AP Writer Tackles Apostles, Prophets and Politics

Associated Press writer Rachel Zoll is addressing religion and politics, or more specifically Spirit-filled Charismatics and the 2012 presidential election.

In her article, Zoll goes way back in time—to the 1940s. She describes it as an era when an argument erupted among a group of American Christians far from the mainstream.

"Pentecostals, the Spirit-filled worshippers known mostly for speaking in tongues, were at a crossroads, divided over the extent of God's modern-day miracles. If God made apostles and prophets during the New Testament era, did he still create them today?" she writes.

"Most Pentecostals said no, and went on to build the movement's major denominations. A minority disagreed—and amazingly, their obscure view is now in the crosshairs of a presidential race. Some critics, fearing these little-known Christians want to control the U.S. government, suspect that Republican Rick Perry is their candidate."

Zoll's investigation is nothing new. The mainstream media has been picking at Perry and his ties with Charismatic leaders like Lou Engle and Mike Bickle from the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Mo., since he organized The Response prayer event in August.

"These preachers believe demons have taken hold of specific geographic areas, including the nation's capital. They also promote a philosophy of public engagement known as the 'seven mountains,' which urges Christians to gain influence in business, government, family, church, education, media and the arts as a way to spread righteousness and bring about God's kingdom on earth," Zoll writes. "The language seems close to

dominionism, the belief that Christians have a God-given mandate to run the world."

And so she said it. The "D" word.

Now that Perry is running for president, his Christian beliefs are under a microscope in much the same way as are Mitt Romney's Mormon beliefs. C. Peter Wagner has been speaking out about how the mainstream media is pushing against Spirit-filled politicians, including Michelle Bachmann, and specifically addressed the apostolic movement in a *Charisma* column and in an NPR interview.

Zoll is rekindling the issue, pointing to comments from liberals like MSNBC's Rachel Maddow. But she also balanced it with voices of reason.

Zoll included comments from Mel Robeck, a specialist in Pentecostalism at Fuller Theological Seminary. Robeck, an Assemblies of God minister, cautioned against concluding too much from the preachers at Perry's event.

"To see potential political leaders courting these people—what they're really doing is looking for the votes that they think these folks can deliver," Robeck told Zoll. "I don't know of any politician that can afford to miss any kind of church vote and they know that church leaders can often influence people."