or regional demonic powers over cities, nations or institutions, is sometimes called spiritual mapping. Spiritual mapping involves prophetic insight and coordinated prayer campaigns. Wagner believed that SLSW was the key to global revival, and that if we wanted to see the world come to Christ, the church needed to identify and confront territorial or regional demonic powers over cities or nations. According to the NAR, powers can only be identified through prophetic insight. Then groups of churches must come together to pray against the identified territorial spirits. What is the problem with SLSW? Why did Wimber break with his friend, Wagner, over this practice?

First of all, Wimber said that there was no clear biblical evidence or biblical precedent for SLSW. The primary biblical text cited by the NAR as a basis for SLSW, Daniel chapter 10, does not, in fact, teach God's people to practice SLSW. In Daniel 10, a messenger speaks about the Prince of Persia resisting him. Wimber had a number of problems with this as the basis for SLSW. First, the conflict takes place between angels, NOT between humans and demons. Daniel does not confront the Prince of Persia or the spiritual world in the heavenlies; Michael the Archangel does. The text describes God's sovereignty over empires, not demonic mapping.

Second, there is no command to imitate this scenario. We see lots of things in the Bible that don't necessarily form precedents for our practice. We are not called to build arks or

march around the walls of the city or sacrifice our firstborn sons on an altar. In the same way, modern believers are not encouraged to try to live out Daniel chapter 10. What Daniel 10 is meant to teach is the importance of prayer, and God's sovereignty over empires. In short, Daniel 10 is not a spiritual warfare strategy for 21st century Christians.

Two other key texts for the NAR, and the whole practice of spiritual mapping and strategic-level spiritual warfare, as developed through Peter Wagner, Cindy Jacobs, and George Oders, Jr. are Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18.

**Matthew 16:19: I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**

**Matthew 18:18: Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**

The NAR understanding of these texts is that the “binding” language is directly addressing demonic entities - specifically territorial spirits - powerful demonic beings who hold authority over cities, regions, nations, and institutions. The “keys of the kingdom” given to Peter are generalized by the NAR to the apostolic authority held by the church in every generation, and especially by recognized apostles and prophets in the NAR structure. And so “whatever you bind on Earth” is therefore read as the church

being given delegated authority to identify, confront, and restrain demonic powers operating at a strategic level over geographic or institutional domains.

George Otis Jr.'s concept of spiritual mapping involved researching the spiritual history of a city to identify what demonic strongholds are in place. Otis understood this research as the intelligence-gathering phase that enables effective “binding.” John Dawson's *Taking our Cities for God*, introduced the broader concept of identificational repentance, (confessing the corporate sins of a city, or a nation to break demonic legal rights) flows from the same framework. Wagner explicitly argued that the reason cities are not evangelized is not primarily human resistance, but demonic occupation. Wagner maintained that the targeting of high ranking spirits before evangelism is the necessary precondition for breakthrough.

According to the NAR, Matthew 16:19 is the charter for apostolic spiritual authority over cosmic powers, and Matthew 18:18 becomes its extension, meaning that when the church assembles in agreement and binds a territorial spirit by name, heaven ratifies that action. There are multiple problems with this approach to Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18. Across the Christian spectrum, whether Protestant or Catholic, these verses are read very differently on both linguistic as well as contextual grounds than the way the NAR reads these verses.

There is a background in 1st century Judaism concerning what “binding” and “loosing” meant. These were technical terms at the time of Jesus that had to do with the power of

a rabbi or an authoritative teacher to prohibit (bind) or permit (loose) certain behaviors under the Torah. In other words, rabbis had the authority to make binding, legal rulings on questions of what was and was not Torah-compliant practice. In terms of the community, the community had the authority to exclude (bind) someone from the community, or to restore (loose) an excluded person back to community. This is what Matthew is saying in his Jewish context.

Reading Matthew 16:19 in the original context, Peter has just confessed Jesus to be the Messiah. The “keys of the kingdom” echoes Isaiah 22, where a man named Eliakim was given the key of the house of David, a metaphor for administrative and judicial authority. Eliakim is not given authority over cosmic warfare. The authority given to Peter is the authority to govern and teach the community of Jesus' followers to make authoritative decisions about what the community does and does not permit, and those decisions will be recognized by heaven.

Very importantly, the grammar in Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18 contain a perfect passive construction in the Greek. And so, these verses are better translated, “whatever is bound on earth will have been bound in heaven. And whatever is loosed on earth will have been loosed in heaven.” In other words, heaven's ratification follows from decisions already made according to the divine will. The idea is not that we on Earth initiate heaven's actions, but rather, that we on Earth are following the Holy Spirit, and heaven then ratifies what we do. Most New Testament scholars see the authority given regarding Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 as granting doctrinal and church authority to

Peter as the foundational leader of the church, which is consistent with his role in the book of Acts.

When we read Matthew 18:18 in context, it is unambiguously about the inclusion and exclusion of people from the community. The whole section is entirely about how to confront a sinning brother, what to do when someone refuses to repent, and then the corporate ratification of those decisions, with the promise of Christ's presence when two or three are gathered. The demonic is simply never in view. The context is about community discipline, not cosmic warfare.

In sum, the problem with the NAR reading is that there is absolutely nothing about demons ever mentioned in Matthew 16:19 or Matthew 18:18. Reading demonic beings into these texts imports a framework entirely foreign to the passages. Matthew 16 is about church teaching authority and Matthew 18 is about community discipline. Neither is an instruction manual for cosmic level warfare. The perfect passive construction in the Greek undermines the NAR claim that human action in prayer compels a heavenly result. The grammar, instead, suggests the discernment of what heaven has already decided by God, not the church commanding heaven. Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 do not authorize the church to pray and bind spirits in the heavens over an institution like the church, over a city block, over a business, over a government, or over a community.

Let's remember what Vineyard affirms. First of all, Vineyard affirms the reality of demonic powers, including what the Apostle Paul calls principalities and powers in

Ephesians 6, and we believe that those powers do operate at a supra-personal level. Vineyard takes the spiritual world seriously, and we believe that the church is genuinely supposed to be engaged in spiritual warfare. The authority of the church is derived from Christ's victory at the cross and his resurrection. We have the authority to confront and overcome demonic opposition. But we engage in spiritual warfare through prayer, worship, the proclamation of the gospel, and deliverance ministry. But we do not engage in strategic-level spiritual warfare.

Second, Wimber encouraged the focus of Christian ministry to always be Christocentric, that is, focused upon Jesus, not upon identifying and confronting demonic beings. For us in the Vineyard, focus on naming and binding territorial spirits risks a dangerous preoccupation with the demonic. Our focus must remain on Jesus and the gospel.

Again, Wimber's major concern was that the practice of SLSW lacked any biblical precedent. He also noted that the apostles never practiced territorial warfare. For example, when the apostle Paul was in Ephesus, the city was drenched with demons. People were practicing the occult, and they had various charms and amulets. There were many magicians practicing in Ephesus and there were many books on demonic curses.

But the apostle Paul never engaged those things directly, Only when a spirit actually manifested itself, not in the heavenlies, but here on earth through an individual did Paul

deal with the demonic realm. He was never concerned about territorial spirits. Rather, he said the heavens were God's business. The apostolic strategy for reaching cities was not prophetically discerning what principality or power might be over a city, but rather emphasized preaching the gospel, healing the sick, caring for widows, casting out demons when those demons showed up through an individual, and church planting.

Wimber was also concerned that this practice involved an over-speculative demonology. Prophetic speculation regarding what spirits were over a city or what the demonic hierarchy involves is not plainly revealed by the Bible. We are not told by God in Scripture about the nature of demon hierarchical structures. Speculation about things that are not plainly revealed in the Bible gives room for spiritual pride and an over-interpretation of spiritual experiences. Further, Wimber was concerned that SLSW called too much attention to demons. Spiritual warfare campaigns distract from the main and plain mission of the church.

Wimber also believed that engaging in SLSW could cause psychological and spiritual harm to the practitioners. Problems in an individual's life, or in a church's life in NAR circles are attributed to demonic strongholds which could create unnecessary fear. Further, we don't know what powers we're engaging with when we confront principalities and powers in heavenly places. Throughout the scriptures, it's clear that the realm in which human beings ought to operate is the earth, NOT the heavenlies. The attempt by humans to crash the heavens was judged by God way back in Genesis 11 when human beings in their pride tried to storm heaven and exercise control in God's

realm. We humans have been given authority only on the earth. God is the one who has authority in the heavens.

Finally Wimber was concerned that SLSW was leading to a kind of spiritual elitism. Some people claimed special revelation not available to the ordinary Christian. But Wimber insisted that New Testament ministry was fundamentally rooted in the opposite of elitism- namely, humility and dependence on God - which are qualities incumbent on all members of Christ's body. Wimber taught that the most important thing for exercising power ministry was weakness and humility, not claims of unique spiritual authority.

### **SLSW and its Parallels with Animistic Practices**

There are strong and deeply troubling parallels between the practices of animistic cultures across West Africa, Southeast Asia, and pre-Columbia, Mexico, and Central America and the practices of the NAR. In animistic cultures, the name of the spirit is essential - it is the key that unlocks power over it. You cannot bind, appease, or expel what you have not correctly identified, according to animistic belief. The discovery of the name is fundamental to the transaction.

NAR spiritual mapping operates with identical logic. Cindy Jacobs, Chuck Pierce, and others speak of "identifying the strongman" over a city or region - naming spirits like Jezebel, Python, Leviathan, or regionally specific entities - as a prerequisite to effective intercession against them. George Otis Jr.'s book, *Informed Intercession*, is essentially a manual for researching the specific identity of territorial spirits through historical,

cultural, and prophetic investigation. The assumption is nearly identical to animistic practice: correct identification of the spirit by name is the prerequisite for effective spiritual action.

The biblical warrant for this is scanty at best, and non-existent at worst. Jesus does name the Gerasene spirits as “Legion.” But this was a response to information the demon volunteered, not a technique that Jesus employed. Paul delivers the slave girl in Acts 16 without any prior research into the spirit's identity or history. The New Testament pattern of deliverance operates through a simple command in Jesus' name, with no prior identification of the spirit's specific identity or jurisdictional claim.

### **Techniques and Practices**

Animistic practice is deeply procedural. Healing rituals, spirit bindings, ceremonies, and protective rites must be performed correctly - the right words need to be uttered in the right order, with the right objects and the right timing for the intended effects to occur.

Technique is not marginal but is essential to the practice's efficacy. NAR spiritual warfare has developed an elaborate procedural vocabulary: identificational repentance must proceed territorial cleansing; prayer walking must be done with specific intentions; prophetic acts, such as burying anointed objects, pouring oil at the city's boundaries, blowing shofars at strategic locations, release specific spiritual effects. Wagner offered detailed protocols for what must happen in what sequence for territorial spirits to be dislodged. The underlying assumption is that spiritual effects are produced by correct execution of spirit-specific techniques. This structure is identical to animistic ritual logic.

Biblical prayer is completely different. Biblical prayer is fundamentally relational and demonstrates the dependence of the believer upon our Creator. Believers appeal to the Creator who acts according to his own will and purposes. There are no techniques or procedures suggested by the Bible that will constrain or manipulate God's response. The NAR model, by way of contrast, repositions the believer as the agent whose correct technique produces reliable spiritual results. The NAR relocates agency from God to the practitioner in a way that mirrors animistic manipulation of the spirit world.

### **The Specialist Class**

In animistic societies, the spiritual world is not accessible to everyone. Instead, the shaman, or the diviner, possesses gifts of discernment, spirit contact, and power that ordinary community members do not. This belief system creates a mediating class whose authority is grounded, not in being part of the community, but in demonstrated supernatural capacity.

The NAR's apostolic and prophetic offices function with an identical logic. The apostle possesses governmental authority in the heavenlies that ordinary believers and even ordinary pastors do not. A prophet has revelatory access to the spirit world - identifying territorial spirits, receiving strategic intelligence for prayer campaigns, discerning the spiritual roots of social conditions - that is unavailable by ordinary means.

## **Historical Sin and Spiritual Legal Rights**

One of the most distinctive NAR concepts, and one of the most clearly animistic in its logic, is the idea that territorial spirits maintain their hold over places through “legal rights” established by historical sins. John Dawson's *Taking our Cities for God* and subsequent identificational repentance movements argue that past events - colonial violence, broken treaties, sexual immorality, occult practices, and even the sins of pre-Christian inhabitants - create enduring spiritual conditions that must be ritually addressed through corporate repentance and renunciation before territorial spirits can be dislodged.

There is an exact parallel in animistic cultures. For example, in many Southeast Asian traditions, land that has been the site of violence carries a spiritual contamination that must be cleansed through specific rites before it can be safely inhabited or cultivated. The logic is identical to identificational repentance: past events create present spiritual liabilities; correct ritual addresses those liabilities and removes the spiritual hold. In the Bible, nowhere is there a causal line drawn between the corporate repentance of God's people for violating their covenant with Yahweh and the removal of a spirit's jurisdictional claim. We do see corporate repentance, especially in the Old Testament, but this always has to do with violating the covenant with Yahweh. We never see corporate repentance as a key for dealing with spirits in the heavenly realm.

So, in sum,

1. There is no biblical precedent for strategic-level spiritual warfare. We can't find it anywhere in the Bible. Daniel 10 does not teach this type of warfare as a model for us to follow.
2. We also can't find SLSW anywhere in the history of the church. We don't have examples of people or church movements engaging in SLSW and teaching others to do the same before the 20th century. We have lots of examples of the deliverance of individuals, but we have no examples of teaching Christians to identify or “bind” territorial spirits over cities.
3. SLSW was not a part of apostolic practice in the New Testament. Apostolic practice was confined to healing, preaching the gospel, discipling the church, and engaging spirits when they manifested.
4. We don't want to get beyond ourselves. Humans are bound to the earth. We don't enter the heavens. What goes on in heaven is God's business.
5. SLSW leads to spiritual elitism and pride. It can also cause psychological and emotional damage.
6. SLSW operates with the same logic and procedures as animistic spiritual warfare.

### **3. Dominion Theology - Seven Mountain Mandate**

The third major distinctive of NAR teaching is dominion theology, and under that umbrella, what is called the Seven Mountain Mandate. Dominion theology is sometimes called “kingdom now theology.” It's the belief that Christians are called to exercise

God-given authority over society, bringing laws and government and cultural influence in line with the Bible before Christ returns.

Often, there's an appeal to the Bible for this kind of authority. Christians who believe in dominion authority sometimes turn to Genesis 1:28 where God says to the first humans, "Be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the earth." Another often-cited text is Matthew 28:18-20 where Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," and then he turns and says, "Make disciples of all nations."

Pastors who hold to dominion theology say that the scope of God's grant of authority to the church can and should be applied to all of society, to politics, to law, to education, and to media, with the goal of bringing all social institutions under God's rule through legislation, through cultural transformation, and through taking over institutions. They also might attempt political dominion through the passing of laws that reflect biblical morality. Proponents of dominion theology might advocate for cultural dominion by taking over public schools, the arts or the movie industry, or they might seek economic domination by attempting to take over major corporations. Dominion theology was especially taught by Wagner when he said, "The church has been called to occupy and transform the nations. God intends for his people to wield authority in every sphere of society."

The Seven Mountain Mandate is simply a specific application of this broader idea of dominion theology. The original idea of seven mountains came from several figures:

Lauren Cunningham from Youth with a Mission (YWAM), and Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. In 1975, they apparently had dreams in which they saw seven spheres of cultural influence that a Christian should impact.

1. Family,
2. Religion or church,
3. Education,
4. Media,
5. Arts and entertainment,
6. Business, and
7. Government.

The idea at this stage was NOT dominion or political control, but influence and cultural evangelism by Christians. And so, the notion spread of Christians having seven spheres of influence. A Christian leader named Francis Schaeffer taught this in the 1980s. Schaefer was known for teaching that Christians should engage the culture, including law, the arts, philosophy, and politics. But he never used the term “Seven Mountain Mandate” and he never suggested that Christians should dominate these domains. In the year 2000, a man by the name of Lance Wallnau encountered Lauren Cunningham, and Cunningham told him about his 1975 revelation about the seven spheres. Lance Wallnau reframed the idea, and instead of talking about influence by Christians, he began talking about the strategic takeover of cultural sectors. Wallnau taught that the goal that Christians ought to have was for Christians to conquer or dominate seven spheres of a society, which he called seven mountains.

This was a major turning point because it moved Christians from cultural influence to cultural domination. And then, Lance Wallnau connected with Wagner. Wagner invited Wallnau to teach the Seven Mountain concept to Wagner's organization. And so, this coalition of apostolic leaders now began teaching the so-called Seven Mountain Mandate. This spread across the world via NAR networks through people like Che Anh, Dutch Sheets and Cindy Jacobs. Then, it was given a major boost by Bill Johnson from Bethel. Bill Johnson and Lance Wallnau wrote a book together called *Invading Babylon, the Seven Mountain Mandate*. That book brought this teaching into thousands of charismatic churches and online ministries. It then spread through independent charismatic networks, especially Bethel and Mike Bickle's International House of Prayer.

### **Problems with the Seven Mountain Mandate**

To repeat, the seven mountains are government, business, education, media, arts and entertainment, family, and religion (or church). What is the problem with the seven mountain teaching? Why does Vineyard and many other evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic churches have so much difficulty with it?

There are a number of problems. First of all, there appears to be what can be called an overrealized eschatology. Wimber, when he taught about the kingdom, always taught that the kingdom was “already and not yet”. Christians believe in two comings of Jesus, not just one. And so while Jesus came to inaugurate the rule of God, God's rule has not

yet been consummated or completed. Jesus is coming again to rule the world. Wimber believed that the kingdom comes through Jesus' words, his works, and his wounds. But neither Jesus nor the apostles ever taught that God's kingdom would come in this age through political conquest and domination.

Vineyard is also concerned that Christians taking dominion overestimates the human role in God's plan. The biblical verses used to justify dominion theology are twisted beyond their intended meaning. Genesis 1:28 does not say that human beings should have dominion over other people. Rather, that we have been given dominion over the earth, over God's creatures, but not over all governments. The Bible calls Christ-followers to kingdom discipleship, not corporate and societal domination.

The Seven Mountain Mandate confuses spiritual authority with political authority. The Vineyard teaches spiritual authority in prayer and healing, in deliverance, and in preaching God's word. We believe that spiritual authority is real. But that doesn't necessarily translate into political or economic authority. The Vineyard is cautious about our relationship with the larger culture. We tend to focus on witness, and acts of mercy and justice at local levels where we can influence things towards a more just end, but we avoid domination language. Nowhere does the New Testament promise that Christians are going to run institutions or government in this age before the Lord returns.

## **Critiques of Dominion Theology/Seven Mountain Mandate**

So, what are some of the critiques of the Seven Mountain Mandate? Let me list them.

1. Dominion theology and the Seven Mountain Mandate, focuses upon cultural conquest, but the Vineyard focuses upon personal transformation, not cultural or political control.
2. Dominion theology or the Seven Mountain Mandate practices an overrealized eschatology. It has too much "kingdom now." There's not enough "not yet" of suffering, unanswered prayer, weakness, or government failure. The Vineyard teaches both the "already" and the "not yet" of the kingdom. We believe that the kingdom is already present in part, but it will not be fully realized, especially politically, economically, or culturally until Jesus returns.
3. Dominion theology/the Seven Mountain Mandate makes an idolatry of structures. So long as self-identified Christians take over certain structures, Christ is assumed to be in control. But long experience shows that Christians may hold positions of power in government or business without bringing those structures under Christ's control. Indeed, critics could easily argue that, in many cases, Christian domination of government (at least in the US) has often led to less care for the poor, less welcome of the immigrant, and less concern for the political rights of women and other religions or racial minorities. The Vineyard focus is not upon taking over structures, but upon people - we believe individual people are the primary objects of God's work.
4. Dominion theology assumes that only "our kind of Christians" will be in charge. But it seems to have no room for other kinds of Christians - Roman Catholics or Eastern Orthodox or Lutherans or Progressive Christians who "don't believe what

we believe.” If Christians are called to run things in society, the question immediately arises: which Christians?

5. Dominion theology/the Seven Mountain Mandate is rooted in prophetic certainty. The prophets and apostles run things. But the Vineyard says that God has different spheres: government and government leaders over the legal structure of societies; parents, over their families ; and pastors, over the leadership of the churches. We don't believe that all of life should be controlled by church leaders or by apostles and prophets.
6. Much of this leads to the same critique that we raised with the so-called Fivefold Ministry and strategic-level warfare: spiritual pride. Dominion theology and the Seven Mountain Mandate strongly risks the potential of elitism among leaders. Vineyard has always taught humility, weakness, and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

This paper has offered a strong critique of specific aspects of NAR teaching and practice. But why ever critique any other Christians? Isn't that divisive? The Apostle Paul commanded pastors to “guard what has been entrusted to us” (1Tim. 6.20). He warned pastors to protect the church from those who teach “different doctrines” (1 Tim 1:3). The spirit of our critique of the NAR should be understood as an encouragement for us in the Vineyard to be “good ministers of Christ Jesus nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed” (1 Tim 4:6). May the Lord enable his church to live out this apostolic charge!