

## The New Apostolic Reformation

*“NAR represents the most radical change in the way of doing church since the Protestant Reformation” – C.Peter Wagoner –*

<http://thewartburgwatch.com/2014/11/21/what-is-the-new-apostolic-reformation-nar>.

The proponents of the **New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)** believe that God will empower the church through the ministry of a new breed of prophets and apostles that will enable the church to take control of the world’s institutions and so prepare it so that Christ can return. The vision to change the world, also known as “Dominionism,” “Reconstructionism” or “Restorationism,” in more recent times is being propagated as the “Seven Mountains Mandate.” The “seven mountains” or institutions over which the church must take control, are:

1. Government
2. Education
3. Religion
4. Family
5. Business
6. Arts / Entertainment
7. Media

In recent times, Bill Johnson of Redding, California, has become a popular teacher of his version of “Dominionism” which is summarised in the title of his book, *When Heaven Invades Earth*. He believes an anointed, elite group of Christians, an “Elijah generation,” will prepare the way for the Lord’s return:

*«We will carry the Elijah anointing in preparing for the return of the Lord in the same way that John the Baptist carried the Elijah anointing and prepared the people for the coming of the Lord » (Johnson, p.184).*

Dominion theology proclaims that the dominion that Adam and Eve lost through the fall, is to be taken back by the church and that Jesus will not return until it has been done. Establishing the rule of the church on earth is, according to some, what is meant by the petition in the Lord’s Prayer, *“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* This theology is illustrated by the words *“Heaven on earth”* which appear in large letters on the walls of certain churches. An erroneous interpretation of the stewardship mandate given to the human race in **Genesis 1:28**, forms the basis of what is taught in Dominionism.

*“And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the seas, and over birds of the heavens, and over all beasts creeping on the earth” (Gen. 1:28).*

By this stewardship mandate, God gave human beings the responsibility to take care of the creation as His stewards and not as overbearing lords. This vision of establishing a visible rule of the church on earth, is in radical opposition to what Jesus declared:

*“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36).*

## The influence of Dominionism

A large section of the church has, in one way or another, been influenced by the teachings of Dominionism. The following are certain of the main unscriptural doctrines and practices that form the basis of what they propagate:

### 1. The importance they place on subjective “revelations”

In order to justify some of their teachings and practices that are not found in Scripture, they declare that they receive revelations and experiences directly from God. One of the modern apostles proclaims:

*“The rhema is regarded as a more immediate word from God which we do not find in the 66 books of the Bible”* (Engaging the Enemy, by C. Peter Wagner. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991, pp.15-16).

They seem to ignore the written Word which states that *“all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”* (**2 Tim. 3:16**). They also ignore the warning given by Paul *“not to go beyond what is written”* (**1 Cor. 4:6**).

### 2. The teaching that words have creative power

We often hear of well-meaning people who “speak” words to “release” peace and prosperity over somebody’s life. Recently, in a more extreme form, Kenneth Copeland, one of the leading figures in the Word of Faith movement, declared the following concerning the Coronavirus:

*“Standing in the office of the prophet of God, I execute judgement on Covid19...I execute judgement on you Satan....it is finished over America, sayeth the Mighty Spirit...”* See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSlrQBGfUtw>.

In the same manner the following appeared on a whatsapp I received:

*“I curse you...I speak death and failure...shrivel up and die...get out of the bodies of the human race...I command you...you will not prosper...”*

Those that believe that words have power, erroneously argue that because it is stated in Genesis that God used words to create, words must have power. What they forget is the fact that it was not because words have power that God could create; it was because **He** had power that He could do it!

What about **Proverbs 18:21** that states that the tongue has power over life and death? The context explains what this verse really means – your words express your attitude that you have towards life and that can have a positive or a negative influence on yourself and on those around you. See **Prov. 17:22**:

*“Being cheerful keeps you healthy. It is slow death to be gloomy all the time.”* (GNB)

*“A cheerful heart makes good healing, but a stricken spirit dries the bones” (LITV).*

When James refers to the tongue as a “a restless evil,” “full of deadly poison,” he is referring to the negative effect that the words of a malicious person can have on the lives of others. (**James 3:8-9**).

**Our words do not have power; they only have influence** – figuratively speaking they can cause “life” or “death,”

What must also be considered is the medical fact that some psychosomatic diseases can be caused by harmful chemical substances that are released in the human body as result of chronic, embittered attitudes.

The “life” and “death” that is spoken about in **Proverbs 18:21** can possibly also refer to the authority that the words of the king had in Biblical times; he could command someone who provoked him to be executed. See **Proverbs 20:2**:

*“A king's anger is like a lion's roar; anyone who angers him forfeits his life”*

### **3. “Binding and loosing” – The belief that Satan and his demons can be bound**

Something that is widely practised in Christian circles, is the practice of the “binding” of demons. If it was true that they could be bound, considering all the “binding” that has been done of the spirits of crime, corruption, rape and violence in our country, we should have been living in an utopian state by now. The reality, however, is that things seem to be going from bad to worse, which corresponds more with what is predicted in Scripture: *“...evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse...” (2 Tim. 3:13).*

The truth is that only God can bind Satan and that he, Satan, is being allowed to be god of this world until ultimately, he will be bound and thrown into the lake of fire at the end of the age (**2 Cor. 4:4, 1 Joh. 5:19, Rev. 20**).

But does **Matthew 18:18** not declare that we can bind demons? The Amplified Bible version of this verse helps us to understand it more fully:

*“Truly, I tell you, whatever you forbid and declare to be improper and unlawful on earth **must be what is already forbidden in heaven**, and whatever you permit and declare proper and lawful on earth must already be permitted in heaven” (My emphasis).*

The context makes it clear that this verse has nothing to do with the binding of demons, but that it refers to how disputes amongst believers should be dealt with. It must be done according to divine principles (**Matt. 18:15-20**).

What about the parable of the binding of the strong man in **Matthew 12:22-29**?

An important principle of Bible exposition is that one cannot build doctrines on parables alone; they can only be used to illustrate truth that has already been established elsewhere in Scripture. For example, by reading the parable of the Ten Virgins and erroneously believing that the oil in the lamps represents the Holy Spirit, it can be concluded that the Holy Spirit can be used up, but that He can be replenished by buying Him from the dealers! (**Matt. 25:1-13**).

The purpose of a parable is to illustrate and emphasise a central truth in a lesson. The main point of the parable of the Ten Virgins is stated in verse 13: keep watch and be ready, because you do not know when the Son of God is coming back!

The main point that Jesus wants to bring across with the parable of the binding of the strong man in **Matthew 12:22-29** is that He has more power than Satan. Nowhere in the context do we find any teaching prescribing how believers are to bind demons.

If it is believed that demons can be bound, the following must be considered: If Satan can be bound, why did Jesus not bind him when he tried to tempt Him in the desert. Furthermore, why does Peter and James, instead of teaching believers how to bind the devil, declare that they must resist him:

*“Your opponent, the devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. **Resist him** and be firm in the faith...” (1 Pet. 5:8-9, my emphasis).*

*“Therefore, submit yourselves to God. **Resist the devil, and he will run away from you**” (James 4:7, my emphasis).*

If Jesus did bind the devil in **Matthew 12:24-29**, who untied him so that he could once again, on a later occasion, influence Peter to thwart the purposes of God (**Matt. 16:23**)? He, Satan, was also very free to enter Judas and cause him to betray Jesus (**Luke 22:3**).

Why did Jesus, instead of binding the demons in the two possessed men, cast them out and allow them to enter the pigs (**Matt. 8:30-31**)?

Not one verse in the New Testament describes Jesus or the apostles binding devils; in every single case they are cast out and commanded to leave (**Matt. 8:16, 8:31, 9:33, 10:8, 12:24-27, 17:18-19, Mark 1:25, 1:34,39, 3:11-12,3:15.....**”).

It is because demons can not be bound that Jesus warned that when they find a house from which they were driven, empty, they will re-enter and bring others with them, with worse consequences (**Luke 11:24-26**).

It is significant that in the context of **Eph. 6:10** where the full armour of God is listed, not a word is spoken of the binding of evil forces!

Only God can bind Satan and he, Satan, is being allowed to be god of this world until the appointed time when at the end of the age, he will be bound and thrown into the lake of fire (**1 John 5:19, Revelation 20**).

Do we have a mandate to curse the devil? See **Jude 1:9**:

*“Even the archangel Michael, when he argued with the devil and fought over the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him. Instead, he said, ‘May the Lord rebuke you!’ ”*

Instead of placing the emphasis on man’s sinful nature as being Satan’s biggest ally and instead of proclaiming that individual sin is the root cause of many problems, the blame is often shifted to evil powers. The Biblical answer, however, lies in the fact that the individual sinner has to repent and take full responsibility for his own sins.

Although the enthusiasm of those believing that Satan and his demons can be bound is to be envied, it remains unscriptural and in reality, ineffective.

#### **4. The practise of the pulling down of strongholds –**

### What is a “Stronghold?”

Many Christians are involved in a mystical type of spiritual warfare whereby they believe that through intercession, the strongholds of territorial spirits over certain areas can be identified, bound and pulled down through united prayer. The victory obtained in this way is then supposed to enable believers to “take towns and cities for Jesus.” It is believed that more influence can be exerted when Christians of all denominations come together in large numbers in gatherings to demonstrate their unity. Victory marches through streets are sometimes organised to celebrate the “victory” that is thought to have been won in this way. But is what they are doing Biblical? Is it effective and does it have any real spiritual power?

The whole idea of “the pulling down of strongholds” and “spiritual mapping”, is based on flawed hermeneutics. The only place in the New Testament where the term “*strongholds*” is used, it refers to lies that are formed in the minds of people (**2 Cor. 10:4**).

### What is Paul referring to when he speaks of a “stronghold?”

Scripture is its best own interpreter. “*Strongholds*” cannot refer to demons because nowhere in the entire second epistle to the Corinthians are they mentioned. Paul defines “*strongholds*” as “*arguments*”, “*theories*”, “*reasonings*” and “*thoughts*” in the minds of people that are not in line with Godly Truth (**2 Cor. 10:4-5**, Ampl.Bible ). From the context it is clear that when Paul refers to the pulling down of strongholds he is referring to correcting false ideas and doctrines concerning Godly truth. When people believe lies and wrong doctrines, they are allowing a “stronghold” of deceit to be formed in their heads.

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not physical weapons...but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, inasmuch as **we refute arguments and theories and reasonings** and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the true knowledge of God: and we lead **every thought** and purpose away captive into obedience of Christ...” (2 Cor. 10:4-5, Ampl. Bible ,my emphasis).*

### What weapon does Paul use to bring these strongholds down?

Paul uses “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*” to refute false doctrines and teachings (**Eph.6:17**). Some are of the opinion that the mind cannot be considered when it comes to spiritual things, because it is darkened and fallen. The New Testament apostles were of a different opinion. Words used in the Book of Acts to describe their preaching and teaching refer to an appeal to the intellect e.g. *didasko* (to teach, **Acts19:9**), *sunécheon* (to confound, **Acts 9:22**), *dialegomai* (to reason, to argue, **Acts 17:2**), *diakatelégchomai* (to overcome thoroughly in disputation, **Acts 18:28**), *peitho* (to persuade and to convince, **Acts 19:9**). Therefore we read that as a result of this didactic preaching people were “persuaded” (**Acts 17:4, 18:4, 19:8, 26, 28:23, 24**). They sought to convince their hearers in order to convert them. Through their preaching and teaching they sought to pull down strongholds of wrong thinking in the minds of their hearers. This approach to spiritual warfare is confirmed by what Paul did in Ephesus. Instead of mystical methods he argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus, some translations add, “*from about ten o’clock till three*” (five hours daily!), “*for two years*” (**Acts 19:9-10**, Amplified Bible). Further confirmation of the fact that

apostolic preaching contained much intellectual content is the fact that conversion is often referred to as a response to truth (“...believing the truth” **2 Thess. 2:10-13**, “...acknowledging the truth” **2 Tim. 2:25**, “...obeying the truth” **1 Pet. 1:22, Gal. 5:7**, “...coming to know the truth” **John 8:32, 1 Tim. 2:4**.) The ignorance in appreciating the role that the understanding of Biblical truth plays in spiritual development is demonstrated by the answer given by a well-known preacher – to defend strange physical manifestations and antics taking place in his meetings he says: “God is offending our minds so that He can reach our hearts.” It is difficult to understand how people can be encouraged to by-pass sound thinking in order to get drunk in the spirit so as to “experience more of God”.

### **New Testament teaching concerning demons**

In dealing with the subject of demons it is important to keep the following facts in mind; the Bible does say that our fight is against evil spiritual forces. (**Eph. 6:12**). Here we are in agreement with those who are involved in mystical spiritual warfare, but we do not agree with their methods. Demons do have the ability to influence a person’s way of thinking and Peter therefore warns:

*“...be self-controlled;...and alert. (a state of mind) Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him...” (1 Peter 1:13, 5:8).*

The Bible gives us several examples of people who had their minds influenced by thoughts injected from sources which were not from God; Peter (**Matt. 16:23**), Judas, (**John 13:27**). Eve is the classic example.

As it has already been stated: the strongholds mentioned in **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** are untruths in the minds of people. The mind is the seat of all knowledge. The enemy, who knows this, therefore aims to build strongholds in it in the form of thoughts, opinions, arguments, doctrines and philosophies which are contrary to the truth of the Word. The Bible does not call the devil the father of lies for nothing. This strategy of Satan is confirmed by scriptures such as **2 Corinthians 4:4** and **Colossians 1:21**:

*“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers...” and “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds.”*

The battle for the mind rages on. True spiritual warfare therefore does not involve the binding of devils, it involves prayerful preaching and teaching aimed at correcting wrong patterns of thought that prevent people from seeing Truth.

**As far as spiritual warfare is concerned, it is not so much a power struggle as it is a truth struggle.**

### **Dan.10**

A sound exegesis of this passage will show that it cannot be used as an example of what is being practised in Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare circles. The angel that was sent to Daniel gave no indication that it was because of spiritual warfare done by any human-being that resistance to his coming was broken. Furthermore, the visiting angel gave no instructions to Daniel on how to go about defeating territorial spirits. At no stage do we read that Daniel addressed the prince of Persia with: “I bind you and pull you down.” Also, nowhere in the New Testament do we read that any of the apostles first had to bind devils before they could enter and preach in heathen cities like Ephesus, Athens or Rome. All of them were

known for their idols and false gods, yet no mention is made of having to pull down the strongholds of Artemis, bind the spirits of Diana, or any of the many other demon gods.

## 5. Identificational repentance

Some Christians think that they can repent on behalf of others who in the past have sinned and wronged other people. Many in the Reconciliation Movement believe that by doing this, strongholds will be broken which will enable opposing groups to be united. What they are doing is not Scriptural and has no spiritual effect. The Bible states very clearly that sinners must repent for their own sins: **Deuteronomy 24:16**:

*“The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”*

**Ezekiel 18:20**: *“The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son”.*

Biblical forgiveness and restitution must be done on a personal level (**Matt.6:14, Luke 6:37, 2 Cor.2:7**).

## 6. A Text out of Context – 2 Chron.7:14

*“if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”*

To proclaim that God will heal our land on the basis of what is promised in **2 Chronicles 7:14**, is to mislead people. In the context, it is the nation of Israel that is being addressed. Neither South Africa, nor any other nation, has the same covenant relationship with God that Israel has. The covenant and its conditions are applicable to Israel only and it is hermeneutically incorrect to make them apply to any other country. In the dispensation of the New Testament, apart from Israel, God does not work with covenant nations anymore, instead individuals are called to repent. To apply this Scripture to the conditions in South Africa, is no guarantee that change will take place.

## Conclusion

One of the dangers of "strategic-level spiritual warfare" is that it distracts the attention of Christians who otherwise could have been involved in building the body of Christ through sound Biblical preaching and teaching. The false experience of subjective excitement can cause Christians to eventually become disillusionment when their expectations concerning the transformation of society are not fulfilled .

Instead of placing the emphasis on individual sin as being the root cause of many problems experienced in communities, many now blame principalities and powers. The Biblical answer is still applicable; the individual sinner must take responsibility for his or her sins, and repent.

The modern emphasis placed on organization and planning gives the impression that the use of the right methods has now become the agent of salvation.

In contrast to dominionists who believe that they must change the world so that Jesus can return, the Bible declares that Jesus must return **so that He can come and do it.**

*“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that **enables him to bring everything under his control**, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Phil.3:20-21, my emphasis).*

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