



Critical Issues Commentary

A BIBLICALLY BASED COMMENTARY ON ISSUES THAT IMPACT YOU

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

ISSUE NUMBER 103

The Roots and Fruits of the New Apostolic Reformation

BY BOB DEWAAY

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone” (Ephesians 2:19, 20).

This article explores the idea of apostles in the church throughout church history. In it I will show that the restoration/Latter Rain idea that fuels the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) is unbiblical and dangerous to the well-being of Christians who become part of it. First we will review how the early church understood apostles in church history. Then we will examine the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching about apostolic authority. From there we will examine the ideas of a 17th-century mystic given new life in the Latter Rain movement, and now the NAR.

At a 1996 Fuller Seminary conference hosted by C. Peter Wagner, a movement that Wagner previously labeled “post-denominational” became the New Apostolic Reformation.¹ Besides Wagner himself is another person prominent in the movement—Bill Hamon—who is strongly endorsed by Wagner. Hamon is important, as we will see, because his ministry goes all the way back to the early 1950’s and began on the heels of the Latter Rain Movement.

HOW THE EARLY CHURCH UNDERSTOOD APOSTLES

In 97 AD, Clement of Rome wrote an epistle to the church at Corinth. The epistle provides solid evidence that the early church did not believe that the

apostles had successors or that new apostles were needed in order to provide direction to the church. At issue was the fact that certain individuals in Corinth challenged the duly constituted elders’ authority; Clement wrote to correct them. Clement’s testimony is remarkable because he likely was the Clement mentioned in Philippians 4:3, whom Paul called a “fellow worker.” Clement mentions the apostles in this passage:

The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments, then, were made in an orderly way, according to the will of God. Having therefore received their orders, and being fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established in the word of God, with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits [of their labours], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe.²

Although the Roman Catholic Church

claims that Clement himself was an apostle of Christ in succession from Peter, Clement claimed no such title and neither did he acknowledge any apostles but the true apostles—the ones Christ appointed personally. What we will see from Clement is that the apostles appointed overseers and elders (the same group), and these were the authorities in the local church. The apostle Paul had given instructions on the qualifications and roles of elders (Acts 20:28 - 31; Titus 1:5-9; 1Timothy 3:1 - 7) and provided for their continuation (2Timothy 2:2). Clement goes on to discuss this:

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled its duties. Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world]; for they have no fear lest any one deprive them

of the place now appointed them.³

Clement did not claim the apostolic authority to intervene, but rather pointed to elders who were appointed according to the standards of the Biblical apostles. It is noteworthy that he used the terms “episcopate” and “presbyters” interchangeably for the same people. Soon the church would develop “bishops” over cities (the “monepiscopate” or single bishop over a city), which was an innovation not endorsed by the Biblical apostles. However, Clement, who had been an associate of Paul, used *episkopos* (overseers or bishops – KJV) and *presbuteros* (elders) to describe the same group of people. This is precisely what Paul did in Acts 20:17, 28 when he called the elders together and described them as “overseers.”

By 97 AD, the authorities in the church were not apostles and prophets, but elders who had been appointed according to the standards laid down by the apostles. Those who claim that God always intended there to be authoritative apostles in the church who give binding revelation ignore the fact that the apostles themselves never anticipated that they would have successors and gave no instructions for the qualifications of any such successors. But they did provide qualifications for elders, and these would apply to future generations. Sadly, the fact that there are no qualifications for apostles (other than that they must have seen the risen Lord and have been appointed directly by Him – which qualifications the NAR apostles ignore or reject) has opened to the door the proliferation of apostles around the world, many of whom claim apostolic status even though they do not even have the necessary qualifications to be elders in a local church.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH’S APOSTLES

As church history progressed, the understanding of church authority as seen in the days of Clement of Rome

disappeared very quickly in favor of the monepiscopate and progressed from that unbiblical innovation to the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. This idea eventually led to the Papacy. Later in church history, and in amazing irony, the Roman Catholic Church claimed that Clement was a successor of Peter and had apostolic status. This travesty dishonors the very teachings of Clement himself who taught no such thing.

Roman Catholic innovation removed the status of the Biblical apostles as the foundation of the church⁴ and replaced it with a succession of apostles who claimed the liberty to give new, binding revelation to the church. Here is how the Roman Catholic Church explains its own position:

We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable.⁵ (Catholic Encyclopedia)

It is ironic that C. Peter Wagner claims we need restored apostles when there have been claimants to the office of apostle going back over 1,000 years. Wagner acknowledges this:

[I]n certain segments of the Church the office of apostle has, indeed, been recognized throughout the past two millennia. The Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican or

Episcopal Church and many denominations that have actually incorporated “apostolic” into their name would come to mind as examples. However, just as was true of prophetic movements, the emphases of these apostolic movements had not penetrated the mainstream of what I am calling life-giving evangelical churches that are now the cutting edge of the spread of Christianity. This only began to happen in the 1990’s.⁶

So, with regard to having apostles Wagner sees the Roman Catholic Church not as guilty of unbiblical innovation as Luther and the other Reformers claimed, but as a positive role model for evangelicals. His new “reformation” claims to have many thousands of apostles and prophets. At least Rome put some reigns on apostles in that they only have one at a time and he speaks “*ex cathedra*” only occasionally. The new apostles are continually speaking new revelations from God.

THE REFORMATION TEACHES “SCRIPTURE ALONE”

The Reformation rightly rejected the authority of the Pope and church tradition and returned to “scripture alone.” This was a return to the true foundation of the church, the Biblical apostles and prophets who speak to us through the Scripture. This means that the decrees of men in church history are not binding on any believer unless those decrees are valid implications and applications of Scripture. This brings up an important point mentioned in the previous issue of CIC: God only binds us to what is inerrant and infallible.⁷ Words from men that contain mixture and error and lack the qualities of inspired Scripture cannot be binding on the lives of believers. This truth was at the crux of the Reformation. The words of the Popes do not have this quality nor do those of latter day apostles and prophets.

17TH CENTURY MYSTIC JANE LEADE PROPHECIES OF A COMING ELITE CHURCH

One of the problems that attended the Reformation was the presence of “enthusiasts” who claimed direct revelation from God. The Reformers universally condemned such persons and movements, but that did not deter them from gaining followers. One who arose a century after the Reformation and who continues to have followers was an English mystic named Jane Leade. Her writings are posted on the Internet by persons who have affiliations with latter day apostles and prophets. She held to a theory of church history that claimed that the seven churches in Revelation stood for seven successive stages of church history. There are some today who still teach this theory. The problem with it is that there is nothing in Revelation itself that indicates John expected his readers to understand it that way. This is a classic case of the reader determining the meaning of the Bible rather than the Spirit-inspired author.

Leade was particularly interested in the church at Philadelphia because Christ found no fault in it. She was involved in a movement called “The Philadelphian Society,” named after that church. In 1679, the Philadelphian Society and the Theosophists published a document containing a 60-point prophecy by Jane Leade (the document has her name as Lead).⁸ The document proposes ideas that resurfaced in 1948 in the Latter Rain movement, and, as we shall see, are still being promoted by a key Apostle-prophet of the New Apostolic Reformation.

The first several points of the prophecy are about sealed mysteries that would be revealed only to “worthy searchers.” She claimed that there was an Ark of the Testimony in heaven containing new revelations to be opened during the church age. She wrote under point 8, “The presence of this divine ark, will constitute the *Philadelphian*

Church, and wherever *that* is, there must the ark of necessity be.” Thus the group was called the “Philadelphian Society” which published “Theosophical Transactions.”⁹ She goes on to prophesy of an elite church that would be beyond anything previously known. In fact this church would be a “virgin” that would give birth to the “son” mentioned in Revelation 12:5:

14. Of the stem of DAVID, a *virgin* church, which hath known *nothing of man* or of human constitution, is *yet to be born*. 15. And if it be yet to be born, *then it will require some considerable time before it gets out of its minority*, and arrives to the full and *mature* age. 16. The birth of this *virgin* church was visionally typified to St. JOHN by the *great wonder in Heaven* bringing forth her first born, *that was caught up to the throne of GOD* 17. FOR — As a virgin woman brought forth CHRIST after the flesh, so *likewise* a virgin woman is designed by God, to bring forth the FIRST BORN *after the Spirit*, who shall be filled with the Holy Ghost and with power. 18. The VIRGIN that is hereto designed, must be as of a pure spirit, *so also of a CLARIFIED body, and all over impregnated with the Holy Ghost*. 19. This church so brought forth and signed with the mark of the divine name, shall be adorned with MIRACULOUS GIFTS AND POWERS *beyond whatever yet hath been*. . . . 23. This Catholic and anointed church must be perfectly holy, as CHRIST himself is holy; so that it may worthily bear the name of *the Lord our Holiness*, and *the Lord our Righteousness*. 24. Until there be such a church made ready upon the earth, so holy, so catholic, and so anointed, that is without all spot or wrinkle, and that is adorned as a bride to meet her bridegroom, CHRIST will not *personally* descend to solemnize this marriage, and present

the same to his Father.

This prophecy of a perfected church (later called the “many-membered man-child”¹⁰) that will be the incarnation of Christ on the earth while Christ remains in heaven sets the stage for the Latter Rain movement in the 20th Century that would make the same claims. Whether that movement got its ideas from Leade or came up with the same heresy independently I cannot say at this time. But the ideas are identical. The church must be perfected on earth before Christ can return, and this shall be accompanied with miracles and power greater than at any time in church history—including Pentecost.

THE LATTER RAIN MOVEMENT: FIVE FOLD MINISTRY ELITISM

At the very beginning of the 20th century a man named David Wesley Myland used the term “Latter Rain” to describe the Pentecostal revival that was going on. He allegorized Joel 2:23 that spoke of God blessing the agricultural harvest in Israel to create a theory of church history. In Israel’s agricultural cycles, there were the spring rains (early rain) and the fall rains (the latter rain). Myland used this terminology and applied it to the Pentecost of Acts (early rain) and the one he claimed was again happening at Azusa Street and elsewhere (the latter rain). The key idea of these early Pentecostals was that the gift of tongues was being restored to the church and was going to issue forth into great power to evangelize the world. But the Pentecostal movement was fraught with aberrations that soon arose—such as the Oneness doctrine that denied the Trinity. The thinking of early “Latter Rain” Pentecostals was that God was restoring the apostolic power of the early church.

Those who wanted to maintain traditional evangelical theology yet include the idea of the gift of tongues as the sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit joined together into groups such as the Assemblies of God. The Assemblies rejected the latter rain ideas

and held to traditional premillennial eschatology that many evangelicals believed.

In the 1930s, a man by the name of William Branham began to preach and exhibit supernatural manifestations. George Hawtin and P. G. Hunt heard Branham speak in Vancouver and brought his ideas to North Battleford, Saskatchewan where the "Latter Rain" revival that became the New Order of the Later Rain (NOLR) actually began. A key book that was circulated at that time was *Atomic Power with God Through Prayer and Fasting* by Franklin Hall. A key idea that still persists is that God is continually desiring to do great and powerful miracles through the church but is unable to do so because the church has not become holy enough, desired it badly enough, has failed in numerous other ways, or lacks the faith that is necessary to precipitate these miracles. The Latter Rain has always been predicated on elitist ideas such as those of Jane Leade previously cited. They consider ordinary churches to be miserable failures that God cannot use.

In 1951, George Warnock wrote a book that became one of the most important statements of the ideas of the NOLR, *The Feast of Tabernacles*. The book is based on an allegorical interpretation of the feasts of Israel that has the Feast of Tabernacles standing for a glorious end-times church that would arise before Christ can return. The entire book can be read online, as it is posted by current advocates of Latter Rain theology. Warnock states a key premise that underlies the theology of the Latter Rain as well as that of the New Apostolic Reformation: "How thankful we are, therefore, that God is revealing the pattern of perfection. The Ascension gifts, the ministries in the Body of Christ—these are the means of perfecting the saints,—and as we have read, they are to remain in the Church till we all come unto unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man!" The "Ascension gifts" is a reference to the so-called "five fold ministry" of Ephesians 4:11. The idea is that the church will be perfected

by the renewal of the ministries of apostles and prophets *before* Christ returns.

Warnock, like Myland, allegorized the rains in Israel to make them create a scheme of church history:

Joel's prophecy, therefore, speaks of Pentecost--but it goes on to embrace the fullness of Pentecost, even the Feast of Tabernacles. God did give the former rain moderately--in the Pentecostal Age extending from the early Church until now. But here is something very unusual. Right here in the "first month" of the Agricultural Year . . . God has promised to do something most unusual; for He would give, not only the former rain which belongs to that month, but He would give the former rain and the latter rain combined!"¹¹

This he interpreted to mean that the Latter Rain would be characterized by far greater power and glory than what was seen in the Book of Acts. Warnock thereby set the stage for the grandiose claims that are made by the apostles and prophets of our day. It is not inaccurate to say that there is no claim so grandiose that the latter day apostles will not make it. We shall demonstrate that when we examine the writings of one of their top leaders.

Warnock also claimed, like Jane Leade, that Jesus would remain in heaven until after the church achieved elite status never before seen in church history, including that of the Biblical days:

O the immensity of these words!
And what is more, Christ is going to remain right where He is at God's right hand until there shall arise a group of overcomers who shall conquer over all God's enemies. . . . And yet the majority of Christians are looking for a rapture any moment, when Christ is supposed to catch away a miserable, defeated, disease-ridden Church.

Notice that ordinary Christians, in this

elitist thinking, are "miserable, defeated, and disease ridden." Supposedly we are not worthy of Christ returning for and catching us up to meet Him in the air. Echoes of Leade's Philadelphian Society are evident here. Rather than looking for Christ's return as the "blessed hope" of the church, elitists from Leade to Warnock, and as we shall see to the New Apostolic Reformation, are looking for the church to become the new "incarnation" of Christ, with Christ still "held in the heavens." The hope of the church has thereby ironically become the church itself.

One of the most heretical teachings associated with the NOLR was called "the manifested sons of God" that claimed that certain elite Christians would obtain the promise of immortality (as promised in **Romans 8:19**) now rather than at the *parousia* (second coming of Christ). Warnock taught that all enemies, in which he included death, the "last enemy," had to be conquered by the church before Christ could return: "God says Christ is going to stay right where He is until all His enemies are under His feet. And His enemies include the 'last enemy,' which is Death. There must arise a group of overcomers who shall conquer and become absolutely victorious over all the opposing forces of the world, the flesh, and the Devil--before this dispensation draws to a close."¹² The "overcomers" is another term used by the Latter Rain to describe elitist Christians who are to be distinguished from the rest of us. This is in spite of the fact that the following verse applies to all Christians: "*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith*" (**1John 5:4**).

One of the ironies of the Latter Rain and New Apostolic Reformation movements (the latter is merely the current version of the former as I will demonstrate) is that they hold to a "restoration" scenario in which God is supposedly progressively restoring truths lost during church history and now are being restored starting with the Reformation. But ironically, NOLR and NAR teachers constantly contradict and reject important Reformation doc-

trines. They want to claim the Reformation as theirs and reject it at the same time. For example, the Reformation taught the priesthood of every believer, but George Warnock of the NOLR taught an elitist "Melchizedek" priesthood that only applies to some:

The Melchizedek priesthood is a priesthood of life, and of fadeless glory. It is a priesthood of eternal fellowship and communion with Christ, and not like the Aaronic priesthood which experienced the presence of God only on a certain occasion, once in the year. . . . In the fullness of this new priesthood we shall be completely glorified, like unto Christ. But even as Christ began His priesthood on earth by interceding for His brethren--so let us begin even now to possess this glorious heritage in the Spirit, the Kingdom of God within.

This only applies, according to Warnock, to the last day saints who have attained to this status and shall operate during the great tribulation and thus shorten it. Saints of previous generations have not had this status.

William Branham, mentioned earlier, became a key figure of the Latter Rain movement and is still revered by many. It was said that he accurately, in thousands of instances, gave detailed information about people of which he had no natural means of knowing. Interpreting this ability as "words of knowledge" (1Corin. 12), his followers were convinced that it was a sign that he was a great prophet of God. Branham claimed to have a personal angel who taught him and gave him revelations. He claimed that this angel told him that he was the Elijah who would come before the return of Christ. He also claimed to be the messenger of the Laodicean church. He is buried under a pyramid that makes that claim.¹³ Branham rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. Branham demonstrated one thing conclusively: that restoration

movements like the Latter Rain so lust for prophets who can do signs and wonders that they will accept nearly any heresy or outrageous claim as long as it is accompanied by signs and miracles.

From the Latter Rain to NAR

Ern Baxter was a personal assistant to William Branham for several years. When the Charismatic Renewal came on the scene not long after the death of Branham, Baxter became a key leader in that movement. He eventually joined with Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, Derek Prince, and Don Basham to become the "Fort Lauderdale Five" who published *New Wine* magazine. They became famous for the controversial Shepherding movement. Taking the ideas that God was currently speaking to people through extra biblical revelations, and that certain persons were more advanced than others at "hearing from God," they began an hierarchical movement in which shepherds would "hear from God" directions for those under them and on down the pyramid.

I was involved in that movement myself in the late 1970s. The key idea was that authority came from "hearing from God." By definition, the leader of the group I was involved with (a man by the name of Jack Winter) "heard from God." He came armed with a cache of miracle guidance stories that he repeated to convince people that when it came to hearing from God, he was unsurpassed. Under him were shepherds who heard from God for those under them. Everything we did was under the scrutiny of over shepherds. This included every decision from whom to marry even to mundane decisions like taking trips. Although our heroes on the national level were Baxter, Mumford, and company, we needed to go no higher than Jack Winter for our final divine approval. If there were any serious complaints about this arrangement, Winter would come into town and preach a sermon on "Korah's Rebellion" with the application that Winter was "Moses" and anyone who disagreed with him was Korah. I personally heard that sermon

more than once.

The shepherding movement in general, and our local version in particular, came apart at the seams by the early 1980s. The shepherding movement, like the Latter Rain movement before it, had been discredited. But those who believed the basic paradigm of a restored, apostolic church with more power than the church in Acts never gave up their beliefs. In their minds, it was only a matter of time before the elite end-time church would arise and defeat all of God's enemies. They dismissed the failures of previous movements on the grounds that certain leaders got off base; but they themselves had kept the dream alive.

Latter Rain Beliefs Enter the NAR

Bill Hamon was born in 1934, and according to his book, *Apostles, Prophets, and the Coming Moves of God*, he entered the ministry as a teenager: "At the age of eighteen, I was birthed in the restoration teaching that there are still present-day apostles and prophets in the Church. I was ordained and started pastoring when I was 19"¹⁴ That means that he was in the restoration movement and began his ministry right after Warnock published *The Feast of Tabernacles*. His claims, as we will show, are almost identical to Warnock's. He too allegorized Haggai 2:9 to prove that the church at the end of the age will be more glorious than that of Acts.¹⁵

Hamon became involved with C. Peter Wagner's New Apostolic Reformation at its very inception:

The National Symposium on the Post-Denominational Church convened by Dr. C. Peter Wagner at Fuller Seminary, May 21-23, 1996, was a historical occasion in God's annals of Church history. It was prophetically orchestrated by the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's progressive purpose of bringing His Church to its ultimate destiny. . . . The consensus of the panelists was that there are still apostles and prophets in the

Church, and that there is an emerging Apostolic Movement that will revolutionize the 21st-century Church. The last-generation Church will have an Apostolic Reformation that will be as great as the first-generation Apostolic Movement.¹⁶

With Wagner's endorsement, Hamon brought the teachings of the Latter Rain movement into the NAR. Wagner "highly recommends" Hamon's book on Apostles and Prophets¹⁷ and wrote the foreword to it. But Hamon's book reiterates nearly every claim of the discredited Latter Rain movement. For example, one of the more extreme teachings of the NOLR was the "manifested sons" teaching; but Hamon teaches the same thing citing a version of the Bible that translates it "revealing of the sons":

The whole creation is waiting for the last generation Church. The earth and all of creation are waiting for the manifestation of God's last-day apostles and prophets and fully restored Church. "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19 NKJV). When the Church is fully restored, then the saints will receive their final redemption, the immortalization of the mortal bodies.¹⁸

Hamon claims that this has to happen before the return of Christ so the church can fulfill her role. Here is further evidence that he claims that immortal bodies will be received before the *parousia*: "The resurrection-translation of the saints that brings about the redemption of their mortal bodies into immortal, indestructible bodies will take place so that God can fulfill His greater purpose for and through His Church."¹⁹ This purpose Hamon has in mind will be shown shortly, and it does not have to do with being caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

LATTER RAIN HERESY IS RENAMED AND REINTRODUCED

The differences between the Latter Rain Movement and the New Apostolic Reformation mostly have to do with terminology, not doctrine. In the 1980s, a teaching circulated amongst those who attend conferences put on by those in the prophetic movement called "a new breed of man." The basic idea is that ordinary Christians throughout church history had been colossal failures and that God was going to fall upon certain persons by His Holy Spirit and "impregnate" them so that they could "give birth" to something entirely new. The "new breed of man" would be exalted saints with holiness and power never known before. I remember debating people at the time who were following this teaching.

Earl Paulk was a noteworthy leader in the 1980s who was involved in these teachings. Though later discredited through a series of sex scandals that are even now back in the news,²⁰ Paulk articulated the elitist ideas of the movement:

"Firstfruits" means many others like Him [Jesus] will follow. Jesus was the firstfruit of God's incarnation, a man living out God's perfect will. Now He says, "I want to inject life by putting the seed of the Holy Spirit in the Church. My people will bring forth life as they become the 'incarnate Word' on planet Earth." I am sure this definition bothers some theologians, but the Church is "the ongoing expression" of God.²¹

So the impregnated church will become "incarnate" like Christ. This idea is exactly the one taught by Jane Leade back in 1679 as cited earlier and then also articulated by Latter Rain teachers. Paulk reiterates the idea: "The great move of God to place the Holy Spirit within us makes us become the incarnation of God."²²

Bill Hamon includes the "new

breed" idea in his teachings: "The new breed of Joshua Generation apostles will move in the miraculous and definitely manifest the signs of the apostle."²³ The "Joshua Generation" is another allegory popular in this movement. The crossing of the Jordan into the promised land by Israel is allegorized to mean the triumph of the church over all enemies so as to take the land, "every place your sole treads" they claim. The "new breed" means that they are not of the same order of humans as other Christians who have ever existed. Hamon further states: "Let it suffice to say here that the new breed of apostles will be motivated by the Spirit of Wisdom."²⁴ The spirit of wisdom in Isaiah 11:2 is that which is distinctive of Christ. The NAR claims that Christ is coming IN the church not FOR the church. Hamon claims that he himself is one of God's "new breed" of last-days apostles.²⁵

Earlier, William Branham had claimed to be the Elijah who would come (Matthew 17:11). But Branham died and all things were not restored. Now Hamon has modified this claim to cover what they call an "Elijah Company": But there is still a future fulfillment when Elijah will come to prepare the way for Christ's Second Coming. This time it would not be just one prophet but a great company of prophets that would not only prepare the way and make ready a people, but they would RESTORE ALL THINGS.²⁶ This "restoration" must happen, through the church, before Christ can return: "Jesus could not leave earth until He had fulfilled all Messianic prophecies and He cannot come back to earth until the Church fulfills all restoration scriptures."²⁷

While rejecting the pre-tribulation rapture, teachers like Hamon do not believe their glorified, end-times church will be martyred by Antichrist but rather defeat the entire Babylonian system of the tribulation themselves! Here is his claim:

God's holy Church apostles and prophets have a co-laboring ministry of bringing about the mighty fall of Babylon the Great. Their

authority will be beyond anything we have seen in our day. . . Like Moses and Elijah, God's apostles and prophets will prevail over all their enemies unto the end.²⁸

The Bible says that God will destroy Babylon; it does not say the church will (see Revelation 18).

THE JOEL'S ARMY HERESY REINTRODUCED

One of the discredited teachings of the NOLR was called "Joel's Army." The claim was that Joel 2:1-11 predicts that the end time church will be "Joel's Army" that will execute God's judgments on the earth. This is another false Latter Rain teaching that Bill Hamon still propagates. Here is his claim:

The saints are being trained now in the military bases of international training centers and their local church armories. The goal is to have them taught, equipped and field trained to be the officers that lead God's army of prophetic evangelist saints during the coming Saints Movement. They will minister under the covering and leadership of fivefold apostolic and prophetic generals who trained them. These saints will function like God's army prophetically described by Prophet Joel (Joel 2:1-11).²⁹

There is nothing in Joel 2:1-11 that predicts that this army is made up of elite, end times Christians. Hamon's allegorical method allows him to read most anything into the Scripture. He further discusses the church as an end time army:

God's great end-time army is being prepared to execute God's written Judgments with Christ's victory and divine judgment decrees that have already been established in heaven. The time

is set when they will be administered and executed on earth through God's saintly army. All that is destined and needed will be activated during God's restorational Army of the Lord Movement.³⁰

All of this ignores the obvious fact that the judgments poured out during the Great Tribulation as described in Revelation are direct outpourings of God's wrath on the earth, not through the actions of the church. The "movements" that Hamon describes are not found in the Bible; he is prophesying them by his own authority with no evidence that we should believe what he is saying.

THE "KINGDOM NOW" HERESY REINTRODUCED

Another "movement" that Hamon predicts he calls "The Kingdom Establishing Movement."³¹ Here he makes even more grandiose claims:

The movement will not cease until all knees bow and every tongue confesses that Jesus is the true Lord God over all the earth. That does not imply that everyone who makes that confession or acknowledgement is saved. However, there will be such worldwide demonstration of God's power over the elements, people raised from the dead, miraculous control of natural catastrophes, miraculous prophetic words and endless supernatural manifestations, signs and wonders, until everyone will have to acknowledge that there is no god like Jesus Christ, the God of gods and Lord of lords.³²

According to NOLR and NAR teachers, the kingdom of God is established by the church during history and before the *parousia*. Hamon writes, "Now let us begin to pray earnestly that the full dominion of His literal kingdom be

established in all reality over all nations and people of the earth. . . They will pray and declare that it is time for God's kingdom to be established over all the earth by the divine delegated authority and ministry of Christ's Church.³³

THE BIBLE PROPHECIES END TIMES DELUSION

Having seen the consistent claims spanning several centuries right up to the present that elite Christians shall arise and overcome death before the rapture, do greater miracles than those of the Biblical accounts, defeat all of God's enemies while Christ remains "held in the heavens," and become the virgin born, new breed of man, manifested sons, the very incarnation of God on earth, etc., let us consider what the Bible predicts about the end time. The Bible teaches none of these heretical doctrines uniformly based on allegorized Scripture, but rather teaches that massive deception through false signs and wonders would characterize the end of the age.

Jesus said: "*Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. . . For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect*" (**Matthew 24:11, 24**). He did not tell us to look for a "new breed" of "anointed ones" (christs) but warned us to avoid their deceptions. Paul predicted perilous times of sin and evil at the end of the age where men will oppose the truth by doing false signs and wonders like Pharaoh's magicians opposed Moses (**2Timothy 3:1-8**). Peter predicted that false teachers would arise and seek to seduce the church by exploiting us with "false words" (**2Peter 2:1-3**). John warned us that in the last hour there are false "anointed ones" (antichrists). Paul tells us where this is all headed: "*Let no one in any way deceive you, for it [the day of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,*" (**2Thessalonians 2:3**).

Furthermore, the passages in Revelation that the elitist, NAR and

NOLR apostles appropriate for themselves, do not teach the church triumphs over the world through her own efforts while Jesus is “held in the heavens.” Their interpretations are fanciful and not based on any sound hermeneutic. They allegorize the Bible because there is no way to find their ideas in the Bible if taken literally. We need to decide whether to believe what Jesus, Paul, John and Peter said in the inerrant Scripture or the prophecies of people who claim to be new apostles and prophets while simultaneously contradicting the teachings of the true apostles and prophets.

CONCLUSION

Church history has shown that whenever new claimants to the office of apostle have arisen, so have false teachings. The teachings of many such persons today, as we have seen, are shocking in the extremity of their error. Yet C. Peter Wagner claims that churches that he terms “apostolic” in this new sense are part of the fastest growing segment of the church in the world today.³⁴ Perhaps he is right; but if he is, this is proof of massive end time apostasy and not the revival he claims it to be.

The only binding authority in the church is that of Scripture. God does not bind us to mixture, error, or the musings of men. The false apostles and prophets of the NOLR and NAR have no power over the true, blood-bought church of God. Prophets that are less than inerrant have nothing to sell but fear: “*When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him*” (Deuteronomy 18:22). The grandiose claims that span from Leade, to Warnock, to Branham, to

Paulk, and to Hamon have never come to pass, and they never will. There will be no virgin born, many-membered man-child, Elijah company, new breed of man, new incarnation of the Christ on earth or any other such blasphemy. The role these terms describe is that of antichrist. The true Christ will return bodily and catch his church up to meet Him in the air (1Thessalonians 4:17).

END NOTES

1. Bill Hamon, *Apostles Prophets and the Coming Moves of God* (Destiny Imagine: Shippensburg, PA, 1997) 10.
2. Roberts, Alexander ; Donaldson, James ; Coxe, A. Cleveland: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol.I : Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, 1997, S. 16; First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians chapter 42.
3. Ibid, Clement chapter 44.
4. See CIC issue 66 that addresses the pertinent passages: <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue66.htm>
5. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05677a.htm>
6. C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets – The Foundation of the Church* (Regal: Ventura, 2000) 19, 20.
7. CIC Issue 102.
8. <http://www.passtheword.org/Jane-Lead/60-propositions.htm>
9. Ibid.
10. This terminology is still in use: <http://latter-rain.com/escha/man-child.htm>
11. The entirety of Warnock’s book is posted here: <http://latter-rain.com/escha/warnock.htm>
12. Ibid.
- 13.

<http://www.letusreason.org/Latrain26.htm>

14. Hamon, 120.
15. Ibid. 2.
16. Ibid. 10.
17. Wagner, 20.
18. Hamon, 235.
19. Ibid. 22.
20. On November 19, 2007 it was revealed that Paulk’s “nephew” who is the pastor of the church Paulk founded is actually his son through an adulterous affair Paulk had with his brother’s wife: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21888916/>
21. Earl Paulk, *Held In The Heavens Until... God’s Strategy for Planet Earth*; (Atlanta: K Dimension Publishers, 1985) 163.
22. Ibid. 227.
23. Hamon, 34.
24. Ibid. 39.
25. Ibid. 131.
26. Ibid. 109, 110.
27. Ibid. 110.
28. Ibid. 139.
29. Ibid. 247.
30. Ibid. 252
31. Ibid. 270.
32. Ibid. 271.
33. Ibid. 277
34. www.globalharvest.org/index.asp?action=apostref

Critical Issues Commentary copyright © 2007

Gospel of Grace Fellowship
P.O. Box 390334
Edina, MN 55439-0334
ggf.church
cicministry.org

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture taken from the New American Standard Bible, © Copyright 1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by Permission

To read back issues of CIC: www.cicministry.org