

10 Divisive Myths About the New Apostolic Reformation

Over the past decade, the term “New Apostolic Reformation” has become a buzzword in certain Christian circles, often used as a pejorative label by left-leaning reporters, theologians, denominational leaders and some parachurch ministries. Originally coined by Dr. Peter Wagner to describe a global movement of independent charismatic churches embracing apostolic leadership, the term has since been misapplied to many leaders, movements and ideologies—many of which bear little resemblance to Wagner’s original definition.

Breaking News. Spirit-Filled Stories. Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!

10 Common Myths About the NAR

1. **Everyone who uses the term “apostolic” is part of the NAR.** One of the biggest fallacies is that anyone who embraces the term “apostolic” or who leads a network of churches is automatically part of the NAR. However, Scripture clearly defines apostolic ministry (Eph. 4:11), and it has existed for 2,000 years. Throughout church history, leaders have recognized apostolic functions without subscribing to the extreme caricatures associated with NAR. The term “apostolic” refers to a biblical pattern of leadership and mission, not a centralized movement. Furthermore, the office of bishop became the term used starting in the second century by most Christian movements to describe apostolic

succession. Hence, even though they usually did not use the term “apostle,” they still believed in apostolic ministry and never negated the fivefold ministry in the Western and Eastern church.

2. **The NAR is an organized global movement like a denomination.** Critics of NAR often present it as a structured, hierarchical organization with a unified doctrine and leadership. In reality, there is no central governing body, no universal statement of faith and no formal organizational structure that unites so-called NAR leaders. While some apostolic networks exist, they usually function independently, with no singular authority governing them.
3. **USCAL has authority over all those who are considered NAR in the U.S.** Some online critics mistakenly claim that the United States Coalition of Apostolic Leaders, which I founded in 2013, is the hub of the NAR. (I transitioned out of leading it in January 2023.) This assertion is false. First, USCAL was intentionally structured as a horizontal association, not an authoritarian vertical body. We never adhered to some of the extreme characterizations of NAR and even took a stand against them. Many national leaders commonly associated with NAR have never been part of USCAL, and I have no personal relationship with most of them. Thus, when a person associated with the so-called NAR is embroiled in a controversy, heresy or scandal, USCAL has no ecclesial authority to discipline them or remove them from ministry. The only ecclesial authority USCAL has is to remove someone from its membership ranks.
4. **The NAR is a new movement originating from the U.S.** Many assume that NAR is an American export, but its roots trace back to independent church movements in Africa and Asia in the early 20th century. Wagner noted that the apostolic movement gained significant traction in the Global South, where indigenous leaders established self-governing, self-sustaining churches outside Western

denominational structures. Today, many of the fastest-growing apostolic movements exist in Latin America, Africa and Asia, demonstrating its global nature.

5. **All so-called apostles try to exert authority over pastors and church leaders.** Apostolic leadership, as described in the New Testament, is not about hierarchical control but about servant leadership and spiritual fathering. While some may abuse the title, most apostolic leaders I know operate with humility and a heart to serve. They do not demand submission from pastors but instead, seek to equip and empower local churches. Just as in the early church, true apostolic leaders today function relationally, not as authoritarian rulers.
6. **The NAR promotes dominionism and political takeover.** One of the most exaggerated myths is that the so-called NAR movement seeks to take over governments and establish a theocracy. While some individuals within the broader charismatic world may unfortunately use the term “dominion” to describe cultural influence, the mainstream global movement is far from advocating unlawful political takeovers. (In a democracy, they have as many rights as every other citizen: to advocate for their own values, encourage people to vote and promote a candidate and political party of their choice.) However, cultural influence that comports with Scripture is about reaching every person in every sphere of society through love, service and moral influence—not coercive control. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) calls the church to focus on making disciples, not on seizing political power.
7. **Apostolic leaders teach extrabiblical revelation.** Some critics claim that all NAR apostles believe in receiving new, authoritative revelation equal to Scripture. While prophetic insight is a biblical reality, responsible apostolic leaders affirm the supremacy of Scripture and test prophetic words against the Word of God. Those who

teach doctrines contradicting the Bible operate outside biblical apostolic parameters.

8. **The NAR promotes a prosperity gospel agenda.** While some high-profile leaders associated with NAR emphasize prosperity theology, this is not an inherent tenet of apostolic ministry. Many apostolic leaders advocate for biblical stewardship, generosity and economic empowerment without promoting the excesses of the prosperity gospel. The assumption that all apostolic leaders are driven by materialism is a generalization that does not hold up under scrutiny. (There are many persecuted apostolic leaders in China, Indonesia, India, Iran and many other parts of the world who do not live in an environment to leverage material prosperity.)
9. **Every megachurch pastor or charismatic leader is part of the NAR.** Some critics lump together every well-known megachurch pastor, prophet or charismatic leader under the NAR umbrella. However, many of these leaders do not consider themselves part of the NAR or adhere to the core ideas attributed to it. For example, pastors who believe in continuing spiritual gifts or embracing New Testament church structures are often mischaracterized as NAR when they have no formal or ideological connection to the movement.
10. **The NAR represents the greatest threat to the church today.** While some apostolic networks exist, errors and abuses do not constitute the greatest danger to the church. The more pressing threats include biblical illiteracy, secularism, moral compromise and the decline of gospel-centered preaching. Many mischaracterized and targeted as NAR leaders are actively evangelizing, planting churches and making disciples—far from being a threat, they are a blessing to the body of Christ! Disagreements over church governance or ministry philosophy should not distract from the church's real spiritual battles today.

Get your FREE CHARISMA NEWSLETTERS today! Stay up to date with current issues, Holy Spirit news, Christian teachings, Charisma videos & more!

The hysteria surrounding the so-called NAR has led to misinformation, misrepresentation and unnecessary division in the body of Christ. While addressing errors and unbiblical practices wherever they arise is important, painting all apostolic (movement) leaders with the same broad brush is neither accurate nor productive.

Join Charisma Magazine Online to follow everything the Holy Spirit is doing around the world!

Dr. Joseph Mattera is an internationally known author, consultant and theologian whose mission is to influence leaders who influence culture. He is the founding pastor of Resurrection Church and leads several organizations, including the U.S. Coalition of Apostolic Leaders and Christ Covenant Coalition. For more on this topic, read his book "The Global Apostolic Movement and the Progress of the Gospel."