

BUCKINGHAM REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE &
EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS

A NEW VISION— AMERICANS FOR ROBERTSON

The *Washington Post* front page headline on September 18 said, "ROBERTSON TAKES HALF STEP INTO THE PRESIDENTIAL ARENA." The opening paragraph of its story called it "one of the most heavily promoted partial announcements in history." But it was more than a partial announcement. It was an irrevocable announcement based on one condition. Pat said he **WOULD** run if three million people signed petitions during the next year.

By delaying his formal announcement for another year, Robertson will be able to appear on "The 700 Club" without violating the federal equal-time proviso that applies to political candidates. **Churches and other non-profit institutions will also be allowed to solicit signatures and gifts without violating restrictions by the IRS which forbid the endorsement of political candidates.**

The 90-minute event at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., on the 199th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, was a cross between the closing night at the Republican National Convention and an Oral Roberts extravaganza. A full orchestra under the direction of Rich Cook was flown in from Arizona. And singers—not only the huge black choir from John Meares' Evangel Temple in Washington, D.C., but an ensemble of young people in red, white and blue singing and dancing their way through "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad" type music, complete with banjo and straw hats.

Expertly orchestrated by Michael Clifford and Victory Communications of Scottsdale, Arizona, the extravaganza was broadcast live by satellite to slightly more than 100,000 people meeting in 216 auditoriums in all 50 states. It was a unique gathering, a strange array of Christian leaders and political dignitaries, all of whom gave glowing testimony to Pat Robertson saying, among wild cheers from the audience, he was God's man for the White House.

The sparkling event cost about \$3.5 million but was designed to bring in \$20 million to the

"Americans for Robertson" campaign. It closed with Pat asking everyone present and watching to sign a petition, take another petition to gather another 20 names and make individual contributions of \$100 each. I saw very few people who were not writing checks.

An Historic Occasion

Jackie and I flew to Washington for a private luncheon at the National Press Club with the Robertsons and about 50 others who came in from around the nation. Looking around the room I was aware that a lot of political people were putting their careers on the line by endorsing Robertson and being willing to go to work on his team. Obviously they saw him as more than a spoiler. They saw him as a winner.

Carolyn Sundseth, until recently Ronald Reagan's liaison for religious affairs, was registering people at the door and pinning them with an "Americans for Robertson" button.

Herb Ellingwood, Reagan's former legal advisor and now associated with Ed Meese in the Justice Department, testified: "There's no one else out there who can replace Reagan."

Ben Waldman, who headed the Jewish coalition for Reagan-Bush, said he felt Robertson was the only man who could adequately succeed Reagan and protect our future for our children.

Mary Ellen Miller, who handled the campaign for the present governor of California, has joined the staff.

Rosey Grier, who campaigned so actively for Robert Kennedy, spoke enthusiastically.

Heading things up is Mark Nuttle, Senator Jeremiah Denton's (R-Alabama) campaign manager.

The group of Christian leaders attending the Washington meeting was also impressive: Oral Roberts, Rex Humbard, Bishop J.O. Patterson of the Church of God in Christ, Beverly LaHaye, Karl Strader, Tommy Barnett (who is also Michael Clifford's pastor in Phoenix), former Southern Baptist president Jimmy Draper (who closed his public presentation by reading a

letter of endorsement from Charles Stanley), Alex Clattenburg, John Meares, John Gimenez, Larry Tomczak, C.J. Mahaney, Vinson Synan and many others.

At the luncheon Robertson told me that, just the week before, after learning Jimmy Swaggart had come out against him, he had flown to Baton Rouge and met with Swaggart. During those hours, as the two men talked and prayed, Jimmy reversed himself. That night he came to the Robertson rally in Baton Rouge and publicly endorsed his run for the presidency.

"The world probably says that this effort is hopeless," Swaggart said, "but if God be in it, it doesn't really matter what the world says. Pat Robertson is one of us."

On stage at Constitution Hall I was asked to introduce the program. I called it what it was, "an historic occasion." Never in history has a man of God received such overwhelming support for the nation's highest office. Whether he wins or not, the fact he has received this kind of recognition—without compromising his values or his preachments—is indeed historic.

The Washington Times, awestruck by the surge of popularity Robertson has generated, commented: "If the religious broadcaster is successful in raising \$20 million from last night's appeal it would be an unprecedented amount for a single political fund-raising event."

Press Conference

I have maintained all along that very few men in the world can handle the media as well as Pat Robertson. At the press conference that afternoon, with almost 100 TV cameras rolling and another 200 reporters taking notes, Robertson indeed sounded like a presidential candidate rather than an evangelist. He quoted long sections of the Constitution, as well as Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Jack Kennedy. He was uncompromising on his stand on foreign and domestic affairs, public education, drug abuse, crime, and the separation of church and state.

"Our problems are not government problems," he said, when speaking of drugs, hunger and poor public education. "They're moral problems."

In answer to a question about the first amendment, Robertson said, "The separation of church and state does not mean the separation of God and government."

One of the problems Robertson will have to overcome is that the press sees him primarily as an evangelist—not a presidential candidate. They constantly refer to him as "Reverend," talk about the possibility of a "preacher-

president" and limit most of their questions to religious issues.

At the press conference one reporter asked Pat what he believed about Armageddon. The veiled reference—dreamed up by the press, by the way—was to former Secretary of the Interior James Watt who said he believed in the second coming of Christ. The press interpreted that to mean Watt felt he could destroy the earth since it was going to be destroyed by Armageddon anyway. Robertson's answer was classic. After saying he didn't want to try to explain Armageddon to the press, he said, "No public policy should deal with Armageddon for this is in God's hands, not the politicians'."

You're not supposed to applaud at press conferences, but my hands really did twitch when he said it.

Asked if God had told him to run he quoted Lincoln: "I don't want God to be on my side; I want to be on God's side." Then he added, "I feel led. I have peace that this is the right decision for me."

When pressed about how much longer he would stay at CBN he said he was committed to resign within the year if he received three million signatures requesting him to run. Then he added: "I doubt seriously if I can continue much longer as a broadcaster because of the demands of the campaign."

A certain reporter, who kept raising his hand without recognition, finally shouted a question over the others. "You've been quoted....," he began.

Robertson interrupted him. "Please identify yourself." He was the only man in the room Robertson asked to identify himself. Either Pat had been briefed that this fellow was an enemy, or God gave him instant discernment.

The man mumbled something about "Liberty Magazine" then went on, "You've been quoted as saying the first amendment is totalitarian."

"I've never said such a thing," Robertson said, turning to the other side of the room. "Next question."

My hands started twitching again.

Standing Applause

That night, gathered with 3,000 others in Constitution Hall, there was no restriction on applause. I was sitting on the platform next to Pat's daughter. About halfway through his speech I kicked myself, saying, "I wish I had started keeping count of the times he's been interrupted by applause."

The people loved him. "There can be no education without morality, and there can be no lasting morality without religion," he said.

The people jumped to their feet shouting approval. He continued, "For the sake of our children, we must bring God back to the classrooms of America." They were back on their feet again, shouting and cheering. They had a champion.

Citing surveys that only six percent of Americans are atheists, he said, "I do not believe that the 94 percent of us who believe in God have any duty whatsoever to dismantle our entire public affirmation of faith in God just to please a tiny minority who don't believe in anything." They were on their feet cheering even before he finished. Reports from the 216 video auditoriums around the nation said everyone else was standing and cheering also.

He closed by saying, "If this effort is to succeed it takes money." That was when he asked us to start with individual contributions of \$100. My wife, who was sitting in another location on the platform, passed me the checkbook and I wrote out a check for \$200. I have a feeling that was just the first of several I'll be writing before this is over.

My Analysis

- Although Robertson stated absolutely he would not run as an independent, Republican activists are concerned about him. There were no old-line GOP folks at the meeting. Instead, Pat is bringing in an entirely new group of people, mostly Protestant Christians. However, the Robertson coalition will also include a large number of blacks, Jews, Catholics and Hispanics—many of whom have been viewed as Democratic supporters in the past. (NOTE: The next issue of the Church of God in Christ magazine, serving four million blacks, will be devoted to the Robertson endorsement.) **The Washington Post** feels some Republicans think the campaign will "intensify the tensions between establishment 'country club' party members and fundamentalist Christians seeking to gain leverage in the GOP."

- The fact that Robertson and his most vocal supporters have had little or no experience in politics is a definite asset. He is not tainted by compromise to special interest groups. While his candidacy may polarize the nation, it will bring unity to the church as no other event in history has.

- Robertson's contention that he does not want to accept federal funds to run his campaign, and that he does not want to sell himself to vested interest groups such as the labor unions and large industry to raise funds, is a huge asset. No presidential candidate in history has the ability to raise money from the grassroots as Robertson has. When people con-

tribute, they will follow it up with work and a vote. That's what wins elections.

- Ronald Reagan has recently said the greatest threat to the United States is the drug problem. A Gallup poll showed that 61 percent of the American people feel it will take a minister to solve the drug problem. That's in Robertson's favor.

- The man who can win the American TV audience can win the White House. Robertson looks like the winner for 1988. He needs prayers, money, signatures and a willingness to get out and work.

A Funny Thing Happened...

The funniest event of the evening came as Harald Bredesen introduced his old friend, Pat Robertson. I was sitting behind Harald on the platform as the time approached. A worried Michael Clifford leaned over my shoulder whispering his final briefing to Bredesen.

"Do you remember what you're supposed to do?"

"Better tell me again."

"Go to the microphone. Introduce yourself. Tell your one-liner: 'I knew Pat when his hair was black.' Then say, 'Now I give you Pat Robertson.' As you say it, turn to your right and point your right hand toward the right back side where Pat will appear. Do you have all that?"

"Ah...?"

"Time!! It's time! Go now!!"

Michael gave him a push and suddenly Harald was at the microphone in center stage—blinking into the lights just as the band finished the last notes of "Stars and Stripes Forever."

"I knew Pat Robertson when I had hair."

It brought down the house. "Oh...I'm Harald Bredesen...I now give you Pat Robertson."

Dutifully, he turned and pointed his right hand at the curtain at the right back stage.

Nothing. No Pat. Harald held his pose—arm pointed to right back stage. Silence. No Pat.

Harald turned and repeated his routine—turning to the right and pointing at the right back stage. Nothing. The auditorium was silent.

Dear Lord, I wondered. What if Pat's changed his mind. Or gone to the men's room. Or been abducted by George Bush's men riding in a PTL limousine....

Still no Pat. Harald began to look around—grinning that desperate sort of grin he has. His arm was still pointing back stage right in an awkward position as he glanced in all directions.

Then, just as he shrugged and started to walk back to his seat, the audience erupted in

wild applause. The spotlights had picked up Pat coming down the aisle, not backstage to the right, but from the right back side of the auditorium—like Rocky entering the ring to fight Mr. T.

Once again Harald Bredesen had stumbled into exactly the right thing to bring just the right amount of levity to a great moment.

Welcome to Big-time Criticism

Some of what is going on is a bit more serious, however. While nearly all the press stories prior to Robertson's announcement have been positive (the one exception was an article in the **New Yorker** which Robertson called "downright lies,") the Almost Candidate has now left the safety of the harbor for open sea.

The first wave to hit was Garry Trudeau's "Doonesbury" comic strip series—designed to spoof Robertson's relationship with God. Typical was the dialogue which appeared the morning after Robertson's announcement.

Scene: Reporters interviewing an offstage Pat Robertson at a press conference.

Reporter: "Mr. Robertson, when did you finally get the go-ahead for this explorative effort?"

Off-stage voice: "Well, God and I talked several times when I was back in Virginia Beach last week. We went over the Michigan results in some detail. I think it was Thursday when I received the final word."

Reporter: "And what was that word, exactly?"

Off-stage voice: "I don't know how to say it in English. We speak in tongues."

Reporter: "Could you spell it phonetically? We can get it translated."

While some thin-skinned Christians shudder at such satire, many of us, including Robertson, get a chuckle out of it. All of us, at times, need to pray as Robert Burns prayed, to "see ourselves as others see us."

More damaging was a reaction from one of Ronald Reagan's cabinet members—William Bennett of the Department of Education. Bennett, a nominal Catholic who says, "I go to church some," criticized Robertson for saying Christians feel more strongly about love of country, love of God and support for the traditional family than do non-Christians.

"This sort of invidious sectarianism must be renounced in the strongest terms," Bennett said.

The real reason behind Bennett's attack? Robertson has been outspoken about the sorry state of public education in America. Bennett correctly sees this as a criticism of the federal government's basic policy of keeping God out of the classroom. Unable to attack that position,

however, without undermining other Republican conservatives, the angry secretary laid down a smoke screen and torpedoed Robertson on an unrelated issue. That's politics.

People for the American Way

The most absurd attack, however, and the one that proves God must be in Robertson's run for the presidency, was the satanic attack by the People for the American Way (PAW).

PAW's frontal attack came only hours before Robertson's friends gathered in Constitution Hall and around the nation. They held a tiny but vitriolic demonstration of their own in Washington, D.C. Only a few reporters attended to see a 20-minute video made up of illegally copied segments from "The 700 Club." It was their way of sneering at Robertson's faith in God.

The film showed Robertson commenting on abortion, the Supreme Court, public education, Social Security, the Federal Reserve System and women's rights. Included was a clip of Robertson showing how Hurricane Gloria veered away from Virginia Beach after he and his staff rebuked it in the name of Jesus.

The inference: Do we want a president who believes in these extremes—anti-abortion, that the husband is the head of the home, that the U.S. Supreme Court should not legislate law, that God should not be omitted from the classroom, and that Christians have authority over hurricanes?

John Buchanan, a Southern Baptist minister and former Alabama congressman, is chairman of PAW. He said his purpose was to show that Pat "is an extremist."

Robertson's people, after viewing the clips, said, "Yes, that's exactly where we stand. What PAW looks upon as ludicrous—anti-abortion, anti-drugs, pro-family, hard stance on crime—is exactly what we believe." Mark Nuttle, Robertson's campaign manager, said he was amazed at the inability of PAW to understand that the vast majority of Americans believe the same thing.

Note: The same day PAW attacked Robertson, former president Gerald Ford, a founding member of PAW, resigned. A spokesman said Ford joined originally because "they represented the organization as being as close to motherhood and apple pie as they could. But Ford has now come to the conclusion that these people were basically radically liberal activists trying to operate under the guise of nonpartisanship."

Final Note: The Sunday night before I flew to Washington for the meeting at Constitution Hall, my pastor, Curry Vaughn, hearing that

PAW was going to sneer at Robertson, led the congregation in a special prayer. A word came from a woman in the congregation that God's Word would not return to Him void. The prayer was that those watching the stolen video clips would see God's power and respond. As a result of PAW's effort to mock Robertson, every major TV network in America showed Pat telling the story of Hurricane Gloria, and outlining on a map how it turned out to sea when it was rebuked in the name of Jesus. Satan, it seems, just never knows when to leave a good thing alone.

JERRY FALWELL BACKING OFF

The same day Pat Robertson announced he wanted to run for president, Jerry Falwell—who last year said he would support George Bush—promised to pull back from politics.

In an interview with columnist Cal Thomas, who used to be on his staff, Falwell said, "I'm not going to get involved anymore in campaigns as I have in the past."

That's good news for Robertson. Although a Falwell endorsement would not necessarily be in Robertson's favor, Jerry's strong support of Bush could cause additional division among believers. As it is, it seems as if Falwell may realize his endorsement of Bush was premature.

Last year, under fire from federal agencies who said he was on thin ice by using his pulpit as a political stump, Falwell formed a new organization called Liberty Foundation to counteract the extreme image of his Moral Majority. Although that got him off the hook with the feds, it did not give him any more credibility with his old enemies, such as former president Jimmy Carter.

Speaking to the students at Meredith College in North Carolina, Carter was asked about Falwell's criticisms of his policies. The former president responded, "In a very Christian way, as far as I am concerned, he (Falwell) can go to hell."

This, of course, raises some interesting questions.

One, is there a "Christian" way to send someone to hell?

Two, does a "go-to-hell" uttered by a man who claims to be born again carry as much weight as the one uttered by a man like Larry Flynt of *Hustler* magazine, who also condemned Falwell to the hot place?

And then, we have to ask, does Carter really want Falwell to roast in brimstone forever? If the statement had been uttered by a Catholic, such as Tip O'Neill or Ted Kennedy, we'd know it was only a temporary hell the

curser had in mind. But when it comes from the most famous Southern Baptist in the world, we have to believe the gentleman from Georgia really wants the evangelist to fry forever.

No wonder Falwell is backing off. Getting a "go-to-hell" from a fellow Baptist is pretty serious stuff. It's almost as serious as the "go-to-hell" Ronald Reagan received from Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. Of course we all know "go-to-hells" from archbishops carry more weight than similar curses from ex-presidents, even Baptist ex-presidents. Although I imagine the "go-to-hell" President Harry Truman—who was also a Baptist—gave the book reviewer at *The Washington Post* (accompanied by a slur at the reviewer's ancestry) who panned his daughter's first book was about as powerful as any ever uttered.

Cal Thomas, who called Carter's remark a "new low in the political behavior of Christian leaders," reminded his readers that it was Carter who once told his adult Sunday school class at Washington's First Baptist Church: "My definition of a Christian often fits myself. I become the standard." Carter then told his class, "I am the voice of Christ."

Oh ho! That's something usually reserved for the pope. But when uttered by the head-of-state of the world's most powerful nation it is certainly more potent than a mere archbishop. In short, a Carter "go-to-hell" could be construed as powerful as a papal edict.

I doubt if, in the final judgment, however, God will take Carter's curse into account when Jerry Falwell stands before His throne. There is ample biblical reason to believe, though, the former president will be held accountable for the words he's uttered. As will Larry Flynt, Desmond Tutu, Harry Truman and the rest of us who either say it or want to say it.

So what of Jerry Falwell? Until the final judgment comes I believe Falwell has done the right thing.

For one he has turned the other cheek. "Seven years ago I was critical of President Carter," he said in response to Carter's latest attack, "and I was out of order. I apologized on 'Meet the Press.'"

Second, he is backing off his strong endorsement of Bush which will give Robertson breathing room.

Finally, he told Cal Thomas, in referring to his strong political involvement as salt, "I was overdosed with no salt 10 years ago. I am now overdosed with too much salt. In the future, I'm going to take a more balanced approach."

While that will not keep Falwell out of hell—or guarantee him a place in heaven (that, it

seems, is settled in a different dimension called grace)—it is good news. It will make things easier for the rest of us to hear God on our own when considering a political candidate.

NEW WINE CEASES PUBLICATION

The news that **New Wine** magazine will publish its last issue in December is sad. As far as charismatic magazine publishing is concerned, **New Wine** started it all back in 1969. **New Wine's** 55,000 active subscribers will be paid off by receiving a "new teaching magazine" published bi-monthly by Charles Simpson and supported by contributions only.

New Wine began publication in 1969 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. The first editor, who helped coordinate a ministry known as the Holy Spirit Teaching Mission, was dismissed following a homosexual scandal. The four Bible teachers of the mission—Charles Simpson, Bob Mumford, Derek Prince and Don Basham—took over publication of the magazine.

Quickly the magazine became the primary source of printed teaching for the fledgling charismatic movement. In those days it carried no advertising and was mailed to anyone who requested it. Later the mailing list was purged annually of those who had not made a contribution. Finally the magazine began charging a subscription price of \$15 a year.

The ministry of the four teachers enlarged and changed. The name was changed to Christian Growth Ministries. John Poole, a Bible teacher from Philadelphia, was added to the team. Ern Baxter came in 1974. After Poole divorced his wife and resigned from his church in 1977, he dropped from the team. Headquarters were moved to Mobile, Alabama, Simpson's old base of operations. The other teachers, except for Prince, also moved to Alabama.

During this time the magazine became, along with the audio tapes of the five teachers, the primary vehicle for what became known as the discipleship movement. A quasi-denomination, based on discipleship, or "shepherding" concepts, formed around Simpson, Prince, Mumford, Baxter and Basham. **New Wine** became its official journal. Although occasional articles by men outside the movement were sometimes published, the magazine existed solely to publish articles by the five teachers.

Over the years, according to Simpson, the \$15 subscription price was not enough to support **New Wine**. Several years ago the magazine spiffed up its format and started printing articles by men outside the discipleship movement, and last year it began accepting advertising. Things continued to get worse

financially, however. In 1985 the teachers had to subsidize it to the tune of \$350,000.

Other things changed. Derek Prince renounced the basic principles of the discipleship movement and separated from the team—although he maintained a personal relationship with the other men. In 1984 Ern Baxter moved back to San Diego. This year Bob Mumford moved to San Rafael, California. Now Don Basham plans to move to Cleveland, Ohio. In the late spring of this year the leaders decided to disband structurally.

With that disbanding, and egged on by the financial crisis, the magazine went belly-up.

In a letter to **New Wine** readers Simpson explained the situation and asked his supporters to "prayerfully consider a financial gift between now and December 31" to help with the cost of closing shop and in supporting the 50 staff members who are having to make transitions.

It's sad. It's like the passing of an old friend—one who has fed, nurtured, directed and inspired. However, since the magazine never changed from being the parochial journal of the discipleship movement and was totally integrated with the five men in covenant relationship, death was inevitable when the movement died and its founders separated. Even so, many of us mourn its passing.

Those who have been blessed by **New Wine** may wish to make a financial contribution to cover the expenses of its cessation. Contributions may be mailed to Integrity Communications, Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616.

UPDATE ON MY VIDEO SERIES

Last month I published some information on my 13-week video series, complete with workbook, **The Journey to Spiritual Maturity**. The 13 video segments, each about 15 minutes long, show me teaching on location in the Sinai—following the footsteps of Moses. They are contained on three VHS or Beta cassettes and are ideal for any small group. Hundreds of churches have ordered and the response is overwhelming. Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship has ordered 5,000 packets to go to all its prison ministries to be used as basic training for Bible study classes in prisons.

We have a special introductory offer. If you buy 50 workbooks at the regular price of \$5.95 each—total \$297.50—the three video tapes will be included free. To order or for an information brochure contact Paraclete Press, Box 1568, Orleans, MA 02653. Phone: 1-800-451-5006.

