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The New Apostolic Reformation and the Theology of Prosperity:

The “Kingdom of God” as a Hermeneutical Key

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Introduction

One of the current features of Latin America is its prolific and changing religious field, which has caused among scholars (social scientists, theologians, etc.) various interpretative essays. No doubt, the so-called “neo-pentecostalism”—which today is called “New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR)—occupies a privileged place in this scenario. The present essay does not intend to explain in a comprehensive manner what the NAR is, however, it will be necessary to understand some key concepts in this movement that is changing continuously.¹

The purpose of this essay is to analyze the NAR starting from the comprehension it has of the metaphor—or category—of “God’s Kingdom”, since it occupies a place of privileged in its theological joint and in the ecclesiastical and political implications of the

¹ Pablo Deiros to the neo-pentecostalism characterizes it as “post-denominationalism”. He says: 1 “The new name of the post-denominationalism is New Apostolic Reformation”. *El cristianismo denominacional*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Centro, 2012, p. 125. In English the NAR is also known as “The New Apostolic Churches” (NAC).

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movement. It is inevitable, in the development of this topic, to link the NAR with the theology of prosperity (TP), since the two feed off each other. For the ends of this essay, many sources will be cited profusely. I should also mention that this essay arises from a theological concern from my teaching and pastoral practice.

1. The New Apostolic Reformation (NAR)²

One of the most important theorists of this movement, the apostle Peter Wagner, argues the use of certain terms in this way:

I use the term 'Reform', because (...) these new skins appear to be at least as radical as those of the Protestant Reformation almost five hundred years ago. 'Apostolic' denotes a strong approach toward the scope, coupled with a recognition of the apostolic ministries of this time. 'New' adds a contemporary draft to the name.³

Then Wagner advances in its explanation:

The New Apostolic Reformation is an extraordinary work that God closes 20th century (...) by changing the shape of the Protestant Christianity around the world. For more than five hundred years the Christian churches have worked mostly with traditional denominational structures, of one kind or another. Particularly in the nineties, but with roots that run throughout the century, have begun to emerge new forms and operational procedures in areas such as the government of the local church, inter-ecclesial relations, financing, evangelism, missions, prayer, the selection and training of leadership, the role of

² Refer bibliographically in Spanish language to this movement is very abundant. Cf. Bernardo Campos. "El ministerio quíntuple y la restauración del ministerio apostólico", en: D. Chiquete & L. Orellana, edits., *Voces del pentecostalismo latinoamericano*. Concepción, Chile: RELEP, 2003; *El post-pentecostalismo, Renovación del liderazgo y hermenéutica del Espíritu*. 2007 (Texto tomado del Internet); *Manifestaciones recientes de un movimiento del Espíritu: el movimiento apostólico y profético en el Perú*. Santiago: RELEP, 2008; *Visión de Reino. El movimiento apostólico profético en el Perú*. Lima: Bassel Publishers, 2009; Rony Chaves. *Apuntes sobre el ministerio apostólico*. San José: Avance Misionero Mundial, s/f; John Eckhardt. *La iglesia apostólica*. Lima: Jhire Grafel, 2000; Bill Hamon. *Los futuros movimientos de Dios*. Buenos Aires: Peniel, 2009; Cindy Jacobs. *El manifiesto de la Reforma*. Lake Mary, FL: Casa Creación, 2008; Edgar Lee, edit., *Él nos dio apóstoles*. Miami, FL: Vida, 2006; Marcelino Salazar. *El resurgimiento apostólico en la iglesia de hoy*. Lima: s/e, 2004; Vinson Synan, edit., *El siglo del Espíritu Santo*. Buenos Aires: Peniel, 2006; Peter Wagner. *Apóstoles en la iglesia de hoy*. Buenos Aires: Peniel, 2003; Señales y prodigios hoy. Miami, FL: Vida, 1985; *Sus dones espirituales pueden ayudar a crecer la iglesia*. Barcelona: CLIE, 1985; "Una nueva reforma apostólica", in: H. Caballeros & M. Winger. *El poder transformador del avivamiento*. Buenos Aires: Peniel, 2005; and the magazine *Plataforma Apostólica* (Venezuela), among others.

³ Peter Wagner "Una nueva reforma apostólica", p. 179. Cf. by the same author: "The New Apostolic Reformation", in: *Global Spheres, Advancing the Kingdom of God*. November 2011.

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supernatural power, adoration and other important aspects of the life of the church.⁴

Finally, the same Wagner presented the NAR as a movement of the Spirit:

Most of the New Apostolic Churches not only believe in the work of the Holy Spirit, but also regularly they invite it to be with them and bring its supernatural power. It is very common, of that time, to observe active departments of health, liberation of demons, spiritual war, prediction, spilling of the Holy Spirit, spiritual mapping, prophetic acts, fervent intercession and prayer that gives light, and even more in the new apostolic churches.⁵

In sum, one can say that “New Apostolic Reformation” is the correct name with which to refer to them. At least Wagner so wishes. Theologians and social scientists will have to leave behind terms such as “post-denominationalism”, “divine health and healing”, “neo-pentecostalism”, “autonomous Pentecostalism”, etc., because none of them, apparently, does them justice for being inaccurate or for having little understanding of the spiritual magnitude of movement.

We observe, also, that the NAR has all the characteristics of what we knew as neo-pentecostalism. In this sense, TP is substantial to the movement. It is not surprising that the apostle John Ballistreri talks of poverty as if it were “leprosy”. But according to him that word is not his own, but of God who told him audibly: “If I say to you that poverty is the leprosy of the 21st Century, you must do something. I am going to take you to a position of authority from which you will be able to liberate many persons tied by this curse.”⁶

As we all know, TP is a theological emphasis that is found in various churches, ministries for—church and media (books, magazines, radio stations, television networks, internet, etc.). The proposal of TP is that Christians, as “sons of the King”, have the right to appropriate God’s diverse benefits, primarily those that have to do with prosperity or economic abundance. In this way, TP emphasizes a disproportionate emphasis in material wealth, transforms this amount of wealth in the measure of faith and even of the degree of Christian spirituality. Furthermore, this theology re—reads the whole of

⁴ Peter Wagner, quotes taken from: Daniel Oliva “La nueva reforma apostólica y la apostolicidad de la iglesia”, in: *Signos de Vida* N° 33, Quito, 2004, p. 27.

⁵ Wagner, *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁶ Juan Ballistreri “La pobreza, la lepra del siglo XXI”, in: *Plataforma Apostólica* N° 2, año 1, Venezuela, 2010, p. 11. According to this quote who releases it is not God but the Apostle, i.e. Ballistreri.

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Scripture form the logic of the total market, which in turn forces the articulation of a new body of doctrine.

This is why in the teaching of TP; **God** appears as an extremely rich landowner, owner of all the gold of the universe. From this, they derive that Christians must be extremely rich and that they should wear gold. Also, teach that **Jesus** was a wealthy man, living in prosperity since his birth until his death. The **cross** is interpreted as the way by which Christ makes Christians prosperous, that is to say Jesus died so that the Christians may live in prosperity and not under the curse of the law (the poverty). The **Church** becomes a transnational corporation in which it is necessary to invest money to obtain many economic gains. **Heaven** is transformed into a place of unparalleled luxury, which implies that on earth Christians must live in a sumptuous manner “to be get accustomed” to their future eternal residence. Finally, **Christians** are financiers, people who know how to invest in the “Bank of God”. They are the “bankers of God”.⁷

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In the NAR, finally, leadership has characteristics very similar to authoritarianism and messianism. Peter Wagner explains the gift of Apostleship:

*The gift of Apostleship is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ, enabling them to assume and exercise the leadership on a number of churches with extraordinary authority in spiritual matters, which is recognized and appreciated by these churches. (...) can make claims that seem to be autocratic, but that are willingly accepted by the christians, because recognized his gift and the authority that goes with him.*⁸

Although the paragraph cited is already quite eloquent, Bernardo Campos, form Peru, adds that the new apostles constitute a new structuring of the religious power in which they are placed at a higher level in the hierarchy of the existing leadership. Campos recognizes that in practice they come to possess a power never seen before. A power that cannot be resisted or called into question, since “to resist their authority is to resist the divine authority that has been delegated by the Holly Spirit.”⁹ However, since this model

⁷ Cf. my books: *Los banqueros de Dios. Una aproximación evangélica a la teología de la prosperidad*. Lima: Puma, 2002 and *Bienestar humano y reinado de Dios*. Quito: CLAI, 2003.

⁸ Wagner. *Sus dones...* Op. Cit., p. 206. The original book in English is from 1979. The italics are of the author. Campos “El ministerio...” Op. Cit., p. 153.

⁹ The Guatemalan Apostle and ex-candidate to the Presidency, Harold Caballeros Apostle Morris Cerullo has the following experience: “We were having dinner it is an opportunity, with Morris, its assistant, my wife and I. It had in my heart the interest to do a consultation to the brother Cerullo. Surely that was not the first time that someone asked that particular advice. He heard me carefully with attention. When I finished my question was not precipitated to answer but, on the contrary, spoke to me slowly, calmly. At a certain point in the conversation, He said to me: ‘You have realized that I did not want to answer you

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of leadership cannot be sustained with the Bible, the NAR appeals to “history”. Furthermore, since history is polysemic, they developed their own version—a very common thing in the context of postmodernity—but in reality this is a distortion of what we have known until now. What follows is a statement of what we hold.

1.1. “Biblical” and “historical” bases of the NAR

The NAR sometimes seeks to legitimize themselves, or be made credible at least, from the sources of authority that Christians accept. In the case of the evangelical communities the Scriptures have a place of great importance, as it is understood that every theological and missiological enterprise is based on it. The above explains the emergence of a new reading of the NAR called “hermeneutics of the Spirit”, which is “a method of interpretation of reality based on an interpretation of Scriptures, but in the light of the illumination of the Holy Spirit for the everyday of the religious life.”¹⁰ This “hermeneutic” certainly knows concrete examples.

Hermeneutic theory or political theory?

The Costa Rican Apostle Rony Chaves, commenting on 1 Corinthians 12: 28 says: “This implies that the ‘Hierarchic Order’ in the Church is not of ‘Democratic’ but Theocratic nature”. And later, explaining the Ministry of the Apostles, he argues that these “are an essential part in the establishment of the Kingdom of God”.¹¹ This type of “exegesis” is a product of what is called the “hermeneutics of the Spirit”, which in fact is a theory that puts the emphases in the interpreter and not in what the Bible really says, and this because the Bible is only of interest in an instrumental way.

It is also noted that, for Chaves, the apostles are an essential part in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. This thought, in light of the last two decades, is coherent with the ideology of the NAR. In the mid–nineties, it was very common to hear in

hastily, Morris could answer you, but you don’t need that Morris you answer. You see that I try to retire, and let that the Holy Spirit be who answer you’. His attitude blessed me greatly”. The appointment is like not to believe it. In: Morris Cerullo “El destino de Dios para los tiempos finales”, in: H. Caballeros & M. Winger. *El poder transformador del avivamiento*. Buenos Aires: Peniel, 2005, p. 140.

¹⁰ Campos, *El Post-pentecostalismo...* Op. Cit., p. 24. It is necessary to clarify that while there are various hermeneutical theories, there are others that arise only in order to justify preconceived impressions, such as in this case. In that sense the “hermeneutics of the Spirit” is not a method of interpretation but a method of distortion of the biblical text.

¹¹ Chaves, *Apuntes...* Op. Cit., pp. 6,7. Fortunately, there are more serious exegesis that the of Chaves: “None represents an institutional authority in the sense of an ecclesiastic hierarchy supralocal, which apparently did not emerge until the beginning of the II century. On the whole, these ministers of the Word of God should train all the people of God for the ministry (4:12)”. Craig Keener. *Comentario del contexto cultural de la Biblia: Nuevo Testamento*. El Paso, TX: Mundo Hispano, 2003, pp. 543-544.

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apostolic conferences sessions on “Widen the shops” or “Possess the land.” Today they prefer to talk of “Restoring creation” or “Restoring earth”. Let’s see:

Restoration is born in God; he starts the process of redemption and restoration of the Universe. The infinite wisdom of the Creator is expressed in his redemptive plan, by sending his Son Jesus Christ to defeat Satan at Calvary, and unleash the restoration of the human race and the creation; Jesus came to restore what had been lost. Alleluia. The concept of restoration is in God himself. He is the Restorer for excellence.¹²

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This has “ministerial” and political implications. God is lifting, in the words of Chaves, “Apostles for a social transformation”. Then he goes on to argue:

God is raising and anointing apostles with great vision to affect socially their cities. This includes the Church’s growth, public morality, as well as the economical, governmental and educational transformation. This implies that neighborhoods, communities, regions, cities and nations will receive the apostolic impact. Territorial Apostles and of cities are required to bring reform and transformation.¹³

Acts of the Apostles and Church history

A careful reading of the brochures, texts on the Internet, official documents and even books produced by the NAR, evidences that the book of the Acts of the Apostles has a prominent place in their arguments and theories. Luke, whom a Christian tradition ascribes the drafting of the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the apostles, has become the favorite “historian” and “theologian” of the NAR. Hence, the constant references to this missionary and writer of the 1st century. Of course, how would it not be so, since Luke favors the action of the Holy Spirit!¹⁴

To put it in other words: some speakers of the NAR—in practice—have reduced the totality of the books of the New Testament to the writings of Luke. That is to say, they have created a canon within the canon already existing. A very common thing in groups

¹² Chaves, Ibid., pp. 24-25.

¹³ Chaves, Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁴ It should be noted with clarity that Lucas is only a writer of several of the New Testament. The NT contains several ecclesiological models and several legitimate ways to understand the actions of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, use in a privileged way to Lucas and detract from the other New Testament writings, can only produce theological theories incomplete. Cf. my essay: “Lucas y sombras en tiempos de avivamiento: una lectura de ‘los Hechos del Espíritu Santo’”, in: Varios autores. *El poder del Espíritu Santo ¿Qué significa hoy en América Latina?*. Lima: Puma, 2012, pp. 45-63.

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and movements who understand selectively biblical revelation. But even more, Luke's writings—particularly Acts—are read from the “hermeneutics of the Spirit”. In the opinion of Peter Wagner,

The book of Acts is not a museum piece. *It is a dynamic text guide that explains to us how the Gospel of Jesus penetrates into new territories, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. (...) Research on missionary work is accumulating a body of material that indicates which throughout the world the Gospel spreads more quickly when there are signs and wonders that accompany it.*¹⁵

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Acts, then it becomes a guide, a criterion that allows you to see how the Holy Spirit operates in the missions in the world and in history. One of the best-known propositions of the NAR—following the previous idea—is that the Holy Spirit was silenced by the institutional Church and the earthly powers. Rony Chaves, in his reinterpretation of the history of the Church, says emphatically:

Constantine, the Roman Emperor, adopted Christianity as the state religion and prostituted themselves then the House of God. The result of later years was the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church; *the attempt of Satan to stifle the prophetic and apostolic move of the Holy Spirit.* The Empire imposed pastors and a Babylonian structure that was slowly rolling back the Apostolic biblical pattern and the Church was devastated and stripped of bark which ruined tree, according to the prophecy of Joel 1. The consequences came against everything established by the Father. Disappeared the apostles and the prophets, the anointing, the power and miracles. Little by little, *the paganism took the altars and lost his life and manifestation of the Spirit.* The darkness enveloped the Church by leaving it for centuries at the mercy of the devastation of the devil and his darkness religious.¹⁶

And referring to the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Chaves says:

The Protestant Reformation of Luther was a reform linked to the renewal of the doctrine of the fundamental faith; it was a reform of the faith. *The current Reform of the Spirit is more a reform of the practice. Affects government and ecclesiastical administration and ministries. It is an Apostolic Reform. It limits*

¹⁵ Peter Wagner. *Señales...* Op. Cit., pp. 12-13. That the book of Acts is relevant today, that's out of any discussion. The same applies to the rest of books of the Bible, because they are all relevant. The point is whether to use facts to support any theory or practice as it does the NAR.

¹⁶ Chaves, *Apuntes...* Op. Cit., p. 26. The italics are mine.

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to bringing substantial changes in the way of govern, manage and control the Church and its ministries.¹⁷

Wagner, to take a tour from the Reformation of the sixteenth century to the present era, adds:

My starting point is that in the Protestant Reformation laid the foundations necessary theological: the authority of the Scriptures, the only justification by faith and the universal priesthood of all believers. The Wesleyan movement introduced the demand for a corporate and personal holiness. The Pentecostal movement outlines the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in a variety of ministries of power. The craft of intercessor was restored in the seventies, and the office of prophet was restored in the eighties. The final piece came in the nineties with the recognition of the gift and the office of apostle. *The New Apostolic Reformation is the current form in which God is rescuing the theocratic government of the Church.*¹⁸

Even more, Wagner believes—or wants to make believe to their readers—that:

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.¹⁹

1.2. The “Kingdom of God” as a hermeneutical key

That the theme of the Kingdom of God is present in the speech of the NAR, is out of doubt. A booklet of the apostle of Costa Rica, Roberto Bonilla, said, “he has a great knowledge of the apostolic truths of the Kingdom of God and how establish them on Earth and how to knock down the strengths of the enemy build up in nations, peoples

¹⁷ Chaves, Ibid., pp. 29-30. The italics are mine. This line is inscribed the book of C. Jacobs, *El manifesto...* Op. Cit.

¹⁸ Wagner, quoted in Oliva, Op. Cit., pp. 28-29.

¹⁹ Wagner, “The New...”, Op. Cit. Do you really is not a doctrinal change? Wagner, in my view, attempts to confuse your readers that these do not sit in continuity with the Reformed heritage, with Pietism or another.

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and families.”²⁰ Similarly, it is said of the Apostle Guillermo Maldonado that, “he is a man called to establish the Kingdom of God locally and internationally.”²¹

Meanwhile Juan Zuccarelli, testifies to “The Kingdom of God at the Olmos prison”,²² and the Apostle Harley Ithier argues that “The Holy Spirit is releasing revelations: biblical, contextual, practical, personal, creative and powerful strategies in the body of Christ for the advancement of God’s Kingdom on earth.”²³ In addition, the book of Peter Wagner, “Prayer of War”²⁴ is subtitled, “How to find the power and the protection of God in the struggle to build his Kingdom”.²⁵ Finally, Bernardo Campos, in his essay “Vision of Kingdom”, complements the previous in the following terms:

Mission consists, according to MAP [NAR], of making manifest God’s Kingdom on earth, the final destination of the man, which implies obtaining a new social order, a state of justice and peace (the shalom, in biblical terms). This, and not a different one, is the stamp that moves the supreme task of the Church. Church growth is no longer the center of affairs.²⁶

From the preceding paragraphs, it can be deduced that the expression Kingdom of God has several meanings in the NAR. These seem to be: (1) a sort of spiritual “principles” which are to be applied to earthly realities, where fortresses are to be knocked down; (2) God personally governing over individuals; and (3) a social order to be built on Earth. This last meaning is surprising, for it was believed that the liberation theologians were the ones who taught that the Kingdom of God could be built on earth.

Being these the meanings of the expression “Kingdom of God”, all of them have connotations of the present, of earthliness, with little or no place for the eschatological

²⁰ Booklet taken from the Internet.

²¹ So it says on the back cover of the book by Guillermo Maldonado. *La liberación, el pan de los hijos*. Miami, FL: ERJ Publicaciones, 2006. About apostle Ana Méndez something similar is said: “The authority that God has granted her and its knowledge on the God’s Kingdom and its government on earth have become one woman General of the army of God”. Ana Méndez. *Sentados en lugares celestiales*. Ponte Vedra, FL: Voice of the Light Ministries, 2009, back cover.

²² It is the title of the chapter that appears in: P. Wagner & P. Deiros, eds., *Manantiales de avivamiento*. Nashville, TN, Miami, FL: Caribe, 1998, pp. 153-169.

²³ Harley Ithier, “An apostolic Perspective. Building the Future Now!”, *Impact Network*, s/f, Republic of Mauritius: New Covenant Ministries, s/f.

²⁴ Peter Wagner. *Oración de guerra*. Nashville, TN: Caribe, 1993.

²⁵ Very close to the Apostles “Emerging Churches” are those who also “to utilize the Kingdom of God as the paradigm for their revisioning of church theology and praxis”. Cf. Todd Miles. *A Kingdom with a King? Evaluating the Kingdom ethics of the Emerging Churches*. 2007 ETS National Conference.

²⁶ Campos, *Visión...* Op. Cit., p. 104. The italics are mine. “MAP” means “Apostolic and Prophetic Movement”, another name for the NAR.

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kingdom of God. Eschatology seems not to interest them much because the ideology of fashion—focusing on the earthly “today”—seems to control all the theological scaffolding of the NAR. In this, there is a strong parallel with the old theological liberalism of the nineteenth century and with the Social Gospel of the early twentieth century, both greatly optimistic as to what could be built in earthly realities.

If the previous observation is true, then which are the emphasis that are relevant in the discourse of the NAR? *Miracles, signs, wonders*, which demonstrate the Kingdom of God.²⁷ In this sense, the signs seem to be more important than the same kingdom of God itself. The signs are like its epiphany, that show the power of God, although more exactly they show the power of the apostles, who are carrying out these signals.

Kingdom of God or kingdom of Apostles?

The question does not have the intention to confuse or distract us from an essential subject of Christian theology. In the opinion of James Leo Garrett, the Kingdom of God is “one of the most significant Christian biblical terms and concepts [which] has been specially important for Christian theology in the XIX and XX centuries.”²⁸ In addition, Garrett reminds us that, particularly in the modern era, the Kingdom of God has been understood as: (1) A socio—ethical ideal (A. Ritschl, Christian Socialism, Social Gospel); (2) a postponed Jewish millennial Kingdom (Dispensationalism); (3) The apocalyptic Kingdom of God that was frustrated by the death of Jesus (J. Weiss and A. Schweitzer); and (4) The Kingdom of God realized in Jesus (C. H. Dodd).

However, none of these understandings of the Kingdom of God, which Garrett summarizes, is comparable to the proposal of the NAR. Bernardo Campos explains how the relationship between God’s Kingdom and the “Kingdom of the Apostles” occurs. After pointing out that “the doctrine of the Kingdom of God is the new axis on which all the doctrinal corpus will rotate and which will guide the ritual acts, forms of organization, as well as its ethics and its social practices”, he says that this involves a “Copernican revolution”. What does this mean? Let us let Campos speak:

— They shall reign here on earth, and *not in Heaven*;

— That we are kings, prophets and priests *here and now*;

²⁷ Wagner relates in the following manner the signals with the Kingdom of God: “There is a solid theological base to reach the conclusion that the signs and wonders occur even in our days. *This hypothesis can be confirmed by examining the biblical concept of the kingdom of God.*” Wagner. *Señales...* Op. Cit., p. 35. The italics are mine.

²⁸ James Leo Garrett. *Teología Sistemática*, Tomo 2. El Paso, TX: CBP, 2003, p. 726.

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—That we have authority over angels and that these are at our disposal to complete the mission of establishing the Kingdom of God on the New Heavens and the New Earth.²⁹

Of ten characteristics of the Copernican revolution that Campos and the NAR maintain, three have to do with the reign of the apostles, like Peter Wagner, Rony Chaves, Cash Luna, Raul Vargas, Harold Caballeros, among others. Where do the apostles go to reign? To earth. What are they here and now? Kings, prophets, and priests. Over who do they have authority? Even over the angels.

The “Copernican revolution” of the NAR, in reality, has more to do with politics and economics than strictly with the Kingdom of God, at least as far as it had been understood prior to this. If the goal is to seek a new social order then it is obvious that they are talking about politics. What is certain is that the apostles want “power” but not for God to reign but them. This is the heart of its political theology. To start with this program, they must first change the democratic structures of the church, where they already reign. The Venezuelan apostle Elias Rincon says:

Democracy does not work as such within the church. *The Church should be governed by a theocratic government, in which there is a clear recognition of the ministries and the biblical gifts. (...)* In the apostolate, recognition is given to a spiritual authority, to which pastors, prophets, teachers and evangelists are subject, who are the other ministries of which Paul speaks to the Ephesians.³⁰

Democracy, in all of its expressions, will always be a barrier to the kingdom of the apostles. Some of these even come to say in the Church that “a good dictatorship is better—theirs—than a bad democracy.” It can legitimately be said that the final project of the NAR is to impose their idea of “theocracy” to society as a whole, if they ever get the opportunity to reign amongst it. However, it would be better if they would state clearly and without ambiguities that what they propose to achieve is an “apostolic world government” (and not precisely *the Kingdom of God*). Their position has generated a series of reactions that are justified from every point of view. A well-known Argentine pentecostal pastor indicates the following:

A power-hungry priestly caste has been born, or, to put it another way, those who attempt to seize power and make use of it discretionally. (...) We begin the twenty-first century with the rediscovery of the apostolic ministry. Now the old

²⁹ Campos, *Visión...* Op. Cit., p. 104. The italics are mine.

³⁰ Manuel Quintero “La iglesia no puede ser neutral”, in: *Nuevo Siglo* Año 4, N° 2, Quito, 2004 (Interview with the Venezuelan Apostle Elías Rincón). The italics are mine.

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evangelists, transformed into prophets are recycled as apostles. (...) We have experienced a centralization of power that brings us closer to the Catholic Church and distances us from the Protestant tradition. The 'priesthood' is increasingly more in the hands of a few illuminated.³¹

1.3. Ecclesial proposals and political articulation

It is a mistaken belief, as previously seen, that the NAR has to do with a strictly ecclesial project. No. The Reform that they pose is, in reality, social—economic. It is a cultural revolution that almost shows no difference in their content to the proposals coming from the American Reconstructionist movement, but perhaps only in the lead actors (the Apostles). Cindy Jacobs, in her book “The Reformation Manifesto” —prefaced by Peter Wagner—argues, “our times require a new reform, not as the former calling the reform *only of the Church*.”³² It is certainly a malicious reading of the Protestant Reformation, made only in order to point out that the NAR do bring comprehensive reform which will cover all areas of life.

Church renewal and reorganization of the social

Cindy Jacobs, in fact, does not speak for herself but for the movement she represents. She is a “General of prayer” and leader of the NAR. Moreover, the Reform to which she refers, of course, implies a political project. Furthermore, is such a project explained anywhere? As far as we know, no apostle has bothered to do so. Perhaps they never will, because that which obvious does not need discernment nor definition. However, some ideas can be deduced of the aims and the ideology of this project, by observing the political behavior of the leaders of the NAR.

In this sense, one must raise the following questions: With whom do they meet to have breakfasts and media coverage? Whom do they visit and take gifts to? In favor of who do they pray publicly before the journalists? With which politicians and dignitaries do they have their pictures taken, which they hang of their office walls? Whom do they invite to their congregations for special events? The popular saying, “tell me with who do you walk with and I will tell you who you are”, in this case, proves more than adequate.

³¹ Norberto Saracco “Pastoral latinoamericana: desafíos y tentaciones”, in: Alberto Roldán y otros, eds., *La iglesia latinoamericana: su vida y su misión*. Buenos Aires: Certeza Argentina – PRODOLA, 2011, p. 117. In the NAR, there are apparently more of an opinion on authority that must have the apostles. Ervin Budiseliv argues that “the authority of apostles should be influential and spiritual, not governmental and hierarchical”. Cf. “New Apostolic Reformation: Apostolic Ministry for Today”, in: *Kairos. Evangelical Journal of Theology*, Vol. II, N° 2, 2008, pp. 209-226.

³² Jacobs, Op. Cit., p. 209. The italics are mine.

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The apostle Rony Chaves argues that in this new church-social order the various “apostolic spheres” have a crucial role. Thus, in “the field of apostolic authority” we find: (1) Horizontal Apostles; (2) Vertical Apostles; and (3) Apostles of the commercial world, which is to say, of marketing or the market.

The characteristics of these three types of apostolate consist in the fact that while the “horizontal” apostles are ministries of relationship—for which they can count on apostles of convening, ambassadorial apostles, apostles of mobilization and territorial apostles,—the “vertical” apostles are leaders of church organizations, denominational or apostolic networks. The apostles “of the commercial world”, on the contrary, “have their coverage at a local Church but practice their ministry primarily in the world outside the nuclear church, that is to say, in the extended church (politics, trade, sport, etc.).”³³

In fact, this Apostolic organization looks more like a Magisterium whose model is the Vatican State. And although Chaves is not entirely clear when it comes to the “extended church”, once again we see that the church in this perspective relates or extends to politics, trade, etc. This is the essence of the NAR since it is their *reason for being*.³⁴ Precisely for this reason is that they must defend the NAR project from their opponents or enemies.

Who is opposed to the New Apostolic Reformation? Of course, the first opponent to all Apostolic Reformation is the Devil. His Kingdom would come down if this happens today. But in truth, they Babylonian structures are the ones which will make every effort to stop it. The spirits prevailing there will wage war to prevent it. Still, sadly, we should say that anachronistic and evangelical religious structures (non-functional) will do what they can to curb this reform of God.³⁵

³³ Chaves, Op. Cit., pp. 84-85.

³⁴ The Apostolic Network IMPACT PERU says that: “The reason of being apostolic is to affirm that the Church’s mission is to influence until you get to rule and reign on the earth (Rev 5:9) and that we are now in the kairos of God for a more glorious manifestation of the sons and daughters of God in all areas and institutions of human life (Government, economics, education, religion, family, arts-entertainment and communications), in all nations. Therefore: It is a matter of priority perfecting of the saints to operate in the 7 spheres of society (Government, economics, education, religion, family, arts-entertainment, communication) as a path integral to develop actions and gain experiences that make visible the manifestation of the kingdom here and now, under an improvement and continuous ministerial coverage”. *Declaración apostólica de Lima. Red Apostólica IMPACT PERU*. Noviembre del 2010. The bold letters correspond to the original text. Taken from: <http://www.pentecostalidad.com/ministerial/apologia-de-lo-apostolico/252-declaracion-apostolica-de-lima>.

³⁵ Chaves, Op. Cit., pp. 36-37. The italics are mine. This type of ideology it is quite common in the NAR. They believe, or want to believe, that the kingdom of the devil can be stopped, interrupted, frustrated, and even “knocked down”, in both grow the NAR.

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A dose of Manichaeistic and Messianic ideas could not be absent from the NAR! Fundamentalism, which is inherent to them, finds in all opposition to the Devil and his respective earthly correlative, i.e. “the evangelical and religious structures” that are nothing but “Babylonian structures” where demonic spirits govern. Who are these in the field of the concrete? Leaders, pastors, theologians, publishing houses, local churches, denominations, theological faculties, ecclesial movements, etc., even any believer, who disagrees with the NAR.³⁶

Apostles in politics: service or power?

In Latin America, the topic of evangelicals in politics has a long history that we are not able, for reasons of space, to synthesize.³⁷ What is novel is that it is the leaders of the NAR, and even the Apostles themselves, who are now involved in politics. Furthermore, they do not seek just any political office but want to be involved in “big politics” (municipalities, regional Governments, Congress and even the Presidency of the Republic). Many examples of this are present in Latin America. Norberto Saracco believes that “as the Latin American evangelical church was transformed from an invisible minority into a noticeable minority, an awareness grew of the possibilities that the Church would have for social transformation.”³⁸

Moreover, while this statement refers to the evangelicals in general, it applies directly to the NAR, who starting from a messianic mentality and a theology of spiritual warfare now sought to rule the world. Saracco adds:

Within a theology of territorial spirits and spiritual warfare it was thought that a society could be transformed if strategic, tactical and spiritual steps would be taken that would give them give the victory. This spiritual action, which in military terms would occupy the role of aviation, should be supplemented with the decision of actual possession of the territory. That is to say, it was necessary

³⁶ Cf. Pedro Oro. *O Outro é o Demônio. Uma análise sociológica do fundamentalismo*. São Paulo: Paulus, 1996 and E. Brito e otros, orgs., *Milenarismos e mesianismos ontem e hoje*. São Paulo: Loyola, 2001.

³⁷ For a basic orientation of this topic, I recommend reading: Carlos Mondragón, *Leudar la masa. El pensamiento social de los protestantes en América Latina: 1920-1950*. Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2005; René Padilla, comp., *De la marginación al compromiso*. Buenos Aires: FTL, 1991; José Míguez Bonino. *Poder del evangelio y poder político*. Buenos Aires: Kairós, 1999; Carlos Martínez. *La participación política de los cristianos evangélicos*. México D. F.: El Faro, 2000; Tomás Gutiérrez, edit., *Protestantismo y política en América Latina y el Caribe*. Lima: CEHILA, 1996; and Tomás Gutiérrez. *Evangélicos, democracia y nueva sociedad*. Lima: Ediciones AHP, 2005.

³⁸ Saracco, Op. Cit., p. 118.

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the Christians prepare themselves to occupy the sites of government and power.³⁹

On this topic, the Peruvian experience is illustrative. The apostles —and the wives of these— have lately run for important positions in politics. For example, the Apostle Marcelino Salazar has run twice for Congress, once with the “APRA party” and another with “National Restoration party.” For their part, the Apostle Alberto Santana has run once by the “APRA party”, and the Apostle Samuel Arboleda ran for the Andean Parliament on the list of the “Alliance for Great Change party.” Furthermore, the “prophets”, Alda Lazo and Iris Huidobro, ran for “National Solidarity party” and “APRA party” respectively. It should be noted that Alda Lazo is the wife of the Apostle Peter Hornung of the Living Water Christian Community, while Iris Huidobro is wife of Apostle Marcelino Salazar, of the Tabernacle of Lima.

These data reveal that: (1) It is irrelevant what party or political movement is used to run from a political office; (2) apparently, the ideology, the behavior and the political proposals of these parties are not very important; and (3) what matters is to get into power, regardless of the party by which this is achieved. This indicates that: (1) Apparently, there is no specific political ideology latent in the apostles; and (2) very much more important than the political project —of the party or of the nation— is the personal and economical project. To say it bluntly, the only thing that the apostles are interested in is the prestige, the power and the money.

On this particular experience, but can be expanded to all the countries of Latin America, it can be concluded, with Saracco that,

it is sad to see leaders (...) that fall under the seduction of power and accept political runs for candidacy without more credentials than their ecclesiastical ministry. We must ask: Which has their political militancy been? Which has their preparation been? What is their ideology of the social transformation?⁴⁰

Moreover, do they look for social transformation or only their personal transformation?

2. An evaluation of the proposals of the NRA

I am of the opinion that it is time to make a theological evaluation to the NAR. I say this because there is a widespread opinion—that comes from supporters of the NAR—that states that it is still too early to undertake such assessment. I believe this would postpone

³⁹ Saracco, *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119. The author does these affirmations based on bibliographical appointments of the apostles Peter Wagner and Harold Caballeros.

⁴⁰ Saracco, *Op. Cit.*, p. 121.

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irresponsibly something that is urgent to do, even more so if it is a movement that begun to expand into the continent almost three decades ago and which effects are clearly seen.⁴¹

2.1. The topic of the “authority” in the NAR

In the book *Para qué sirve la teología?* Alberto Roldan studies the topic of the authority inside Christianity, not only because it is of cardinal importance, but also because “in last analysis all the questions of life have to be decided on the notion of authority.”⁴² Indeed, Christianity cannot be understood without the authority on which its theological scaffolding has been built. In addition, the notion of authority, particularly since the Protestant Reformation, has had the Bible as its pillar. That is why they have insisted on “Sola Scripture” as their sole and final authority.

In the NAR who has summarized clearly the theme of “authority” is Peter Wagner: “God speaks directly to his people today! Some have been surprised at how many intelligent Christians and of good heart cannot believe this. *They think that the entire revelation of God to his people is in the Bible.*”⁴³ This is, in my opinion, the crux of the matter and what makes the NAR something completely different to the Protestantism, the classic Pentecostalism and other forms to be Evangelicals in Latin America.

“God speaks today directly” means in concrete that: (1) The Bible is not enough as the authority in what regards faith, doctrine and praxis; (2) The word of God is not limited by the canon that is expressed in the Scripture, but goes beyond it; and (3) God speaks today by other ways, that in the practice of the NAR are known as the “rhemas”, supposedly a fresh voice and that can in some cases be until audible.

⁴¹ Among the few Latin American attempts to evaluate the neo-pentecostalism are: R. Gálvez y otros. *Unidad y diversidad del protestantismo latinoamericano*. Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2002; and Arturo Piedra y otros. *¿Hacia dónde va el protestantismo?* Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2003. In my opinion these assessments are based on a pre-understanding wrong: they see the NAR as part of the Protestant or Evangelical heterogeneity in Latin America. In reality are another religious phenomenon, are something like a “post-Protestantism” very in tune with our postmodern culture. Cf. In Sik Hong. *¿Una iglesia posmoderna?* Buenos Aires: Kairós, 2001. A better reading of the theological emphasizes of the NAR offers it: Alberto Roldán: “Postmodern theologies?”, in: *¿Para qué sirve la teología?* Grand Rapids, MI: Libros Desafío, 2011, pp. 137-156. Cf. the important essay of Emilio Núñez: “El movimiento apostólico contemporáneo”, en *Kairos* N° 29 y N° 30, Guatemala, 2001 y 2002. In Peru are few denominations have taken a clear stance against the NAR and the TP: the Assemblies of God (ADDP), the Christian Alliance and Missionary (ACM), the Peruvian Evangelical Church (IEP) and one than other denomination.

⁴² Roldán, Op. Cit., p. 78. The quotation corresponds to Derek Bigg. *La racionalidad de la revelación*. Barcelona: EEE, 1971, p. 19.

⁴³ Wagner, *Siete principios poderosos que no aprendí en el seminario*. Miami, FL: Vida, 2003, p. 38. The italics are mine.

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“God speaks today directly” also refers to a series of supposedly experiences of the Spirit, which represents “an open channel of God” by which he communicates—not a few times—against Scripture itself. So it is very common to hear in the mouth of the Apostles expressions like “God has said to me ...”, but that in key of the NAR are not another thing than the rhemas who say to have received.⁴⁴ Seen historically, the problem is not new, since there have been various characters and movements that have appealed to this type of authority based on the experience, according to them always from the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

A quick field work in the various communities of the NAR suggests that much of his theological discourse appeals to experiences (and much more frequently to emotions). In the personal I have discussed this topic with apostles—of several countries in Latin America—and I have always heard the same reasoning: “is that you haven’t experienced what us.”⁴⁶ But what is the intention of the NAR to substantiate their theological proposals in the experience? I believe that there are two possible answers: (1) Open the revelation of God, leaving behind the canon inherited; and (2) bring a new revelation, leaving behind the tradition or memory. Both answers, of course, endeavor to ensure that the Christianity ceases to be “the religion of the Book” to make it the religion of the experience, the feeling and emotion. The “Sola Scriptura” ceded its place, in this way, the “Sola Experience”.

Open the revelation of God in the name of the Spirit has been the temptation of the “enlightened” or “anointed” in the course of history, both in Judaism (the apocalyptic, for example) and Christianity (the examples are many). And not only in these religions but in almost all that are based on a “sacred text.” The truth is that the new “enlightened” aim to break the established canon, because this is one of the major stumbling blocks that are in the way. As we know, the canon theologically “points to a closing in the

⁴⁴ An example: “In 1996, when God showed me that this decade of the Holy Spirit was about to conclude, He said to me: ‘Son, my people do not know my true pentecostal experience’.” Cerullo, Op. Cit., p. 148.

⁴⁵ On the particular Calvin rightly pointed out: “When God communicated to us its Word, he did not want that she was serving to us as sign in any time then to destroy it with the arrival of its Spirit; but, on the contrary, he sent then to the Spirit itself, for which virtue had granted it earlier, to perfect its work, with the effective assertion of its Word”. (*Institución de la Religión Cristiana*. Libro I, Capítulo IX, 3,b). It should be noted that Evangelical Christians have always believed in the experiences that only do not base our doctrines and theological theories in them. Moreover, we believe that the Christians must have continuous experiences then to attest them, that is to say, to give testimony of what God –or Christ or the Holy Spirit- is doing in its lives, in its Christian communities or in the society.

⁴⁶ Pablo Deiros said: “a change is taking place deep in the worldview of Christians. (...) is producing a significant change in the way that Christians, particularly in our hispano-american culture, we are approaching the understanding of reality and of the Gospel. We are still less rationalists and more we are emphasizing our emotions and feelings”. *Protestantismo en América Latina*. Nashville, TN: Caribe, 1997, pp. 97-98.

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interpretation of the transmitted texts, and a way to ensure against deviating from doctrine."⁴⁷ Severino Croatto adds something else:

A canon does not appear of one day for other. The traditions are constituted in a long process of appropriation, formalization, rereadings, etc. Only in a certain stage of its itinerary there takes conscience that there is a *corpus* of texts expressing them appropriately.⁴⁸

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This *corpus*, however, comes historically to a formal definition, which in our case is in the sixty—six canonical books. The canon is both end point (there can be no other revelations written more) as the starting point (God is still speaking, only that by means of the canonical text). The NAR to overcome the canon, in consequence, assumes another source of authority that distinguishes them from Christianity are created or made called “the third wave of the Holy Spirit.”

But overcome the canon has further implication: denies the tradition, the memory that gave rise to the movement, in this case to Christianity. The Christian faith is first and foremost a faith based on the “memory”, i.e. founded “in the memory of historical facts that are going to be retraced in the course of the centuries.” As says Hoornaert, “Christians know very well that their religion stands or comes down with the accuracy of his memory.”⁴⁹ And that memory directly refers to Jesus Christ, vehicle of salvation and hope.

The sociologist of religion Paulo Barrera has carefully studied the sociology of religious transmission and is—based on fieldwork in Lima and São Paulo—that the new movements, like the NAR, transmitted its doctrines not so much by appealing to the memory and tradition but the religious emotions.⁵⁰ In this sense, the NAR tries “to domesticate the Protestant reason”.⁵¹ This implies that the inherited thing does not count already any more. As apostle Pablo Deiros admits, the NAR more that to be faced to the past (the “heredity received”), is faced to the “received *vision*”, that is to say to the future.⁵² But who receive “the vision”? The apostles like Peter Wagner and Rony Chaves, for quoting only two names. What received heredity do they reject? The entire history of

⁴⁷ Severino Croatto. *Experiencia de lo sagrado*. Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2002, pp. 467-468.

⁴⁸ Croatto, *Ibid.*, p. 473.

⁴⁹ Eduardo Hoornaert. *La memoria del pueblo cristiano*. Buenos Aires: Paulinas, 1986, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Paulo Barrera “Tradição, memória e modernidade: A precariedade da memória religiosa contemporânea”, em: *Estudos de Religiao* N° 18, São Paulo, 2000, pp. 121-144.

⁵¹ Paulo Barrera. *Tradição, transmissão e emoção religiosa*. São Paulo: Olho d’Água, 2001, p. 231.

⁵² Deiros, *El cristianismo...* Op. Cit., p. 125.

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Christianity, that is to say, their forms of church government, their doctrines accepted and developed, the various forms of doing theology, etc.⁵³

2.2. The theology of the Kingdom of God in the NRA

There is no doubt that the Kingdom of God has had diverse understandings and developments in Latin America. According to Mortimer Arias, we can say that there are still various “eclipses” or reductions of the same, such as: The apocalyptic reduction (the Kingdom cataclysmic), the evangelical reduction (the Kingdom inside), the liberal reduction (a new social order) and the charismatic reduction (the Kingdom of the euphoria).⁵⁴ And even though the approach of Arias may seem too schematic—and even outdated given the dynamic and changing of the theological movements,—however helps us to see the picture in a general way. In a later book, Arias offers a definition with which it is difficult not to agree:

The kingdom of God, announced by Jesus, it is multidimensional and covers everything. It is a reality both present and future. It has to do with each individual creature and with society as a whole. Was originally addressed to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”, but was intended for the “whole world” and even “the ends of the earth”. Covers all dimensions of human life: physical, spiritual, personal and the impersonal, the community and the social, historical and timeless. And covers all human relationships: with the neighbor, with nature, and with God.⁵⁵

Then, Arias accurate:

The message and the perspective of the God’s Kingdom has always been there in the Biblical text, in the memory of the church, and in the mission of the God’s people. It has been a subversive memory. What has happened in certain periods has been the disappearance of the language of the kingdom or the reduction of the kingdom to the only dimension.⁵⁶

⁵³ It’s a true “mutation”, in the words of Roger Bastide: “don’t talk about mutation while we remain in the same structure; we reserve this term for any change which is defined as the transition from one structure to another, as a condition of the systems”, in: “Sociologie des mutations religieuses”, G. Balandier, edit., *Sociologie des Mutations*. Paris: Anthropos, 1970, pp. 157-172, quoted in: Jean Pierre Bastian. *La mutación religiosa de América Latina*. México: FCE, 1997, p. 14. The italics are mine.

⁵⁴ Mortimer Arias. *Venga tu Reino*. México D.F.: CUPSA, 1980, pp. 37-53. Along with the reduction “liberal” must also include the liberation theology and the NAR.

⁵⁵ Mortimer Arias. *Anunciando el Reinado de Dios*. San José: Visión Mundial, 1998, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁶ Arias, *Ibid.*, p. 43.

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This last observation of Arias helps us to evaluate the theological-political proposal from the NAR about the Kingdom of God. In the seventies and eighties, in Latin-American evangelical circles biblical-theological contributions appeared on the topic, since some movements like “Church and Society in Latin America” (ISAL) and the theology of the liberation had an exposition as specific as challenging: the God’s Kingdom must be constructed, particularly under the form of certain social system, which privileged social subject the poor were.⁵⁷

The evangelical contributions should have continued, but unfortunately there was some decay in the reflection on the Kingdom of God. It is not that we do not have appeared essays on the subject but that these almost not addressed the pressing issues that demand attention in the current context cultural-political-economic Latin American. In this sense, the NAR with the metaphor—or category—of the “Kingdom” has come to fill certain theological gap although, in Arias terms, eclipsing it.

The NAR, for example, retrieves the history as a place of salvation. The problem is that not thinking enough about that history. And perhaps they will never do because prefer follow it uncritically. If the interpreters of this history—politicians, marketers, employers, etc.—say that the earthly is to enjoy it to the maximum, and particularly in the terms of the neoliberal market, the NAR will continue to translate that ideology as theology of prosperity. In this sense they adapt themselves well to the “spirit of the century”, which is not the same that “to be contextual”.

And it is precisely by have been adapted so well to the present time is that the NAR forget an essential role to all theological discourse: the prophetic role, so present in the various evangelical experiences in Latin America in the last hundred years. The prophetic voice has been part of our history. Certain that the NAR has “prophets” and “prophecies”, but with the purpose of strengthen and legitimize himself likewise. Does anyone know a critique of the new apostles to the prevailing economic system? There is to say without ambiguity: the NAR has become a religion inoffensive to the prevailing economic system.

If interpreters above mentioned, in addition, found in the human being, in the nature and even in the cosmos the “spiritual” and even the “supernatural”—understanding by them almost anything,—the NAR will adopt and adapt that speech but in the key of “spiritual warfare”.

And if in the current historical processes increasingly dominant the vertical politicians, by more dress of “democratic”, it will be the effective model for leadership in the religious

⁵⁷ Cf. my essay: “El poder político: una exploración en la producción de la Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana”, in: *Teología y Cultura*, año 6, vol. 10, octubre 2009, pp. 25-46.

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institutions. They call him to that “a managerial leadership” and “leadership of entire quality”. Is surprised that these ways of exercising the power are a part of the extract of “being an apostle” in the NAR?⁵⁸

Conclusion

The NAR, by what we have seen, is a contemporary religious movement with great political ambitions. To achieve their political purpose does not hesitate to go to the metaphor—or category—biblical of the “Kingdom of God”, which occupies an important place in their arguments.

But the Kingdom of God—in the perspective of the NAR—has a location and an earthly content. The goal of the NAR is the construction of the Kingdom of God on earth. They believe that such an undertaking is possible. And the apostles, and the movement itself, have a preponderant role in it.

We have seen, also, that the NAR involves much more than a reform church. This is something that some critics of this movement have not seen him yet with adequate clarity. The renewal or reform to which they point is fundamentally social-political-economic-cultural. As well as reiterate their same exhibitors.

Finally, although there are very controversial its concepts of “power”, “theocracy”, “apostles”, “vision”, “experiences”, etc., the true thing is that they convince certain population who—in general terms—accepts of form uncritically this theological-political speech. The “signs” that they say to be of the Spirit apparently have a strong conviction power, at least for this population.

One important thought, and do not want to overlook, offers it Samuel Escobar. This leading missiologist says that:

The test that we apply to determine if a movement comes from the spirit of God has to do with determining if the movement concerned glorify Christ and consistently contributes to transform people in his image, making them more similar to Christ. Evangelicals have had reason to insist that we should not become content with the gifts of the Spirit if we do not see at the same time the fruit of the Spirit.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Cf. Y. Bonilla & F. Guerrero. *Nuevas formas de poder. Movimientos apostólicos y mesiánicos “evangélicos”*. Quito: CLAI – FLET – FLEREC, 2005, and Osías Segura. *Riquezas, templos, apóstoles y superapóstoles*. Barcelona: CLIE, 2012.

⁵⁹ Samuel Escobar. *Cómo comprender la misión*. Buenos Aires: Certeza, 2008, p. 164.

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Certainly, this criterion, which I share entirely, must help us to evaluate the different religious movements, including the NAR.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What aspects of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God should be mostly deliberate in pastoral task and theological work today?
2. What should be the biblical criteria to interpret historical events?
3. How do the cultural context is influencing the models of leadership in the church? What models we have to develop in the church?

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This is a paper presented by the author at the [2014 Lausanne Global Consultation on Prosperity Theology, Poverty, and the Gospel](#). You may find a [video version of this paper](#) in the Content Library. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the personal viewpoints of Lausanne Movement leaders or networks. For the official Lausanne Statement from this consultation, please see '[The Atibaia Statement on Prosperity Theology](#)'.

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