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**Christian leaders: Clinton re-election  
marked by discontent, wrong priorities By Tom Strode**

**Baptist Press  
11/6/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Bill Clinton handily became the first Southern Baptist to win re-election to the White House Nov. 5 in an election concerned Southern Baptist and evangelical leaders described as characterized by misplaced priorities, discontent and apathy.

Clinton, a member of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark., won 379 electoral votes to Republican challenger Bob Dole's 159. With more than 90 percent of precincts reporting nationwide at noon Nov. 6, the Democratic incumbent had about 49 percent of the popular vote. Dole, a longtime senator from Kansas, had 41 percent, with Reform Party candidate Ross Perot at 8 percent. Other candidates accounted for 2 percent of the vote.

In winning, the president surpassed his 1992 electoral accomplishments, when he upended President George Bush. Clinton gained 370 electoral votes and 43 percent of the popular vote in his first election to the presidency. He also became the first Democrat to win re-election since Franklin Roosevelt won his fourth term in 1944.

As he has since the 1994 congressional elections, Clinton will have to contend with a Republican majority in both the Senate and House of Representatives. Republicans gained at least one seat in the Senate and are leading in a close race in Oregon. If the GOP holds on in that state, it will have a 55-45 advantage in the Senate.

In the House, the Republicans apparently will lose about 10 seats from their majority of 235 but will retain control. With 10 races still undecided, they had won 223 seats to 200 for the Democrats.

In the Senate, the Republicans apparently will have not only a larger majority but a more conservative one. In Clinton's own state, Rep. Tim Hutchinson, a conservative, pro-life Southern Baptist, won a seat left open by a retiring Democrat to become the first Republican senator from Arkansas in this century.

As a result, Clinton will not only face a Congress opposed to some of his legislative initiatives but one prepared to continue to investigate the growing number of ethics questions about his administration. Neither controversies about ethics and character nor his support for abortion rights and homosexual rights in the work place prevented the president from winning handily, however.

Some Southern Baptist and evangelical leaders lamented such a signal.

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"It shows that the American electorate at the presidential level demonstrated a self-centeredness that is disturbing," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "They seem to be voting out of a feeling that 'If I'm OK economically, then I will vote just for the status quo.'"

Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff told Baptist Press, "America has a deep spiritual problem which only a spiritual awakening can remedy." As evidence, the Oklahoma City-area pastor cited "more than one poll which indicated that the economy was of greater concern to a majority of Americans than the issue of character."

"So, while the election has left things basically unchanged in our nation's government, it is extremely troubling to me that the issue of character seemed to be of little concern on virtually every level," Elliff said.

Arkansas Republican Gov. Mike Huckabee, a former Southern Baptist pastor, said, "A lot of evangelicals are voting more according to their pockets than their principles. I think that's a sad reflection on the state of the church today. I think what motivates a lot of evangelicals in politics, sadly enough, is not the decay of the country, but it's their loss of personal income and wealth through high taxes."

"I think while high taxes are a bad thing, that's not as much a moral issue as it is a political and economic one," said Huckabee, former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd, president of the SBC Pastor's Conference and chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, said he believes Americans have "elected the president that more clearly reflects where we are as a nation."

Clinton is "a persuasive and gifted communicator who at times can feel the pain of the American public, quote God's Word and yet govern in a very liberal way pertaining to moral issues," said Floyd, who called Southern Baptist pastors and churches in his June convention sermon to days of repentance, fasting and prayer for revival the week before the election.

"The complexity of Clinton's leadership represents the complexity of the American culture," Floyd said. "Our culture is what he is. One minute we can talk about feeling one another's pain, quoting God's Word, and the next minute we can make moral and ethical decisions that are totally in opposition to many major principles in the Word of God."

Although he was running on a conservative, pro-life platform, Dole never excited conservative evangelicals about voting for him, some said.

"For two elections in a row, (Republican) inclusiveness has cost them the White House," Floyd said. He accused Republicans and Democrats alike with "totally ignoring major moral issues, especially those close to the heart of the evangelical." That failure, he said, "cost the American public having a man of character and trust to be head of this country."

"If the Republicans six months ago would have spoken to the moral issues, they would have been able to put fire in the belly of evangelicals to have really worked for their cause."

Carmen Pate, vice president of communications for Concerned Women for America, said, "The race this year was very different in that I think the Christians had a very difficult time in enthusiastically doing the grassroots work that the Republicans were hoping they would have to put Dole in office."

"Though (Dole) has a pro-life voting record, he would not discuss it in this campaign. If he would put it on the back burner during the campaign, (pro-lifers) weren't sure they could count on him to stand up for the sanctity of life."

According to exit polls, voters who identified themselves as "religious conservatives" did not support GOP candidates as strongly as they had in recent elections.

Moral and cultural issues were notably absent in the campaign, said James Guth, political science professor at Furman University in Greenville, S.C.

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"We didn't see a whole lot of discussion of abortion on a specific level," said Guth, who researches voting by Southern Baptists and other evangelicals. "A series of other questions didn't come up. Gay rights didn't appear. These issues are important in that President Clinton did a remarkable job in stealing the Republicans' thunder in bringing up subjects such as the status of families and school uniforms, indicating he was concerned about the state of the culture. I don't think it convinced conservative Christians that he is one of them, but it ate into Republicans' strength with other groups."

Moral and cultural issues are as important to voters as they have been in the past, Guth maintained. But the result of the presidential election "obscures the fact that morally conservative Protestants are playing a significant role in the Republican party in congressional and state races," he said. Socially conservative values "drew a lot of support. Even though they were not discussed a lot in the presidential races, they did play a significant role in the outcome of the elections."

"If you look at questions like abortion and others that have had a tremendous role in mobilizing people, you don't see that much of a change in the proportion of people who are concerned about social and moral questions that come up. The question is how those become activated in any specific election. One of the mistakes the Republicans often make is that they think of the moral issues as abortion, gay rights and sex education in schools. The broader American population tends to think in terms of teaching respect in school and general moral values than in terms of specific issues."

"The concern Americans have about morality is as broad as in the past and greater than that in other societies," Guth said. "The issue is how those are expressed in public policy. Given some of his disadvantages on some of these issues, Mr. Clinton did a better job. Mr. Dole did not do as well addressing specific issues or broader kinds of moral and cultural issues. He didn't get the enthusiasm of Christian right activists, and he wasn't able to convince the American people that he would be any more active in fostering moral values than Mr. Clinton does."

The CWA's Pate said she believes many Christians chose not to vote for a presidential candidate, while exercising that privilege in other elections such as congressional and senate races.

"So many I talked to commented that they were going to vote, but they were not going to vote for president," she said. "They wanted to make sure (Republicans) retained both houses. It makes you think maybe it was those voters who didn't cast a vote" that resulted in re-electing a Democrat to the White House and a Republican majority in Congress.

Jim Wallis, founder of the evangelical left magazine Sojourners, said he found great dissatisfaction with the presidential candidates in a 34-city, 17,000-mile trip he took in the six weeks leading to election day. He attended town meetings on behalf of the "Call for Renewal," a moderate/liberal evangelical response to the Christian Coalition.

"I saw no yard signs and no bumper stickers, for the presidential list especially," Wallis said. "I just saw no enthusiasm for this election."

Wallis lamented neither Clinton nor Dole discussed poverty or racial reconciliation. How "can you not talk about poor people or racism from a Christian viewpoint in a political campaign?" he asked.

"I talked to anguished voters, especially Catholics, who said, 'I can't vote for Bob Dole. He doesn't care for poor people. I can't vote for Bill Clinton. He doesn't care about abortion,'" Wallis continued.

"There is no clear mandate here for anybody or anybody's vision."

Less than 50 percent of the electorate voted, according to preliminary figures. That is the smallest percentage since the 1924 presidential election.

Elliff said, "Here again we see the failure of America to participate in what is a privilege we cherish as a nation, a privilege for which our forefathers have died, a privilege people of many other nations would die to have. The clear test of history is what you do not use you lose."

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The election sends "a very important signal to the Christian community that we cannot set aside the fact that the Lord called us to be witnesses -- to evangelize," Elliff added. "What is needed in addition to better informed Christians is that we just simply need to see more Christians -- more people trusting Christ as their Savior."

Huckabee encouraged conservative evangelicals to "hope and pray that Clinton will moderate his views on abortion and homosexuality and find a moral center on issues like that."

Emphasizing Christians "are charged to pray for him and hope the very best for the country and not be angry and bitter," Huckabee said, "I'm satisfied when the people make a decision that they've spoken, and we've got to accept that." He said the next step is to seek to work with Clinton "to hopefully see that what he said in the campaign is what he will do as president."

Preceding Clinton as Southern Baptists to the White House were Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter, also Democrats. Truman served out the fourth term of Franklin Roosevelt at the New Deal leader's death but was elected president only once, in 1948. Carter won the 1976 election but lost in 1980.

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Tammi Ledbetter, Charles Willis, Trennis Henderson, Russell N. Dilday and Dwayne Hastings contributed to this article.

**Rex Horne accepts 'open door'  
to pray & talk with Clinton**

**By Russell N. Dilday**

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Rex Horne viewed part of the presidential election "from the inside" as he prayed with the president just prior to Clinton's acceptance speech. Horne, president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, is pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, where Clinton is a member.

Horne said he responded to a call at his home from a Clinton aide "that the president wanted me to come down and have a time of prayer with him before his speech."

Moving alone with Clinton to a private room in the Old State House, "I prayed for the president as I always do. Some of it, honestly, was of a personal nature, just praying as I always pray for him and with him that God would give him strength and wisdom and that he would do that which is first right before God and then helpful to our country."

Minutes later, in his acceptance speech on the front lawn of the Old State House, Clinton thanked "my pastor, Rex Horne, who prayed with me before I came out here tonight" and "all the ministers and people of God who prayed for me and with me over these last three years."

Clinton also thanked Christian leaders "who came to the White House time after time, in good times and in bad," to support him.

"When the times were bad, they reminded me that God gave St. Paul a thorn in his flesh, so he would not become exalted in his own eyes," Clinton noted. "That certainly was not a problem for me in bad times."

"When times were good, they reminded me that humility is always in order in the presidency, for in this life you see through a glass darkly and cannot know the whole truth of our circumstances or the motives of those who oppose us," he said. "I want to thank them all for bringing me closer to God and the eternal wisdom without which a president cannot serve."

Horne said that while he has opposed Clinton "on several of his policies, and have done so publicly on some such as partial-birth abortion and others," Clinton's faith does provide "an open door" to be heard.

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"I know him and some of those things about him better than many people that make their assessments of him," Horne said. "While I can't know what is in any man's heart, I think that his faith is a foundation for him and it provides an open door for me.

"If he allows me the access to talk with him about my convictions in whatever matters, he allows that because his faith is something that provides that door," Horne explained. "I can't say it's always caused him to make decisions that I would make, but it has provided me an access, a line of communication that he keeps open to me to share that with him."

Emphasizing the need for Southern Baptists to pray for the president, Horne said, "None of us could know the unbelievable stress and responsibility that lies upon the president of the United States."

Horne also warned Christians against placing their faith in the political process. "If you place any confidence in the exit polling, how the rest of the country makes a decision on a candidate is different than what Christians or evangelicals factor into their decisions.

"It is a reminder to Christians that the commission of Christ was given not to a political candidate, party or even a group that comes together, but his commission for eternal change was given to the church," Horne said. "We have the opportunity to do that person by person and town by town, and I hope that would be a signal or a message that would come out of this."

While affirming "there is certainly a place for believers to be involved in the political process and make their voice heard," Horne added, "I think that it is skewed if we think that God has now chosen to work through the (political process) rather than the church being on mission to evangelize and carry out the Great Commission.

"Frankly, no president in my lifetime has had any impact upon what I teach my children or what I preach to my church," he said, "but there's still an awful lot of emphasis placed upon political candidates."

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#### **Prayer leaders list concerns for post-election intercession**

**By Jon Walker**

**Baptist Press  
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Scripture calls Christians to pray for the nation's leaders, whether or not we agree with them, said several Southern Baptist prayer leaders after the Nov. 5 election.

Here are their suggestions for how Christians can pray for the nation:

-- Pray that God would raise up fearless, focused leaders of integrity who are committed to holiness, said Henry Blackaby of the Home Mission Board, author of "Experiencing God" discipleship materials. "We need leaders who will deny self, instead of affirming self, and pick up the Cross instead of avoiding the Cross. Leaders like that will catch the attention of the nation," Blackaby said.

-- Pray that the American people will begin to vote character over the economy. "We lost the whole character issue in this election," said Avery Willis of the Foreign Mission Board. "This is particularly noticeable to missionaries, who are gone for four years, and then come back to see the change. They notice a leaping in this direction, not just a creeping."

-- "We should pray for our president in relationship to what the Word of God says," said Ronnie Floyd, an Arkansas pastor who is president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference and led a convention-wide call to prayer and fasting the week before the election. The president "should lead in a tranquil and quiet way with godliness and dignity," Floyd said.

-- Ask that the nation's spiritual leadership remain spiritual, and not become political, that their leadership become a catalyst to the nation.

-- Pray that our nation will come to fear the judgment of God.

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-- Pray that Christians will recapture the magnitude of what God has given his people, and that they will begin to proclaim the power of God unto salvation.

-- Plead that preachers will begin, again, to emphasize the nearness of Christ's return. "It's been a long time since I've heard a message that allows people to smell the fires of hell," said Blackaby.

-- Ask that Southern Baptists will use their unique position to provide spiritual leadership to the nation, leading a great revival and awakening.

-- Pray that God would guide the hearts of those politicians calling themselves Southern Baptists, including Clinton, Gore and House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Pray that all political leadership will hear the voice of God and turn to him.

-- Ask for Christians to be salt and light across the country and that Satan be denied footholds. Pray the tearing down of those footholds he has already established.

-- Plead that righteousness be established as a norm in America.

-- Pray for American foreign policy overseas because it affects the efforts of missionaries trying to reach the world for Christ.

-- Pray that the American people will learn to judge leaders according to the heart and not according to appearance. Several of the prayer warriors noted that when the people of Israel insisted on their own way, God sent them Saul.

-- Pray for the salvation of the 174 million American who are not Christians.

-- Finally, "We need to pray for ourselves," Floyd said, "that we would conduct ourselves in a godly way."

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Tammi Ledbetter contributed to this story.

## **Marijuana referendums pass in Calif., Ariz.**

**By Dwayne Hastings & Karen L. Willoughby**

**Baptist Press  
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SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP)--Citizens of California and Arizona gave strong endorsements to referendums legalizing marijuana as a medicinal treatment, while voters turned back a tightening of state obscenity statutes in Oregon and measures for school choice in Washington in statewide votes Nov. 5.

California voters' decision to legalize marijuana for medicinal purposes is tragic, an opponent of the measure stressed during the final hours of election night.

"This is going to have a greater impact on the U.S. than the presidential or congressional elections," warned Art Croney, executive director of the Southern Baptist-supported Committee on Moral Concerns in Sacramento, Calif. "This is going to do for drug legalization what the Abortion Act of 1967 did for abortions."

California's Proposition 215 "exempts from criminal laws patients and defined caregivers who possess or cultivate marijuana for medical treatment recommended by a physician. It provides that physicians who recommend use shall not be punished," according to the explanation printed on the ballot.

The measure received a 56 percent majority, according to the Associated Press.

An article in the Oct. 14 issue of Newsweek magazine said the vote would be on "a little-noticed initiative with national implications." According to the article, "Proposition 215 doesn't limit the amount of marijuana an individual can grow or smoke and requires only oral permission from a doctor to obtain the narcotic."

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No written prescription is required, Croney said. If a medical doctor on a radio talk show recommends marijuana use for migraine headaches, for example, anyone who says he or she suffers from migraines can grow or use all the marijuana they want without fear of prosecution, he speculated.

"District attorneys won't be able to prosecute, police won't be able to arrest," Croney said. "This has the potential to destroy America." He said a speedy court challenge to the referendum's result is expected by the state's attorney general since the proposition is "in conflict with federal law."

Nearly two-thirds of Arizona voters agreed with Californians, approving a proposition titled the "Drug Medicalization, Prevention and Control Act." The measure allows physicians to formally prescribe marijuana, as well as drugs such as heroin and LSD in situations where they can prove the drugs have medicinal value for a patient.

The tally was 65 percent of Arizonians voting for Proposition 200, which also provides harsher penalties for violent drug offenders -- they must serve 100 percent of their sentences -- and more lenient treatment of first- and second-time offenders -- probation, first arrest; house arrest, second.

Arizona Gov. Fife Symington threatened to veto the measure if it was approved. Under the state's constitution, the governor apparently has the right to veto any initiative that is not passed by a majority of the registered voters. While a majority of those voting adopted the initiatives, those approving the measure did not constitute a majority of the electorate.

"We talked about it in staff meetings and had a consensus that it would open the door for more drug use," said Bill Parr, associate pastor at First Southern Baptist Church in Tucson and former director of missions in Catalina Baptist Association.

Passage of the two drug legalization measures date to 1993, when the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws -- NORML -- met for a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the hallucinogenic drug LSD, Croney said. At that gathering, NORML's national director Dick Cowen said the first step to full legalization of marijuana was to get it approved for medicinal purposes.

"The whole push for medical marijuana is a scam," Croney said. "What marijuana does is what any illegal drug does -- it makes people think they feel better. Marijuana is probably the most tested natural substance in the world, yet it has not been accepted as a medicine by ... any national medical association."

Further north on the nation's West Coast, concern about censorship brought down an Oregon proposal to tighten the state's obscenity laws.

By a 14-point spread, Oregon voters defeated Ballot Measure 31 which read, "Obscenity, including child pornography, shall receive no greater protection under this Constitution than afforded by the Constitution of the United States."

"As of Oct. 27 the opposition had raised \$400,000 to our \$152,000," said Gary Schwindt, a Southern Baptist and accountant, who has been involved with the issue since 1992, when an adult video store opened a few blocks from his home in an upscale section of southwest Portland.

"How do you fight that kind of money?" Schwindt asked as he watched the ballot measure, which would have brought the state constitution's protection of obscenity into line with federal rulings, fail.

A library association and major local bookstore were drawn into the fray along with sex-related industries that financed most of the opposition, Schwindt claimed.

"The end result is that I feel like the sex industry is hiding behind some legitimate concerns about censorship," he said. "They've been able to push that from the back side."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said he was saddened by the state's failure "to stiffen restrictions on pornography."

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"This means more women and children will be victims of abuse and sexual molestation. It is a tragic day for Oregon's women and children," Land said.

A slide into a pornographic laissez-faire began in 1987, when the Oregon Supreme Court "interpreted the freedom of expression clause so liberally that they cut the then-in-place zoning laws," Schwindt said. "Since that time the sex industry has found a safe place in Oregon and it is just booming.

"In 1987 there were only five nude dance bars and they weren't fully nude, topless bars," Schwindt continued. "By a year ago, that number had increased to over 100. They're fully nude, too, and they also offer couch dancing, whatever that is.

"I don't think Oregonians are going to withstand the major inroads that the sex industry has got ahold of," Schwindt said. "Oregon has just become so very, very liberal."

Also in the Northwest, Washington state voters doubly rejected the opportunity for school choice.

Initiative 173, which dealt with scholarship vouchers for any authorized public or private school, garnered the support of only 44 percent of voters. The vouchers would have provided parents the opportunity to enroll their children in the schools parents determined would be best for their children's educational needs.

A similar measure, Initiative 177, failed by an identical percentage. The initiative called for consideration of charter schools, independent public schools that could be started and managed by nonprofit organizations.

"This is not so much a moral issue as it is a parental rights issue," said Richard Seim, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Renton, Wash., and chairman of the Christian Life Commission for the Northwest Baptist Convention.

"I believe the rights of education have been taken away from parents. Schools are the only business we know that if they fail, we just give them more money.

"I don't believe it really is a loss," Seim continued. "It's a beginning. You've got to start somewhere."

He predicted school choice would be on the ballot in future elections because parents consistently indicate their interest in the education of their children, noting Washington is one of the largest home school states in the nation.

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Elizabeth S. Young contributed to this article.

## **Anti-gambling sentiment felt across the country**

**By Lee Weeks**

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Voters in states and cities considering gambling referendums Nov. 5 turned the tables on the gaming industry by rejecting most bids to place casinos and video poker machines in their localities.

But where the stakes were the highest, gambling proponents scored big, cashing in on voter approval in New Orleans of a land-based casino. And in Alabama, voters approved a constitutional amendment to lift the cap on the monetary amount of prizes offered on bingo games in Jefferson County.

Besides Alabama and Louisiana, legalized gambling efforts registered significant gains in Michigan and West Virginia.

From Washington state to Guam and points in between, however, the stakes for potential economic growth from the gambling industry were seemingly too high for the majority of voters to cast pro-gambling ballots.

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Gambling referendums were turned back in Arkansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Ohio, Washington state, Iowa, Virginia and Guam, as well 33 parishes in Louisiana.

The following includes a state-by-state breakdown of how the gambling referendums turned and what they mean.

Louisiana:

Voters in Orleans Parish approved a land-based casino, 67-33 percent. Twenty-nine other parishes in Louisiana said yes to riverboat gambling, compared to 14 parishes which said no.

Despite the increase in potential riverboat casino sites, Louisiana stands to gain only one riverboat gambling venue because of a state law limiting the number of waterway gambling sites to 15. Louisiana currently has 14 riverboat gambling operations.

Residents of 33 of Louisiana's 64 parishes turned down video poker in their areas while 31 parishes approved the measure.

West Virginia:

Voters in Jefferson County overwhelmingly approved a measure to allow video slot machines at the Charles Town horse racing track. The final tally showed 64 percent in favor, 36 percent against.

That will make it the fourth track in the state with video terminals, said Wyman Hall, who had preached against it while some members of his church, Charles Town Baptist, worked on an anti-gambling committee, Citizens for Sanity.

"I guess we'll just have to see what happens, but I'm afraid of the (gambling) addictions that will happen," the pastor said. "We don't have a Gamblers Anonymous in our area, so I'm going to check into that to see what it would take to establish something around here. Everywhere else this kind of thing has happened (problems have) gone up so much, we need to help out."

While gambling proponents said the machines would generate more than \$1 million annually in taxes, Hall said the other three tracks combined have yet to raise that much revenue in a year.

Michigan:

Voters approved the legalization of three casinos in Detroit by a 52 percent to 48 percent margin.

Michael Collins, executive director of the Michigan Baptist Convention, said too many churches remained silent on the issue. Many felt casinos were Detroit's problems, he said.

But Collins foresees them spreading to other cities in Michigan such as Lansing, Jackson and further north.

"We've already got casinos in the state on Indian lands," he said. "But now they are going to be on private land. It's going to create more problems and havoc because we're going to have all these competition-type things with casinos."

The referendum drew sharp political contrasts. Michigan Gov. John Engler and Attorney General Frank Kelley opposed it. But Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer supported the measure.

Collins said the presence of two casinos in neighboring Windsor, Ontario, also helped convince enough voters to keep some of that gambling money within the state.

"I think it was a bill of goods that was sold to the people," Collins said. "But it's just the beginning of difficulties that are going to be faced."

Colorado:

Voters here rejected legalized gambling by a 69-31-percent margin.

David Bunch, executive director-treasurer of the Colorado Baptist General Convention praised the outcome.

"I think the Colorado voters feel there are enough opportunities for gambling in the state now," Bunch said. "The problems that have come with gambling are beginning to emerge, and the Colorado voters just don't want anymore."

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Typical problems brought about by gambling include increasing debt and credit problems for participants, Bunch said. The gambling of money by participants often comes at the expense of failing to financially support families, he said.

Ohio:

For the second time during the 1990s, Ohio voters soundly defeated a casino referendum, this time by a margin of 62-38 percent.

Issue One would have authorized eight gambling riverboats around the state -- three each in Cleveland and Cincinnati and one each in Lorain and Youngstown. Proponents argued it would generate \$186 million for the state's schools, but a high-profile coalition led by Gov. George Voinovich opposed the measure.

"I feel great," said Orville Griffin, executive director of the Ohio Baptist Convention. "That would have created some problems for us here. A strong reason that caused it to go down to defeat was our governor taking a strong stand against it."

While there was no organized Southern Baptist opposition at the state level, Griffin editorialized against casinos in his state newspaper column. After meeting with various churches around Ohio, he felt sure church members would oppose it.

"I tried to caution (churches) not to get into the arena as far as individual candidates are concerned," he said. "But when it comes to moral issues, I encourage our people to get involved and we consider this a strong moral issue."

Nebraska:

Members of the grassroots organization Gambling With The Good Life claimed victory soon after the polls closed Tuesday night in Nebraska. Voters soundly defeated an initiative to permit off-track betting, 62-38 percent.

"We're thrilled," said Pat Loontjer, who spearheaded the group's formation to oppose casino gambling and a second initiative that would have permitted slot machines in Nebraska's keno parlors.

"Voters are becoming aware of the issues and voting their conscience. This is the last of the gambling issues. I think it sends a message to the state, that we're saturated (with gambling). Enough is enough, no more."

The defeated measure would have authorized the legislature to create off-track betting facilities connected with the state's five horse racing tracks.

Despite the victory, Loontjer said the Omaha-based group will continue to spread its anti-gambling message. It anticipates casino backers will try again in 1998 after they failed to get a referendum placed on this year's ballot, she said.

"We'll spend the next two years educating the public even more," she said.

Arkansas:

Voters defeated a proposed constitutional amendment that called for expanding legalized gambling in the state.

Amendment 4 was defeated by a 61-39 percent margin in a race that saw proponents spending millions of dollars in advertising against a poorly funded grassroots movement to halt gambling in the state.

If approved, Amendment 4 would have legalized a state lottery, charitable bingo and up to three casinos, with local voter approval, in Hot Springs.

Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Action Committee of Arkansas, said the results of the election were a "mandate" during a jubilant election night watch party at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention chapel in Little Rock.

"This is not a situation where the opposition can say, 'We just didn't get our message out,'" Page said. "Arkansans are saying this is the Natural State, we're going to stay that way, we want to draw families to Arkansas and we want to enhance those amenities. It's an overwhelming rejection of those who would make the case that casinos and lottery gambling are good economic tools."

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Page said Arkansas Baptists played "a critical part" in the campaign against Amendment 4. "We had good help from many of the denominations, but as is always the case, the Baptists carried the fight.

"They are the largest denomination, they are traditionally opposed to gambling and we had an excellent publication in the (Baptist) Newsmagazine, so there was a way to disseminate the information," Page noted. "You have to say Baptists carried the fight.

Page and other CCAC leaders cultivated the movement to resist gambling by sponsoring 15 "town hall meetings" across the state that featured debates between gambling opponents and proponents, as well as a five-stop tour by economic planner Robert Goodman speaking against gambling as an economic tool.

The race also saw four other gambling-related amendments thrown off the Nov. 5 ballot. The Arkansas Supreme Court struck three amendments proposing the expansion of gambling in Arkansas from the ballot Oct. 21, leaving only Amendment 4 for voter decision.

The stricken amendments all called for expanded gambling in the state through legalized lotteries and charitable bingo. All three were struck in part because justices found vague or misleading statements in their titles.

Page called the campaign against all four initiatives "a classic match-up" between "wealthy money that are sponsors of these initiatives on one side and a poorly funded but well-organized, really enthusiastic grassroots organization.

"It was money against people and the people won," Page continued. "When all is said and done, we will find the four initiatives will have spent \$9-10 million as opposed to our \$400,000. Amendment 4, as of Oct. 20, had already spent 5.1 million and I think they will end up at \$6-7 million."

The CCAC's campaign was marred, though, by accusations by gambling proponents that the CCAC was receiving funding from Mississippi casinos.

"That's simply not true," replied Page. "Our campaign was funded entirely by Arkansas money."

An earlier anti gambling proposal sponsored by the CCAC was removed from the ballot Sept. 6 by Page following two lawsuits filed against the CCAC by gambling proponents.

Amendment 6 sought to outlaw all gambling in Arkansas, including existing thoroughbred and greyhound in the state.

The suits, filed by proponents associated with Oaklawn Park in Hot Springs and Southland Greyhound Park in West Memphis, challenged the way volunteers collected signatures to place the anti-gambling measure on the ballot.

Page said that opting to withdraw rather than face the suits was "the right thing to do" and noted that financial limitations as well as "concern for the people in our network" were among factors that led to the CCAC's decision.

"The investigative process carried on by the law firms hired by the challengers of Amendment 6 was a painful one for some of our people," he explained.

Although Arkansas Baptists and others succeeded in gaining more than 87,000 signatures to qualify Amendment 6 for the ballot,

Page acknowledged that "some of the canvassers of our petitions inadvertently and innocently failed to comply with some of the technical rules regarding the circulation of petitions."

Page acknowledged "it is a possibility" the CCAC would sponsor another amendment proposal similar to 6 in the future.

"We would have to look at what some of the gambling proponents are going to do." "It may be that they'll not come back," he said. "They are wealthy and they didn't get that way by throwing good money after bad. If they sense that Arkansas is not fertile ground, they will go elsewhere."

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Ken Walker, C. Lacy Thompson, Karen L. Willoughby, Russell N. Dilday, Elizabeth Young and Keith Hinson contributed to this story.

## Colorado voters defeat tax on church, charity property

By Keith Hinson

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (BP)--Colorado voters have defeated two proposals that attracted widespread attention in religious circles, both in Colorado and nationally.

Amendment 11, a proposal to require Colorado churches and charities to pay property taxes, was defeated by a 66-point margin Nov. 5. Amendment 17, a proposal to guarantee certain parental rights, was defeated by a narrower margin.

With 100 percent of precincts reporting, the statewide vote totals on Amendment 11 were: Yes, 17 percent, 242,499 votes; No, 83 percent, 1,209,734 votes. Totals on Amendment 17 were: Yes, 42 percent, 614,275 votes; No, 58 percent, 836,524 votes.

David T. Bunch, executive director-treasurer of the Colorado Baptist General Convention, suggested the defeat of Amendment 11 is a strong victory for churches and other nonprofit organizations in the state.

"We are highly pleased that it failed and also that it was defeated with such strength, because we feel that it will probably not come up again in this form," Bunch observed. "Really, the churches carried the ball on the defeat of this. I think the church leaders of our state ought to be highly commended for doing the work and most of the finance."

Although church leaders spearheaded the fight against Amendment 11, credit is not due to church members alone, Bunch said.

"I think the church membership took the lead in alerting and informing people, but because of the low percentage of church membership in our state, it had to be many, many friends who voted with the church membership," Bunch said. "Many of these folks are tied in with other nonprofits, such as the YMCA, hospitals and others."

Some Christians may have been surprised by an unexpected ally -- the state's news media, Bunch suggested. "One of the significant things I saw is the 'perceived liberal press' ... came out very strong against the amendment and did a lot of editorials. They even took some initiative on advertising against it."

On the day of the election, one daily newspaper sponsored a full-page advertisement with a picture of a church and an exhortation for readers to "support the church of your choice," Bunch said, noting the ad quoted from Matthew 25, "I was hungry, and you fed me."

Bunch said churches in Colorado should see a residual, beneficial effect from the effort to defeat Amendment 11. "I think it raised a high visibility and awareness that the churches, charities and nonprofits are a vital part of our culture here and very contributive to the health of the state," he said.

Early in the campaign, Bunch said some supporters of the proposal suggested churches and their members should stay out of the campaign.

"That, of course, is erroneous and un-American," Bunch declared. "They were suggesting that people of faith ought not to vote on the issue, because it pertained to them, but that was dissipated in the later part of the campaign."

Bunch predicted the issue will not be presented again as a statewide referendum, but he predicted supporters of Amendment 11 likely will try other strategies to tax churches and charities.

"Knowing the promoters and initiators (of Amendment 11), I would anticipate that some attempt will be made ... through the Colorado legislature," Bunch said.

Amendment 17 -- the proposal on parental rights -- would have amended Article 2, Section 3 of Colorado's state constitution to read as follows: "All persons have certain natural, essential and inalienable rights, among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; of acquiring, possessing and protecting property; and of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness; and of parents to direct and control the upbringing, education, values, and discipline of their children."

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Bunch said the Colorado convention had not taken a formal position on the proposed amendment. "We had not really done anything in that area, other than alert our people that it was on the ballot. Many of our churches were active in getting signatures to put it on the ballot."

Still the proposal's intent may yet be enacted in some form, Bunch indicated. "The Colorado legislature has been working on this whole issue. I think part of the struggle that the voters had was probably wanting to give the legislature a chance to handle it through legislation, rather than through a constitutional amendment," Bunch said. "That seemed to be much of the issue."

During 1996, the issue of parental rights has become an issue in other states and even in Congress. A federal bill to codify such rights died in the most recent session of Congress, and legislatures in Kansas, North Dakota and Virginia have rejected similar proposals.

One proposal for amendments to state constitutions has been promoted by an organization in Arlington, Va., called Of The People. The proposal states: "The right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children shall not be infringed. The legislature shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

Proponents cite what they see as troubling trends that would be corrected by such a bill, such as:

- a court ruling that parents have no rights to prohibit their children from receiving condoms in schools.

- psychological testing of students that intrudes upon family privacy.

- school counseling that tells students they don't need to obey their parents at all times.

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**Southern Baptists in Congress:  
5 senators, 26 representatives**

**Baptist Press  
11/6/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--In the next Congress, at least five members of the Senate and 26 members of the House of Representatives will be members of Southern Baptist churches.

The Baptist contingent in Congress will include Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and House minority leader Richard Gephardt, who were returned to office in the Nov. 5 election.

Among the newcomers is Roy Blunt, former president of Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo.

Tim Hutchinson of Arkansas, meanwhile, will move over to the Senate from the House of Representatives, with his brother, Asa, elected to fill his congressional post.

Below is a list of Baptists in Congress.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Vote totals represent 100 or 99 percent of precincts reporting as of 2 p.m. (CST) Nov. 6, unless otherwise noted. The church cited for each Southern Baptist candidate is where they are members. Some, however, actually attend other churches. These include Gingrich, Steny Hoyer of Maryland and Asa Hutchinson. Gingrich, for example, attends Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga.)

#### U.S. SENATE

Arkansas: Rep. Tim Hutchinson, R., 3rd District, member of Immanuel Baptist Church (hereafter, Baptist Church will be referred to as BC), Rogers, won a first term in the Senate, defeating Winston Bryant, D., state attorney general, 441,705-396,008, 53-47 percent.

Kentucky: Sen. Mitch McConnell, R., member of Crescent Hill BC, Louisville, seeking third term, defeated Steve Beshear, D., former lieutenant governor, 722,525-558,621, 55-43 percent.

Mississippi: Sen. Thad Cochran, R., member of Northminster BC, Jackson, seeking fourth term, defeated James Hunt, D., retired farmer, 614,564-234,154, 71-27 percent.

North Carolina: Sen. Jesse Helms, R., member of Hayes Barton BC, Raleigh, seeking fifth term, defeated Harvey Gantt, D., former mayor of Charlotte, 1,330,912-1,159,955, 53-46 percent.

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South Carolina: Sen. Strom Thurmond, R., member of First BC, Aiken, seeking seventh term, defeated Elliott Close, D., real estate developer, 607,551-502,510, 53-44 percent.

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

#### Alabama:

Rep. Spencer Bachus, R., 6th District, member of Lakeside BC, Birmingham, seeking third term, defeated Mary Lynn Bates, D., lawyer, member of Shades Mountain BC, Birmingham, 181,313-70,072, 71-27 percent.

Rep. Terry Everett, R., 2nd District, member of First BC, Enterprise, seeking third term, defeated Bob Gaines, D., insurance agent, 132,596-74,330, 63-35 percent.

Bob Riley, R., 3rd District, businessman and member of First BC, Ashland, seeking a first term, defeated Ted Little, D., 102,923-94,927, 51-47 percent.

#### Arizona:

Rep. J.D. Hayworth, R., 6th District, member of North Phoenix BC, seeking second term, defeated Steve Owens, D., former state party chairman, 113,545-112,955, 47-47 percent.

#### Arkansas:

Asa Hutchinson, R., 3rd District, member of East Side BC, Fort Smith, seeking first term in seat held previously by his brother, Tim, defeated Ann Henry, D., former city council member, 127,970-97,123, with 96 percent of the precincts reporting, 55-42 percent.

#### Florida:

Rep. Joe Scarborough, R., 1st District, member of First BC, Pensacola, seeking second term, defeated Kevin Beck, D., lawyer, 174,799-66,073, 73-27 percent.

#### Georgia:

Rep. Newt Gingrich, R., 6th District, member of New Hope BC, Fayetteville, speaker of the House, seeking 10th term, defeated Michael Coles, D., cookie company executive, 174,152-127,132, 58-42 percent.

Rep. Nathan Deal, R., 9th District, member of First BC, Gainesville, seeking third term, defeated Ken Poston, D., state representative, 130,200-68,869, 65-35 percent.

#### Illinois:

Rep. Glenn Poshard, D., 19th District, member of First BC, Carterville in southern Illinois, seeking fifth term, defeated Brent Winters, R., farmer, 157,242-75,576, 67-32 percent.

#### Kentucky:

Rep. Ron Lewis, R., 2nd District, member of White Mills BC, White Mills, Hardin County, also former pastor of that church, seeking second full term, defeated Joe Wright, D., former state senator, 125,413-90,188, 58-42 percent.

Rep. Harold Rogers, R., 5th District, member of First BC, Somerset, seeking ninth term. There was no Democratic opponent.

#### Maryland:

Rep. Steny Hoyer, D., 5th District, member of Broadview BC, Temple Hills, Md., in suburban Washington, dually aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention and American Baptist Churches, seeking eighth full term, defeated John Morgan, R., engineer, 116,611-88,111, 57-43 percent.

#### Mississippi:

Rep. Roger Wicker, R., 1st District, member of First BC, Tupelo, seeking second term, defeated Henry Boyd Jr., D., paralegal, 121,302-54,903, 68-31 percent.

Charles "Chip" Pickering, R., 3rd District, member of First BC, Laurel, Miss., previously served as legislative assistant on Sen. Trent Lott's staff, seeking first term, defeated John Eaves Jr., D., lawyer, 114,379-67,957, 61-36 percent.

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## Missouri:

Rep. Richard Gephardt, D., 3rd District, member of Third BC, St. Louis, dually aligned with SBC and ABC, House minority leader, seeking 11th term, defeated Debbie Wheelehan, R., office manager, 136,869-89,951, 59-39 percent.

Roy Blunt, R., 7th District, member of First BC, Bolivar, former president of Southwest Baptist University, seeking first term, defeated Ruth Bamberger, D., college professor, 162,489-79,294, 65-32 percent.

## North Carolina:

Bobby Etheridge, D., 2nd District, state superintendent of public instruction, defeated incumbent Rep. David Funderburk, R., member of Buies Creek BC, Buies Creek, seeking second term, 112,188-97,491, 53-46 percent.

Rep. Bill Hefner, D., 8th District, member of North Kannapolis BC, Kannapolis, seeking 12th term, defeated Curtis Blackwood, R., property manager, 101,755-81,562, 55-44 percent.

Rep. Charles Taylor, R., 11th District, member of First BC, Brevard, seeking fourth term, defeated James Ferguson, D., farmer, 127,791-87,815, 58-40 percent.

## Oklahoma:

Rep. Tom Coburn, R., 2nd District, member of First BC, Muskogee, seeking second term, defeated Glen Johnson, D., state representative, 112,272-90,120, 55-45 percent.

Rep. J.C. Watts, R., 4th District, member of Sunnyslane BC, Del City, seeking second term, defeated Ed Crocker, D., state representative, 106,036-74,338, 58-40 percent.

Rep. Frank Lucas, R., 6th District, member of First BC, Cheyenne, seeking second full term, defeated Paul Barby, D., oil and gas investor, 113,499-64,173, 64-36 percent.

## South Carolina:

Rep. Lindsey Graham, R., 3rd District, member of Corinth BC, Seneca, seeking second term, defeated Debbie Dorn, D., real estate agent, 107,576-68,077, with 93 percent of the precincts reporting, 61-38 percent.

## Tennessee:

Rep. Zach Wamp, R., 3rd District, member of Red Bank BC, Chattanooga, seeking second term, defeated Chuck Jolly, D., lawyer, 113,764-86,195, 56-43 percent.

## Texas:

Rep. Steve Stockman, R., 9th District, member of First BC, Houston, seeking second term, defeated opponents Nick Lampson, D., former teacher, and Geraldine Sam, D., teacher. Stockman received 88,002 votes, or 46 percent, to Lampson's 83,733 votes, or 44 percent, with remaining votes for Sam.

Rep. Tom DeLay, R., 22nd District, member of Sugar Creek BC, Sugar Land, near Houston, seeking seventh term, defeated Scott Cunningham, D., lawyer, 125,636-58,848, 68-32 percent.

## Virginia:

Rep. Owen Pickett, D., 2nd District, member of Taylorsville BC, Doswell, seeking sixth term, defeated John Tate, R., telecommunications director, 106,208-56,682, 65-35 percent.

## Other evangelicals in election campaigns included:

Rep. Steve Largent, R.-Okla., 1st District, Hall of Fame pro football wide receiver, seeking second term in Congress, defeated Randolph Amen, D., legal researcher, 143,415-57,996, 68-28 percent.

Jim Ryun, R.-Kan., 2nd District, Christian speaker and former world record holder in mile run, won a first term in Congress, defeating John Frieden, D., lawyer, 130,100-113,189, 52-42 percent.

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Compiled by Tom Strode, Art Toalston and Polly House.

## Falwell qualifies whether he's a Southern Baptist

By Art Toalston

LYNCHBURG, Va. (BP)--Jerry Falwell, in a recent Wednesday night service at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va., declared, "I am not and have not been a Southern Baptist minister."

Falwell's Oct. 31 comment, reported by the local Lynchburg News & Advance, followed national news stories that his church had become dually aligned with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Bible Fellowship, a Missouri-based group with which he has long been associated.

Various media, including Baptist Press, reported that a \$1,000 donation by Thomas Road Baptist Church in late September to the new Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV) state convention -- 50 percent of which was forwarded to SBC causes -- had, in essence, made Falwell a Southern Baptist.

In an Oct. 24 statement to Baptist Press, Falwell had noted:

"For many years, I have watched with admiration the theological renaissance within the Southern Baptist Convention. ... When inerrantists in Virginia formed the SBCV recently, the Thomas Road Baptist Church was quick to show its approval and to offer encouragement by beginning modest monthly financial support. While we have no intention of discontinuing our support to our missionaries who are affiliated with many different fellowships and faith mission boards, we fully intend to take our permanent stand with the national and Virginia Bible-believing conservatives who have rescued the Southern Baptist Convention from theological liberalism.

"Thomas Road Baptist Church will continue to be what Southern Baptist churches have always been, independent and autonomous. We are now happy to work in voluntary cooperation with Southern Baptist churches."

The Lynchburg newspaper reported that Falwell had not realized the \$1,000 donation would qualify Thomas Road Baptist Church to send messengers to the SBC annual meeting and its members to serve on SBC trustee boards.

"I am very pleased to see these men of God take a stand," the newspaper quoted Falwell as saying of SBC conservatives. Falwell was then quoted as saying, "I am not and have not been a Southern Baptist minister, but I will pull for anyone who stands up for the Bible."

The newspaper additionally reported that Falwell, in an interview, said the church has no interest in participating in the SBC's annual meetings and that he himself has no interest in holding any SBC office.

Said Falwell in the interview, "The Thomas Road Church and I are very sensitive to anyone thinking we may have abandoned our independent groups. We have not."

The Baptist Bible Fellowship, based in Springfield, Mo., encompasses about 3,500 churches, many proud to be known as fundamentalist.

In a separate clarification issued Oct. 31, Elmer Towns, dean of the school of religion at the Falwell-founded Liberty University in Lynchburg, wrote that Thomas Road Baptist Church "has no interest in these privileges" -- such as sending messengers to the SBC, stemming from the church's contribution to SBC causes -- "at the SBC or anywhere else. Dr. Falwell and TRBC (Thomas Road Baptist Church) plan to continue their 40-year policy of 'befriending all who are friends of Christ' and seeking no power or political influence within any fellowship or convention of churches. If contributing to Bible-believing churches and their Great Commission initiatives means TRBC is in voluntary cooperation with the BBF (Baptist Bible Fellowship), the SBC or any other entity, then we proudly accept that status. Nothing more should be read into the TRBC support of the SBCV. TRBC will continue to be independent and autonomous."

Meanwhile, the editor of the fundamentalist journal, Sword of the Lord, Shelton Smith, has described Falwell's statements as likely "a classic case of doublespeak" in an editorial titled, "Did He or Didn't He?" in the journal's Nov. 15 issue.

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"To those of us who have paid a price to be independent, no amount of smooth-sounding explanation makes the situation palatable or plausible," Smith wrote. "Playing on both sides of the fence from a position astride the fence is discomfiting and divisive. ... While observers who have been watching the Falwell ministry over the last 15 years have seen very clearly the move from its fundamental and independent beginnings to a more mainstream evangelical stance, this recent flap over his ties to the SBC is nonetheless 'news.'"

"The Sword of the Lord has warned repeatedly over the years of the dangers of these compromising alliances," Smith continued. "The great majority of fundamental, independent Baptists have long since given Falwell a wide berth because of the direction of his ministry. The PTL fiasco, Falwell's (recently) speaking at the 'Washington for Jesus Rally' alongside (charismatic pastor) Benny Hinn, and a long list of speakers on his platform -- including Eldridge Cleaver, Bob Harrington (recently) and Ted Kennedy -- are just a few examples of the leftward slide in evidence. The contemporary music scene (D.C. Rap and others) has become big at the Lynchburg campus." (The Christian rap group's actual name is "dc Talk.")

And, of the SBC, Smith wrote, the convention "has 'many miles to go' before the cleanup will get their slate clean again." Smith noted the Sword of the Lord's next issue will include an article titled, "SBC Conservative 'Take-over' Is Not a 'Make-over.'"

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## **Harrington claims 'restoration' from adultery, self-centeredness**

**By Tim Ellsworth**

**Baptist Press  
11/6/96**

ST. LOUIS (BP)--A backslidden Bob Harrington stood over the casket of his mother, whom he had led to Christ years before.

"I believe that my life probably caused her to die a little bit early, because she was concerned about me to the point of worry," Harrington said with a trembling voice and teary eyes. "The saddest feeling in the world is to walk by a casket holding your mother. I said to her ... 'I'm sorry.' I said, 'I'll be back.'"

The once-renowned "Chaplain of Bourbon Street" lived up to that promise to his mother. A year after her death, "I went back home and went to the grave site of my mother, fell on that grave and told her, 'I'm back. I'm back,'" Harrington said.

That was a monumental moment in Harrington's life. Once known nationwide for his ministry in New Orleans, his national debate tour with atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hair and his thousands of converts, Harrington threw it all away to embrace a life of adultery, arrogance and self-centeredness. But he now wants Christians to know this: Brother Bob is back.

"The '90s have been my decade of restoration," Harrington said.

Raised as a Methodist, Harrington started preaching three days after he was saved. "I got started and grew so fast that I didn't build me a good foundation," Harrington said. "So, when I got real tall ... and real recognized, I think my whole building just tilted and fell. I didn't have enough rootage. I didn't have enough depth in the things of God."

His messages became cold and automated. "I was a professional preacher," he said.

Harrington said Satan threw him a PASS, an acronym for pride, arrogance, self-centeredness and stubbornness. "I caught it and ran for defeat," he said. "Satan doesn't throw victory passes. ..."

"I don't want anybody to think that Satan caused me to do all this. Satan participated with me. The cooperative program was in effect. I cooperated with him, and he surely cooperated with me."

The defeat was great. Harrington left his public ministry in 1978 to pursue a career as a motivational speaker for corporate groups. He lost his marriage because of his numerous affairs. His first wife, Joyce, never remarried.

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"The '80s would be my period of being out of the will of God," said Harrington, who noted how his departure from God didn't have a negative effect on him early on. "I wasn't feeling bad out there. When you have forsaken God, it doesn't bother you to forsake your family, or your church, or your friends. You're really honed in to self at that particular time. You can get so caught up in worshipping self that you enjoy it for a while."

Harrington said he'd drive blocks out of his way "to keep from seeing a church steeple. The first thing I did in my hotel rooms was put the Gideon Bible in the dresser drawer." He also got tired of people calling him "Brother Bob," a title which is now his favorite.

But God wasn't finished with him. His mother kept writing him letters, urging him to repent and return to God. His daughters were praying for him.

Things progressively got worse for Harrington, to the point that "I even thought of jumping out of a building one time."

In 1989, while staying in a hotel in Miami, Harrington ran across some drug dealers, who beat him severely. "That's where the Lord said, 'Well, what else is it going to take to get your attention?'" Harrington said. "That was my handwriting on the wall. It was vivid handwriting."

It was after the beating, but before his restoration, that his mother died. Shortly thereafter, while in Los Angeles, Harrington got a phone call from a friend, Rex Humbard, who asked him, "Aren't you ready to come back?"

Harrington responded in the affirmative. Humbard read to his friend Psalm 51 -- David's prayer for forgiveness after his affair with Bathsheba. "I got restored," Harrington said.

In response to his restoration, he asked former friends for their forgiveness. "I started writing people -- 138 two-page letters, handwritten," he said.

He received a 17-page, handwritten response from Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina.

"It was a Patterson epistle, really," Harrington said. "He gave me about 21 things I needed to do" -- such as faithfulness in church, a regular system of Bible study and prayer, fellowship with the right people and asking his family for forgiveness.

Harrington did just that. "My wife, the mother of my children, has forgiven me. My children have forgiven me," he said.

Patterson said "the Christian army is the only one that shoots its wounded. The easier thing is to ignore people when they're hurting and messed up. ...

"We need to be honest enough with people to risk their friendship and tell the truth."

Patterson encouraged Harrington to take three or four years just to get back into Bible study and prayer. While that sounded like a long time to Harrington, he's glad he took the advice.

"We serve a God whose business is redemption," Patterson said. "I'm very much encouraged by Bob's renewed commitments to those things that he formerly cherished. I pray every day that he'll be true to those."

Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, is Harrington's son-in-law. Kelley's wife, Rhonda, is Harrington's daughter. "There is a very profound difference in who he is and who he had been," Kelley said.

"He's let God open doors for him in ministry. We've just watched him settle down and walk with the Lord."

Now back in full-time ministry, Harrington has moved his base of operation from New Orleans to St. Louis, thanks largely to Gene Spurgeon, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cahokia, Ill., where Harrington is now a member.

In April of this year, at Spurgeon's invitation, Harrington came to the church for a revival meeting. "Our church had revival," Spurgeon said. "In fact, we're still in revival."

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Other churches in the area also began inviting Harrington to speak. Throughout the summer, Harrington preached in more than 30 churches around the St. Louis area. He has a daily radio program, and his red tie, red socks and red suspenders have become a permanent fixture in the region. His future plans include nationwide radio and television programs.

"The Lord said to me in a vision type of thing, 'Go into the heartland of America and get the attention of American people to their hearts.' The American people need a clean heart," Harrington said.

"People need to have an awareness of the wrath of God upon disobedient children," he added. "American people have lost the fear of God. Most American people today and most American young people are flipping the bird to God. That's about the most obvious sign I can come up with."

With the theme, "Loving the left back right," Harrington is calling attention to "the sin of neglect," which he calls "the number one ingredient that's dirtied the hearts of Christians."

"The sin of neglect is the cause of the empty chairs in our churches today," Harrington said. "I have a real phobia of empty chairs. When I see an empty chair, I see a Bob who wasn't there for over 10 years."

Harrington said he has implemented more accountability in his life than before and his ministry this time will be different "because of experience, because of knowledge, because of past learnings, because of hurt." He knows there are people who are hesitant about his ministry, but thinks "eight years, nine years, 10 years will prove to the people this is not an overnight fling. ...

"I want to be nothing but 100 percent daily -- with God's help."

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