

More of the same?

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Much of the backlash against critics of Governor Rick Perry's religious beliefs has focused [on the idea that](#) the charges are essentially "more of the same": more of the same secularist paranoia about religion in public life, more of the same elitist disdain for the "evangelical vote," more of the same fear-mongering over tangential connections to Christian theocrats.

But these dismissals are themselves more of the same: the same ignorance of the influence of Pentecostal and charismatic movements on American Christianity. According to one leading critic of Perry's views--researcher and writer Rachel Tabachnik, who [spoke to Terry Gross last week](#)--the New Apostolic Reformation movement is not simply the same old thing with a new name:

[The NAR] is quite radically different than the evangelicalism of my youth. The things that we've been talking about are not representative of evangelicalism. They're not representative of conservative evangelicalism. . .

This is a movement that's growing in popularity, and one of the ways they've been able to do that [is that]...they're just presented as nondenominational or just Christian--but it is an identifiable movement now with an identifiable ideology."

It's a troubling ideology. The NAR's utopian vision is, as Tabachnik [summarizes it](#), to see like-minded Christians "take control over government, arts and entertainment, media, education, business, family, and religion" to prepare for the end times. This raises serious questions for people of good will, whatever their religious beliefs.

As for Governor Perry, it's not just that he has some sort of distant, shadowy connection to the NAR that's of concern to northeast liberals. Perry has gone out of his way to identify his public expressions of religion with the NAR. His recent prayer rally was patterned after NAR themes, endorsed by NAR "apostles" and promoted by NAR personnel. As Tabachnik [puts it](#):

A who's who of New Apostolic leaders graced the stage at Perry's [prayer rally]. Some of the crowd obviously recognized them. Young people in the audience could be seen bobbing from the waist, up and down, like Apostle Lou Engle has done for years, mimicking a movement from Jewish prayer.

Perry's prayer rally was patterned after Lou Engle's The Call.

When Perry came out to speak and pray, he hugged and thanked Alice Patterson and then had her stand by his side throughout his appearance. Patterson is an NAR apostle known for [claiming](#) to learn from a vision that the Democratic Party is "an invisible network of evil comprising an *unholy structure*" (emphasis in original) that was released by the spirit of Jezebel. (Lest you think she is a purely partisan visionary, Patterson also reports another vision showing that the Republican Party is under the spiritual control of Ahab.)

[Ross Douthat](#) and others are right to point out that the media is for the most part ignorant about religion. But the consequence of that ignorance isn't that some people are calling attention to Perry's beliefs. It's that his relationship with the NAR continues to fly under the national media's radar. The initial national coverage of Perry's prayer rally was nondescript and said nothing about the NAR's participation or Patterson's unique beliefs. Until Trabachnik appeared on Gross's show, few Americans knew about Perry's coreligionists--a lack of knowledge shared by those now quick to assure us that his faith is just more of the same.