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FACE THE NATION

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**GUESTS: MITT ROMNEY (R-MA)
2008 Presidential Candidate**

MODERATOR/PANELIST: Bob Schieffer – CBS News

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**FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, an exclusive interview with Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney. The former Massachusetts governor has spent millions of dollars, including his own, on political ads in the early primary states of Iowa and New Hampshire to boost his standing in the race to the Republican nomination. But he continues to face questions about his changes of position on a number of issues, including abortion, and about his Mormon faith. We'll talk about all of that with the candidate in an exclusive interview.

Then I'll have a final word on what part should a candidate's religion play in politics.

But first, Governor Romney on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now, from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again.

Surveys show that nearly one American in five is a white evangelical Christian and almost 60 percent of those are Republicans. So when a conservative evangelical group gathered here this weekend, Republican presidential candidates trooped in, hoping to win the group's straw poll. Rudy Giuliani stressed his belief in God. Fred Thompson promised his first act as president would be to pray for guidance. John McCain talked about being a prisoner of war in Vietnam. And former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, who is also a Baptist minister, stressed values over politics.

But it was former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, a Mormon, who narrowly edged Huckabee to win the straw poll. Romney's people called it a big boost. And for sure it was a surprise because many evangelicals have raised questions about the Mormon doctrines. We caught up with Romney at the conference, and in his most candid interview yet on his faith, he talked about that and much more.

Governor, thank you for joining us. You've come to Washington to try and win the votes of these conservative Christian evangelicals. In light of that, is it fair to ask you about your faith? I mean, I'm wondering how much about his faith do you think a candidate is obligated to share with voters?

Former Governor MITT ROMNEY (Republican, Massachusetts; 2008 Presidential Candidate): Oh, you can ask anything you like. I don't--I don't feel bad at all about people asking me about my faith. I think it's natural. Most people don't know very much about it, and so, if they want to ask questions, I'm happy to respond. If they have questions about the doctrines of my church, I typically direct them to the church because they could probably do a better job explaining than I can. But in terms of my values, what I think about the future of the country, how my faith impacts my thoughts about important issues, then I'm, of course, open to all those topics.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just, for example, rightly or wrongly, a Newsweek poll says that 28 percent of the people they polled said they would not vote for a Mormon. I know your staff has said that's irrelevant because they should be asking if they'd vote for you. But do you feel

compelled to explain your religion or your relationship to it? Or is that something that ought to be out of bounds?

Mr. ROMNEY: No, no. I'm happy to have people ask questions. That doesn't bother me. And I think the reason that some 28, 29 percent are not comfortable voting for a Mormon is they think they're voting for Harry Reid. But that's not the case. I think as people say, 'Would you vote for Mitt Romney?' and they get to know me and my wife and my family, they realize that our values are as American as any values you'll find in the country, and they're comfortable with us. They'll be--of course there'll be some who don't come on board. But, by and large, people will make their decision not based on where you go to church, but instead based upon your values, your vision for the country, and your ability to actually help the country in a time of great need.

SCHIEFFER: Well, will you ever make a speech like Jack Kennedy did back in 1960 when Catholicism was an issue for a lot of people? Would you ever make a speech outlining how you feel about your religion and the part it plays in your life, or...

Mr. ROMNEY: Well, I sort of get a chance almost every day to add one or two things to that--to that speech. I probably could never do something that would compare to what John F. Kennedy did. His was a masterpiece in American political history. But maybe there's a time when I talk mostly about religion. Although, I don't know, at this stage I'm getting good support across the country, people want to know a bit--a bit about my faith. They learn a bit about it, and they'll say, 'OK, that's fine, now what do you think about the jihad? What do you think about being competitive with China? How can you fix your schools? What're you going to do about health care?' And those issues overtake any differences with regards to religion they might see. But maybe down the road there'll be a speech. Just haven't made a final decision on that.

SCHIEFFER: Well, I would just think, for example, of, you know, there are many different people who call themselves Christian. I consider myself a Christian, but I don't necessarily believe or take every line in the Bible literally. Other Christians do. Do you take literally the teachings of your church?

Mr. ROMNEY: I do. I'm not going to try and distance myself in any way, shape or form from my faith. It was the faith of my fathers and my sons, long tradition in my--in my family. I'm, as I say, true blue through and through. And so I accept the teachings of our church, and I do my best to live by those teachings. It hasn't made me perfect, far from that. But I'm probably a better person than I would've been, and my kids are better than they would've been without faith. And, you know, I don't try and be critical of other people's faiths. Actually, I'm of the view that religious individuals have an enormous advantage in stability in their life, and I respect the works that's being done by ministers of all faiths. I think it draws people closer to God and makes us better people.

SCHIEFFER: Well, I remember during one of the Republican debates, people were asked, the various candidates, did they believe in evolution. And I believe you said that you did.

Mr. ROMNEY: Yeah, I do. Yeah, it's very consistent with me to believe that there is a God and a creator, but that he might use the tools of science--as we're learning them--to help create the human body. Now, I don't think he created the human spirit or soul that way, but--I think that's something that comes from God--but how he created our body is something which I think science

will help to find, and I don't--I don't argue with science. I believe there's no conflict between true religion and true science. And we've got a lot to learn. There's so much we don't know, probably both on the scientific front as well as on the front of theology.

SCHIEFFER: I'm told that the Mormons teach that the Garden of Eden was in Missouri. Is that correct?

Mr. ROMNEY: You know, they're probably the right folks to give you the answers to questions related to a bunch of Mormon teachings. So I'll probably let them respond to questions about specific doctrines. But what I can tell you is that the values of my faith are founded on Judeo-Christian principles, and the--and the same kind of philosophy that's associated with other Christian faiths, the Jewish faith and others is very much consistent with ours--the view that there is a God that created us, that all the children on earth are of the same, if you will, divine origin, that the loss of one life anywhere is the loss of a fellow son or daughter of God, that liberty is a gift of God. These fundamental principles are the same faith to faith.

SCHIEFFER: Bob Jones, who heads Bob Jones University down in South Carolina, recently endorsed you. And he said this week that he is completely opposed to the doctrines of Mormonism, but he said he preferred your erroneous faith to Hillary Rodham Clinton's lack of religion.

Mr. ROMNEY: Isn't that a great line?

SCHIEFFER: Do you accept that endorsement?

Mr. ROMNEY: Oh, I'm happy to receive endorsements from individuals, and, of course, we have different faiths. I'm not expecting him to endorse my faith. I'm not asking anyone to do that. I'm asking him to look at me as an American and judge my values, learn about me and my family, my character, and decide whether I could help America at a critical time. And I'm pleased that you have a evangelical Christian leader who says, 'Look, Mitt Romney's a guy who is a social conservative, an economic conservative, a foreign policy conservative.' Those three branches, if you will, of conservatism have to be united if we're going to win the White House. And so his endorsement is good news to me. but I don't endorse--or excuse me, I don't expect him to endorse my religion.

SCHIEFFER: Why do you think that a lot of evangelical Christians do have a problem with you and with your religion?

Mr. ROMNEY: Well, you know, religions are different, and in some respects we have--our faith has a different take on various religious issues than do other faiths. And so in the competition, if you will, of religion and what's a true doctrine and what's not, there'll be a lot of contrast between the different faiths of the world. But when it comes to the values of our faith--I was with Jerry Falwell before he passed away, and he said, 'Look, when we were fighting to stop gay marriage,' he said, 'I got together with the Mormons in California and the leadership of your church, and we fought to try to stop gay marriage because, on a value basis, we come from the same place.' And I think that's going to be true for people who take a good look at me. They're not going to accept my religion, necessarily, but they will certainly see me as someone who can be one of those who could carry the standard of conservatives for social--major social issues.

SCHIEFFER: Would you just--I think back to the speech that Kennedy made, and people were worried about that somehow or another he might take orders from the pope.

Mr. ROMNEY: Oh.

SCHIEFFER: How would you describe your relationship to the church and how you would see the responsibilities and duties of the president?

Mr. ROMNEY: Well, no president could possibly take orders or even input from a religious leader telling him what to do. I mean, OK, I guess you can always listen to ideas. But you certainly wouldn't be guided by someone outside the constitutional circle, if you will. And I subscribe to something Abraham Lincoln spoke about when he was a young man. He said, 'You take the oath of office, and you subscribe to America's political religion.' And that is you take the oath of office and the rule of law as your primary promise to God. And that's the way I feel. My church wouldn't endeavor to tell me what to do on an issue, and I wouldn't listen to them on an issue that related to our nation. If I'm president to the United States and put my hand on the Bible, I do what the Constitution tells me, what the rule of law tells me. I certainly don't do what a leader of my church or any other tells me to do.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, we'll talk some more about this and some other things in just a minute.

Mr. ROMNEY: Thanks, Bob.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with Republican presidential candidate Governor Mitt Romney.

Governor, in your speech to these evangelicals, you said you were a convert to the pro-life cause. In fact, you did once believe in protecting a woman's right to choose. You've been very candid about saying that's how you felt. But you said that your thinking on that has evolved. But last week on FACE THE NATION, Senator McCain said it's not just your change of position on abortion. Here's what he said.

Senator JOHN McCAIN: It's not just the abortion issue, although he certainly was passionate in his advocacy for being pro-choice, but it's not--I mean, look at literally every major issue, whether it be immigration reform or taxes or immigration or any other issue, there has been changes in his position, and perhaps all of those are evolved. But I think that that brings to mind the question isn't consistency on fundamental issues an important factor in this race? And I don't think that consistency has been there.

SCHIEFFER: What is your response to that, Governor?

Mr. ROMNEY: Well, I respect Senator McCain, but we have a different view in that regard. And, obviously my, position did change with regards to life. But on other issues my positions have been very consistent with my principles and my views. On something like immigration, I

feel very strongly that we should protect our borders and that amnesty is not the right way to go. Senator McCain has a different view in that regard. You know, I'm happy to go through issue by issue and talk about my views and my principles on those issues, but I note that as I look at the other candidates who are running for president, over time they look at specific areas and say, "Gosh, I was wrong on this. That needs to be adjusted," Senator McCain among them. He's changed his views relating to immigration in certain ways. He's changed his views on Roe v. Wade. He's changed his view--he's voted against the Bush tax cuts, now he's in favor of them.

SCHIEFFER: When did he change his position on Roe v. Wade? He's always been pro-life, has he not?

Mr. ROMNEY: No, he actually said that--he said that he was in favor of it not being overturned, and now he says he thinks it should be overturned. He was on one side of ethanol and now the other, and that's fine. He's a fine person and over time he's said, 'Gosh, there's--you know, an adjustment.' But his principles have remained the same, and I just happen to disagree with him. I think we're different places on something like immigration.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just ask you about immigration...

Mr. ROMNEY: Sure. Right, mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: ...since you brought it up. I see a quote from the Lowell Sun in, well, the last year. And it says, talking about illegal immigrants, "Those who are here paying taxes and not taking government benefits should begin a process toward applications for citizenship." Now you're quoted as saying, "One simple rule, no amnesty."

Mr. ROMNEY: Yeah. And my view is exactly that, which is the people who have come here illegally, should be able to apply for citizenship or permanent residency, just like everybody else around the world that wants to come here. But there should be no special deal, no amnesty deal saying that all those that are here illegally get to stay. And that's the place where I differ from Senator McCain, the bill that he brought forward in the Senate and that many other Republicans supported was one that said "All illegal immigrants not only get to apply to stay, but they all get to stay permanently," and that's a mistake.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me ask you about this. The National Rifle Association, you once said, "We do have tough gun laws in Massachusetts, I support them, I won't chip away at them. I believe they protect us." Now you say you are a gun owner. You have joined the National Rifle Association, after saying at one point, "I don't line up with the National Rifle Association." Why would you join that group?

Mr. ROMNEY: Well, I had their endorsement when I ran for governor. I support the NRA. I support Second Amendment rights, but I don't line up 100 percent with the NRA. They take some positions that are different than mine. But my positions are the same as my positions have been with regards to guns for a long, long time, and that is that I respect the right of people to bear arms, and whether that's for hunting or personal protection. I sought the support of the NRA when I ran for governor, and I got it. I'd like to have their support now. So there will be an effort on the part of people who run against me to try and look for any quote to see in any obscure place

that might look like it's different than what I've said more recently. But, you know, you can go back and look at my record as governor.

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Mr. ROMNEY: I was governor--I was governor for four years. And you can see what I did, what I fought for, and those are the postures and the positions that I'm fighting for as a--as a presidential candidate.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let's talk about gay rights. In your Senate race, you told a gay Republican group that you would be a stronger advocate for gays and their rights than your opponent, who was Ted Kennedy. Now you emphasize your opposition to gay marriage and civil unions.

Mr. ROMNEY: Well, actually, you see, you got to--you got to complete this, Bob, you got to put the whole thing together, all right? I also told gays in 1994 that I opposed gay marriage and civil union because gay rights didn't include--at that time people weren't talking about gay marriage and civil union. So I've always opposed gay marriage. But at the same time I don't discriminate against people.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you...

Mr. ROMNEY: I don't--I don't discriminate against gay people, and I believe that gay people are entitled--entitled, rather, to have civil rights and not be discriminated against, and that's not something that I would oppose. But I do believe that marriage should be between a man and a woman, and I've always felt that way. And I've been a strong advocate for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman. And, you know, others that I'm running against, I think, have the other--next three leading candidates, all of them oppose that position.

SCHIEFFER: We'll be back with more of our conversation with Mitt Romney in just a moment.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you about a statement you made last week that caught the attention of a lot of Republicans, including Senator McCain, when you said, 'I'm the real Republican in this race.' I remember back when you were quoted as saying, 'I was an independent during the Reagan-Bush days.' That was when you voted for Paul Tsongas, who was a Democratic candidate for president. And you say in those days...

Mr. ROMNEY: Bob, Bob, we've got to fix some of those things.

SCHIEFFER: You said in those days, 'I'm not trying to return to Reagan-Bush.' Now, you're proclaiming yourself the real Republican. You believe--you're quoted as saying you believe the party's ascendancy began with Ronald Reagan's vision, and you're saying you won't beat Hillary Rodham Clinton acting like Hillary Clinton.

Mr. ROMNEY: Absolutely. Where do you want to start?

SCHIEFFER: Well, I mean, this is not like a change in position, it's like a change in philosophy, it seems to me.

Mr. ROMNEY: That's not--that's not true at all. And I--there's no question that the older I get, the smarter--the smarter Ronald Reagan gets. But also, I never voted for Paul Tsongas in a general election. I voted for a Republican every time there was a Republican on the ballot. So some of these things are...

SCHIEFFER: But you voted for him in a primary.

Mr. ROMNEY: Yeah. I voted in the Democratic primary, as a lot of Republicans in Massachusetts do, because when there's no contest of significance on the Republican side, when you register as an independent, you can vote in the Democratic primary and vote against Bill Clinton. I used to vote against Ted Kennedy, all right? So that's something that you get to do. But I--look, I was a Republican through and through. My dad ran for president. I was in the Republican Club when I was in college. I'm a Republican, always have been. Now, I also...

SCHIEFFER: But why do...

Mr. ROMNEY: Well...

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just interrupt you.

Mr. ROMNEY: No, let me...

SCHIEFFER: Why did you say...

Mr. ROMNEY: Let me--can I--can I...

SCHIEFFER: ...`I am not trying to return to Reagan-Bush'?

Mr. ROMNEY: Well, when I was running in '94 I wasn't trying to return to Reagan-Bush because that was characterized as a very different posture than what I was running for. I was talking about my own vision. I wasn't trying to be a copy of anybody else. I was trying to say what I wanted to do and lay out my position. I wanted the death penalty reinstated. I wanted to make sure that our welfare programs were reformed. I wanted to get tough on crime. So I had my own posture. And Senator Kennedy in the debate was saying, `Oh, you're just turning yourself into Reagan-Bush.' I said, `No, I'm my own person.' So my views go back a long time. I come from a Republican family. And also, you know, the idea that I'm the only real Republican, I'm not the only real Republican. John McCain's a real Republican. So is Rudy Giuliani. There are a lot of real Republicans. I'm not the only one, but I'm one. And I believe in the principles of my party and believe that the only way that we're going to take the White House is not by acting like Hillary Clinton, but by holding true to the principles of our party, which is a coalition of social, economic and foreign policy conservatives. And you know, being a Republican in Massachusetts, the most liberal state in America, that takes some--that takes some backbone, and that's what I've done.

SCHIEFFER: So who is the Republican who's acting like Hillary Rodham Clinton?

Mr. ROMNEY: I'm going to let other people figure that out, but that's the wrong way to go. We don't want to turn left as a party. We want to adhere to our principles. I think amnesty in immigration is the wrong way to go. I think fighting against the line-item veto and taking that all the way to the Supreme Court, as Mayor Giuliani did, that was the wrong way to go. So we'll talk about our differences. I think McCain-Feingold, the finance--the campaign finance bill was the wrong way to go. But these are differences on issues. It doesn't mean someone's not a real Republican. I didn't say anyone was not a real Republican. But I--but I want to--I want to bring together a coalition of Republicans that is a winning coalition. Because I think there's a view on the part of some that to win the White House we've got to turn left and act more like the Democrats. I think that's exactly wrong. I think to win the White House we've got to stay true to Republican principles and values. And I'll tell you, if you can do that in a state like Massachusetts, where I ran for governor and became governor, and held the line on taxes and balanced the book every year--books every year, and got health care in a conservative way, that's, I think, a good model for what we can do in the nation.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Governor, thank you very much.

Mr. ROMNEY: Thanks, Bob.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, when former Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 2000, he said he believed in God and would say no more about it than that. He said the rest was his business. It's a good answer, as far as I'm concerned. That is why, when I interviewed former Governor Romney, I asked how much of his faith he felt obligated to share with voters. I brought it up because polls show many Americans say they just won't vote for a Mormon. For a Mormon politician that's not a religious problem, it's a political problem. So when Romney said he was happy to be asked, I asked. I found his answers interesting. He outlined how he saw the relationship of his religion to the duties of the presidency in much the way that John Kennedy explained his faith in that 1960 speech after people questioned his Catholicism. Romney didn't go as far as Kennedy, but I came away from the interview feeling I knew more about him, who he was, and that helps us to make a political, not a religious, judgment. Had he said his religion was none of my business, I would have taken that as a legitimate answer.

In America, what we choose to tell others about our faith is nobody's business but our own. Kennedy said he hoped no one would vote for or against him because he was a Catholic. Romney said about the same thing. I think they got that part exactly right.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.

