

Poor Play More

by John Yeats

Immediately following . . . Oklahoma Baptists' state convention, Walter Mullican led Oklahoma City, Portland Avenue members to unanimously adopt the convention's anti-lottery resolution as a statement of their church's convictions. The church overwhelmingly understands that faithful followers of the Lord Jesus do not want to be involved with gambling and detest the attempt to expand gambling operations in Oklahoma. Three cheers for the Oklahoma City congregation.

For centuries,

Bible believers, including Baptists, have understood the biblical teaching that gambling is a sin, and especially a sin against our neighbors and friends. Since it was sin back when, who changed the criteria to make it a non-sin today?

"I know a Baptist deacon . . .

who gambles," said one commentator. Well, duh! I know of deacons and other church leaders who rebel against the clear teachings of God's word, but their behavior doesn't erase the reality of their sin. The fact that there are a bunch of Baptists in our prisons doesn't mean we should promote their behavior as acceptable. There are consequences to pay for rebellion, and they aren't pretty. A follower of Christ has within him/her a thirst for what is right, and gambling is not on that list. Consult Philippians 4:8 *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things."*

One of the big consequences . . .

of gambling is that people who have the least resources play the most and consequently become greater burdens to the society. Everyone needs a little help every once in a while, but it is very hard to be a witness of Christ's provision when you are perpetually on the government dole. Further-more, gaming promoters target people with lower incomes, lower intelligence and lower standards. They play people for fools, making them think they will become rich with the next \$1 lottery ticket.

A Chicago pastor heard the . . .

rumblings regarding expanded gambling in Oklahoma and sent the *Baptist Messenger* some very interesting information. Illinois already has state-sponsored lotteries, pari-mutuel track betting and riverboat casinos, and guess what? They also are scrambling for revenues for the Illinois educational system. Isn't education funding the primary pitch the gaming promoters use to justify the state establishing a "voluntary tax" via a lottery? Isn't that the same deceptive technique they used to introduce other forms of gambling in Okla-homa? The gambling lobby will never be satisfied until Okla-homa's laws look very similar to Nevada's gaming laws.

A certain gubernatorial . . .

candidate stated that the problem with some state programs including public education is more a management issue than a shortage of funds. There are very few voices in the government with the courage to propose significant reform. You see, elected officials find it easier to throw money at a problem via new revenue streams, especially those proposed by gambling syndicate lobbyists, than to make hard choices that may not sit well with some of their constituency.

Investigative reporter . . .

Leah Samuel of *The Chicago Reporter* wrote a series of articles demonstrating how "The Poor Play More" in Illinois. For example, the South Chicago ZIP code 60619, one of the poorest areas in the state, spent \$23 million on lottery tickets thus far in 2002. This area spent more on lottery tickets than any other ZIP code in the state. While this same area had a 14 percent unemployment rate, statistical data calculate that every adult in the area bought \$418 in lottery tickets last year.

Paul Street of the Chicago . . .

Urban League said, "Lotteries are in essence a form of regressive taxation that distributes wealth and resources away from those who can least afford to pay. Lotteries especially extract wealth from communities of color, and most particularly, from African Americans."

Marty Oberman,

a Chicago alderman, summed it up best, "It (the lottery) was basically a way to get money for the state without taxing those who were better off. Of course, the school funding thing was only a ruse."

The secular media will . . .

have difficulty sorting through the facts on the gambling issue because they stand to gain huge profits from advertising dollars. You will find helpful articles in the *Baptist Messenger*. Being informed is important. More importantly, be a person of conviction and courage. Refuse to bow down to the lottery lies. Gambling hurts people, families and Oklahoma's future.

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Originally published in the January 9th, 2003 issue of the Baptist Messenger.