

Atheists of Florida CHAPTER MEETINGS:

MIAMI:

For time and date of the next meeting, call the Atheist Hotline at: (305) 936-0210.

TAMPA:

Saturday, November 25, 10:00 to noon at the Clearwater East Public Library, 2251 Drew Street, Meeting Room B. Program not yet set.

MANA-SOTA:

Sunday, November 26, 1:30 to 3:30, at the Marie Selby Public Library, 1001 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota.

Letters

and the Clerk of Court for their consideration. I am confident that they will consider your letter appropriately.

Sincerely,
Stephen M. Cohen

County Court Judge
cc: Judge Jack H. Cook, Chief Judge
Dorothy H. Wilken, Clerk of the Circuit Court
June 16, 1994

Dear Judge Cohen:

Thank you for your letter dated June 14, 1994. It was a pleasure and a privilege meeting you, and you are a credit to the American way of life.

You epitomize the open mindedness that unfortunately you don't see in too many of our fellow citizens today. Our Bill of Rights along with the United Nations' universal Declaration of Human Rights should be our guiding light so that humanity can face the third millennium and all of its challenges.

Sincerely yours,
John A. Xanthopoulos, Ph.D.

Forum viewer approves

Dear Friends:
I probably got the name wrong, the TV pro-

gram ran down so fast, I hope I have the address right so this get to you. I didn't even get a chance to write down the name of the station. I had been riveted to the screen, listening to what millions should be hearing to help them unshackle from the superstitions of organized religion.

I am amazed that you were able to present a television program that spoke out the truth about the incredible harm that religion does to mankind. I expected a bomb or an "accidental" short circuit at any moment. I am extremely concerned about the strides the "mainstream" fanatics of the moral majority (?) seem to be making in politics with the triumphs of the Republicans. I can almost see the book burnings.

I would like to volunteer to do something to help stem the rising tide before they bury us in prayers and protection of my morals. I am a retired bilingual advertising executive with a very successful career behind me, so I think I could be useful in some way.

Please give me names of organizations that are set up to fight back so I can see which I can join. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jose R. Solorzano
North Miami Beach

Correspondence like Mr. Solorzano's is responded to by A of F Pres. Izanetakos — Ed

8 October/November 1995

Atheists of Florida

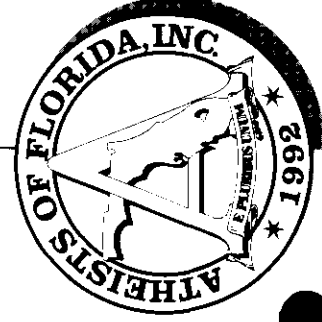


P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33681-0753

ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED

Volume IV Number 8

October / November 1995



Atheists of Florida eligible for Combined Fed Campaign Fund

MIAMI — AFTER THREE YEARS of effort, Atheists of Florida, Inc. has been accepted by the United Way of Dade County as a participant in the Fall, 1995 Combined Federal Campaign for Dade County, Florida.

The CFC is regulated by the Office of Personnel Management and is overseen by a Local Federal Coordinating Council. It is the only authorized work place fund-raising campaign for federal civilian, military and postal personnel in the country. Personnel are encouraged to give through payroll deduction. Each potential donor is asked to review the listing of eligible charitable organizations, and is encouraged to designate his/her gift to the specific charities of choice.

Over 1,500 charitable organizations worldwide participate in the Combined Federal Campaigns. Local organizations applying for inclusion are reviewed by the local LFCC. Last year, A of F applied but was denied on a technicality—we did not produce an annual report on our organization. This year we produced an annual report and distributed it to all board members of A of F.

With all elements of the application fulfilled, we were again denied inclusion. Upon receipt of the rejection, A of F president Christos Izanetakos immediately contacted the OPM demanding an explanation. Unable to

explain that our rejection was based solely on the fact that we were being discriminated against on the basis that we are an atheist organization, they had to reverse their decision and accept us.

We will now be listed in the brochure which is distributed to potential donors; our listing reads:

4203 Atheists of Florida, Inc.
305-936-0210 Dedicated to freedom of thought and expression, and to the mandate of the first amendment for complete separation of State and Church.

LAST YEAR, A of F had the pleasure to be invited to attend the Annual Humanist of Florida Convention held in Clearwater. Participants included our vice president, Ed Golly, several of our board members and a score of atheists who are members of both our organization and the Humanists of Florida.

The convention was a great success and our organization was honored with the allocation of a time slot for an A of F presentation utilized in the form of a *Jeopardy* satire performed by Golly, Brent Yaciw, Ed Corf and Nan Owens. At the close of the convention, the board of The Humanists of Florida passed a motion to network and cooperate with several like-minded groups. Atheists of Florida, Inc. placed on the top of the list.

This year we were again invited to their Annual Convention scheduled for Feb. 24th and 25th (Sat. & Sun.), to be held in Clearwater. Two speakers will represent our organization at the event which I strongly recommend and encourage all our members to attend.

The program and other details will be published as soon as they become available. **A**

A HISTORICAL FIRST took place in the *St. Petersburg Times* recently: a religion writer wrote a column espousing the atheist viewpoint without mentioning atheism, and even cleverly disguising it so that it appeared to have nothing at all to do with religion!

Okay, some details first. Mike Wilson wrote a column which attacked the tobacco companies' recent efforts to capitalize on a network over accusations that the companies were "spiking" their cigarettes with more nicotine in order to hook people, an allegation that wasn't backed up with proof.

CYRILUS OF THERMOPYLAE VACILLI



"An Atheist in Sheep's Clothing?"

The tobaccoists are running full-page ads, headlined "Apology Accepted," that imply in the smaller print that all attacks on them are equally unjustified, and that the attackers who accepted the TV reports were unjustified in using them against the tobacco companies. Wilson's column reminded us that even without spiking, tobacco is poison, and the companies are hardly innocents

allowed it to become a reality in the first place. Not everyone who gets involved in religion will become a Charles Manson or Adolf Hitler, but there's no denying that theology played a huge part in creating them. Not every member of the clergy will molest children or commit sexual improprieties with parishioners, but there is enough abuse by those "holy men" in authority positions that their beliefs must be questioned as a cause.

Now I must note that Wilson might be as unaware of this interpretation as I was when I first read the column. It didn't hit me until after I sent the newspaper out in the recycling bin, and perhaps it never occurred to him at all. Academics accept that there are many cases where the writer is unaware of the complex levels of content, or potential interpretations, of everything written. Most of us have experienced the accidental pun or double-entendre that just slipped out before we were aware of it; the same applies to writing in a more delayed sense.



However, I'd like to give Wilson the benefit of the doubt. I know nothing about his religious beliefs, or lack thereof, nor have I seen any previous evidence that he agrees with us on the subject. Call it wishful thinking, but it would be nice to have a religion writer who wrote objectively about religion's faults in a general publication, and it would also be nice to think that Wilson has learned from his contact with religion that despite the claim by most religions to have "the way, the truth, and the secret formula for Kentucky Fried Chicken," none of them really know anything for sure, and the pretense of knowledge harms every one of us.

Regardless of Wilson's position, the truth of his words remains: we must never lose sight of the essential "poison" nature of religion. No apology, either for actions past or

being unfairly characterized. They aren't guilty of this particular accusation, but that hardly excuses the basic nature of the product they push.

Some of you are perhaps getting a glimmer of where this is heading. In the past year, a number of religious groups have offered apologies for their past behavior; others have apologized for or condemned the behavior of particular members, but denied culpability; and in some cases the recanting of witness testimony has caused the church to imply that nothing wrong really occurs at all, it is all just the unreliable memories of witnesses (I call this the Packwood Syndrome).

Wilson's column is a reminder to us all that this is merely public relations. The basic reality of religion remains the same: it poisons thinking. Sure, not every religionist would support slavery, but the theology of religion, with its concept of a divine hierarchy, is what

"defunding the left," and English as the official language of the United States.

"You're no Jack Kennedy..."

FT. LAUDERDALE — In March, Rev. D. James Kennedy of the Coral Ridge Ministries announced at his "Reclaiming America for Christ" conference the upcoming establishment of a Center for Christian Statesmanship in Washington, D.C.—capping his drive to be a national political force. May brought a special fundraising appeal describing how "Now, The Biblical Perspective Will Never Be More Than 3 Minutes Away From The Capitol." (A follow-up mailing announced a \$200,000 challenge gift and the aim to open the Center by the end of the summer.)

Rev. Kennedy wrote of this "particularly crucial Hour for America" and need to "seize this God-given" and "historic" opportunity to establish this "ministry command center." He emphasized that: "Thanks to the generous giving of friends like you last year, our new office will be linked via satellite and/or other fiber optics to our studio in Florida. Through this state-of-the-art technology, we have the ear of millions of Americans. In Washington, this translates into real influence."

He stated that: "In fact, leaders of several other major ministries—including the Chris-

tian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, and Family Research Council—have encouraged me to establish the Washington office. They recognize that we bring the crucial biblical perspective to major political issues—theological insights into divisive issues like homosexuality and abortion."

Furthermore: "Our Washington center will not be simply a hub for civic involvement. From this launching pad, we will conduct evangelism—one of the most desperately needed activities in Washington! We will share Christ with people in need. This will be the highest calling of our Center for Christian Statesmanship."

The Center "will work to achieve the goals of our Family Values Contract—opposing special privileges for homosexuals, taxpayer-funded abortions and pornography, condom distribution in the schools, and the so-called 'separation of church and state'...and supporting moral school curricula, school prayer, respect for the flag, and our Christian heritage." And the newly-established satellite and fiber optics "will keep America informed of what is really going on in Washington—not just what the left-leaning secular media want you to know."

In sum: "We must be active, we must be aggressive, we must keep the pressure on Washington!...My friend, I can assure you of this: because of our presence on Capitol Hill, America will feel the difference...We will RECLAIM AMERICA FOR CHRIST!"

It pays to write

Atheists of Florida Board Member John Xanthopoulos, Ph.D. was summoned for jury duty last year. The oath gave him the kind of problem all atheists face. He did not just walk away from it. The following letters speak for themselves:



Stephen M. Cohen
County Court Judge
County Courthouse
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Dear Judge Cohen,

Thank you for your letter dated June 6th, 1994. It was very much appreciated. I agree with you, that trial by jury is a fundamental right in our criminal justice system.

When I was a juror in your courtroom not

long ago, my fellow jurors and I were required to take an oath that ended with the phrase "so help me god". I and I am sure plenty of our fellow citizens object swearing allegiance to what I believe it to be at best fiction, in order to establish my (our) truthfulness and sincerity.

Please consider an alternative method, so that future jurors will not feel as uncomfortable as I did during the pre-trial procedures.

Thanking you, I remain,

John A. Xanthopoulos, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Teacher Education
Florida Atlantic University

June 14, 1994

Dear Mr. Xanthopoulos:

I am in receipt of your letter dated June 9, 1994.

Your comments concerning the substantive nature of the oath described is both of interest and concern to me. I have considered the issue and, in fact, delete the provision "so help you G-d" whenever I administer an oath to anyone.

By copy of this letter, as cover, I am forwarding a copy of your to both the Chief Judge

(continued)

Atheists of Florida

Published eight times a year by Atheists of Florida, Inc., a non-profit organization designed to heighten public awareness about atheism and to provide intellectually stimulating contacts for the membership.

Membership dues and general correspondence should be sent to:
Atheists of Florida
Main Dept. 39155-0102
Miami, FL 33155-0102
Contact phone is (305) 996-0210

Annual dues are prorated:
Sustaining \$50.00 \$15.00
Couple 40.00 25.00
Individual 30.00 20.00
Student (under 25 yrs.) 10.00 10.00
Send newsletter correspondence to:
Tampa Bay Chapter
P.O. Box 130753
Tampa, FL 33661-0753
Atheist FL E @AOL.COM

The A of F newsletter is provided free to our members as a medium of exchange. Letters from members are published on a space-available basis. Articles may be edited for clarity or length.

Atheists of Florida, Inc. is affiliated with the national Atheist Alliance for purposes of information exchange.

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Sweetwater wants school prayer

To hell with the constitution

MIAMI -- Resolution Number 2314 of the Mayor and Council of the City of Sweetwater, Florida is a plea for prayer in the public schools of not only that community, but also the entire Dade County public school system.

It's truly amazing that people can attain positions in government with a total lack of understanding of our constitution and the rights afforded by it.

The resolution supports prayer in the public schools and urges county, state and federal governments to "allow children to express their religious beliefs in school without fear of reprisals, censorship or punishment."

They also asked the Dade County School Board to implement a policy allowing prayer in the schools.

All of which is now permitted.

An item in the *Miami Herald* quoted Betsy Kaplan, School Board chairwoman responding with, "We do have a moment of silence in schools. Always have."

But Sweetwater Council President Cecilia Holtz-Alonso is not satisfied. She wants it forced down everyone's throat, maintaining that "religion plays a vital part in molding character and instilling values in the children of our society." She wants a formal prayer, and even suggested its wording:

"Dear God, we want this day to give us some understanding, love and peace among us. Let us go on with life and be happy and not let us do anything we're not supposed to." (The usual shirking of responsibility for one's actions.)

Resolutions have no effect. In this case, it only serves to show that the Sweetwater Council has no respect for the constitution and urges all government agencies to do likewise in the interest of promoting their religious coercion.

Holtz-Alonso thinks prayer... "will help the gang situation."

Wise up, Alonso--placebos never work!

Report on CNP meeting

Approximately 375 members of the secretive Council for National Policy (CNP) held closed-door meetings at the Ritz-Carlton Tysons Corner hotel in McLean, Virginia on May 12 and 13, 1995. Founded in 1981, the CNP membership is a virtual who's who of the

religious and political right-wing in the United States.

The meetings are so secretive that the press is not allowed, and no public announcements of the meetings are ever made. Plainclothes security guards carefully watch who comes and goes at the hotels where the meetings are held.

The CNP is a networking vehicle for right-wing leadership. CNP meetings enable members to become acquainted with one another, speak freely, and to plan short- and long-term strategies.

At each meeting, CNP Action Inc. sponsors standing committee workshops, which provide a vehicle for members to work together to influence crucial public policy decisions. According to a CNP memo, at these workshops members "formulate strategies and execute plans to make a difference on the issues where we can have a real impact." The six permanent standing committees are:

- Family, co-chaired by Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family and Phyllis Schlafly of Eagle Forum.
- Law and justice, co-chaired by former Attorney General Edwin Meese III and former Texas Court of Appeals Judge Paul Pressler.
- Economics, co-chaired by former Office of Management and Budget director Jim Miller and Reed Larson of the National Right to Work Committee.
- Defense and foreign policy, co-chaired by Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) and Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus.
- Institutional reform, co-chaired by former California state senator H.L. Richardson and direct mail expert Richard Viguerie.
- Environment, chaired by former Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Energy Don Hodel.

At the May meeting, CNP members discussed impeachment strategies regarding presidential appointments. It was pointed out that any presidential appointee can be impeached, and that the process is quite easy. Though not mentioned specifically, it may be that they had President Clinton's nominee for Surgeon General, Dr. Henry Foster, in mind during this discussion.

Dr. James Dobson led a workshop called "Abortion and the Republican Party," and spoke about "the attitude of Haley Barbour." This past spring, Dobson sent a letter to Barbour, the head of the Republican National Committee (RNC), saying, "If the RNC abandons its clear pro-life position, then you leave us and millions like us with no recourse but to consider a third party candidate for president in 1996."

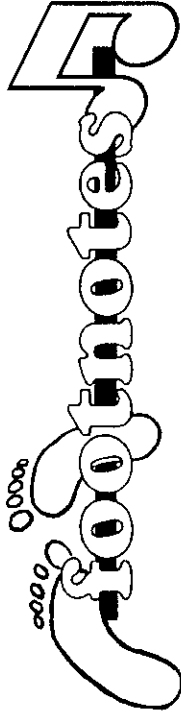
The CNP's last conference was held in February in Palm Springs, California. Discussions included capital punishment, school prayer,

present or for contradictions and errors in the Holy Bible, can alter that. No "revised version" that uses more politically-correct language, or removes/changes the sexist, racist, and homophobic language found in the King James version, can alter the basic irrationality of faith-based thinking. No "new translation" that attempts to disguise the hundreds of errors and contradictions can alter the history of bloodshed and atrocity that flows from religion like pus from an open wound; that wound is still unhealed, and can never heal until the infection is cured.

Scholarship Fund

Our scholarship fund has received a letter of determination from IRS granting us status under Section 509(a)(1) as described in section 501(c)(3).

A of F member Mike Perdomo is willing to donate \$300.00 towards the purchase of a



copy machine. The Board of Directors of the Scholarship Fund will consider such a purchase. If we can locate a good new or reconditioned machine which can accommodate the printing of our newsletter and our publications, it should be a good investment for our organization.

Charles Ross, our Treasurer and one of the five elected Trustees of the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, Inc., has donated \$500.00 to Atheists of Florida for our general needs and \$1,000.00 to the Mark Twain Scholarship Fund, Inc. In addition, Mr. Ross has pledged another \$1,000.00 matching funds.

MARK ANDREW TROP
Attorney at Law

Shoreview Bldg., Ste. 201
9999 N.E. 2nd Ave.
(305) 759-5727 Miami Shores, FL 33138

We cannot cure society of religion by force. Even if that were desirable, you cannot heal the damage of a wound by enlarging it: the history of force in the service of religion proves the folly of that approach. Nor is force a practical solution for a segment of society that is outnumbered and outfunded. Our only hope is constantly exposing people to our message, constantly planting seeds of rational doubt and hoping they will grow the scar tissue needed to close the the gaping hole in the mind that religion produces.

Save the world: plant a seed today. **A**

The MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, INC. and ATHEISTS OF FLORIDA, INC. are expressing their gratitude and thanks for his generosity.

The CHARLES A. ROSS \$1,000 Scholarship Matching Fund Drive

MATCHING DONOR	AMOUNT	MATCHING BALANCE
CELIA GLANTZ	10.00	990.00

Notice: If you wish to become a matching donor, please send you check to:

MARK TWAIN SCHOLARSHIP FUND, INC
P O BOX 530102
MIAMI FL 33153-0102

Your contribution is totally tax exempt.

Although the Forum production is complete for this year, it remains an expensive proposition. Our dues for the year are not renewed until January and we are running tight to finish out 1995. Besides the Miami-Dade County area, the Forums are shown in Tampa, St. Augustine, Wisconsin, and are about to begin broadcasting in Salem, Oregon. Shipping and duplication requires time and money--we'll make the time; can you help with some money? Thanks!

The Tampa Bay Chapter held its annual officer elections at its September meeting. Results are: Ed Golly elected Director and Patrick Welsh elected Assistant Director. Here comes another year!

Re: "Religious Equality Act"

There's no voter named "God" listed on the voter registration rolls in Florida. No one named "God" is listed as an official resident of Florida. Hence, "God" cannot vote and is not even a constituent of any Florida politician. Can anyone explain why Congressman Charles Canady says he's listening to "God" instead of ME? **A**

"Reeding" between the lines

Hold on to your constitution, folks. Ralph Reed is focused on one singular agenda -- theocracizing America.

Insight

—Ed Golly

AS ATHEISTS, WE ENCOUNTER SO many people who are of like mind but feel a threat to our freedoms is overblown. Of all the frightening names to emerge from the conservative movement, perhaps the most dreadful is that of Ralph Reed. A closer look at Reed and the Christian Coalition, the organization he heads, may give cause for serious concern.

Now focusing on its "Contract with the American Family", the Christian Coalition is, of course, the brainchild of Pat Robertson. Eventual goal: complete domination of the Republican Party with the eventual reversal of our constitution reducing the United States to a theocracy.

In 1989, when they met for the first time at a Washington banquet, Pat Robertson told Reed about his plans for the new organization. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority was about to collapse. Robertson knew of Reed's religious conversion; Robertson's cable show, The 700 Club, had done a piece on it. He also knew Reed's reputation as a conservative organizer. Reed wrote a memorandum on how the new group should be run. Nine months later, he was putting that prospectus into practice as Christian Coalition's executive director. Reed emerged as the movement's fresh face, the choirboy to the rescue, a born-again Christian with a fine sense of the secular mechanics of American politics.

His message, emphasizing such broadly appealing themes as support for tax cuts, has helped make the Christian Coalition one of the most powerful grassroots organizations in American politics. With 16 million active supporters and an annual budget of \$25 million, CC holds a virtual veto on the Republican nominee for President, and will exert an extraordinary influence over who will

occupy the Oval Office beginning in 1997.

A backfired beginning

The defeat of George Bush in '92 dealt the religious right a blow. Robertson and Reed had assumed early on that Bush would narrowly edge out Clinton. Thus, although they had little affection for Bush, they helped check the movement of social conservatives toward Pat Buchanan. Their expectation was that Christian Coalition would get credit, and legitimacy, for securing the critical margin of support. In exchange, Bush's handlers accepted many of Reed's choices for delegates to the convention and allowed the religious right to pack the platform committee. The upshot: Bush seemed a prisoner of his party's extreme right, and the conservatives took a mostly bum rap for Bush's defeat.

At the local level, Christian Coalition had pursued a combative strategy. It sought to take over (i.e., P. committees, ousting complacent regulars indifferent to the coalition's Bible-based agenda. In some intraparty contests, as well as races for public offices, the coalition's candidates kept quiet about their affiliation. Close to Election Day, bursts of church-centered politicking showed what was going on. Reed made the mistake of bragging in a few interviews about what became known as "stealth tactics," talking up the political benefits of guerrilla methods. "You don't know it's over until you're in the body bag." That inflammatory language made its way into data bases, to be recycled frequently.

For mainstream Republicans seeking to put the Evangelicals back in their pews—from which they would supply votes but not leadership—the religious right's image as sinister, frigid and exclusionary was excellent material. The same applied to liberal opponents like People for the American Way, which monitors the religious right and scores points from its every excess.

The beginning of the end

Ralph Reed Jr. was hatched in 1961, son of a Navy physician from Portsmouth, Virginia—a few blocks away from Pat Robertson's first broadcast studio. He attributes his political adaptability to his upbringing. Upon entering high school in Foccoa, VA, it was the seventh town that the family had called home. Asked what her son always aspired to be, his mother once responded, "In charge." An avid Republican through his college years, he ran school campaigns and gained a reputation as a player of dirty tricks. Eventually landing a weekly column in the University of Georgia college newspaper, he advocated hawkish positions. He resigned from the paper after a reader charged him with plagiarism. A heavy smoker,

What they are saying:

Ramon Mestre, Miami Herald:

"Using the deceptively moderate Contract With the American Family as a reliable guide to the Christian Coalition's doctrines and long-term objectives is as foolish as using the Bolshevik Party's ambiguous public statements in early 1917 as true indicators of what Lenin and his boys really stood for.

"What does Reed's coalition stand for? I'm not concerned here with venturing a detailed Talmudic refutation of the coalition's doctrines. Rather, I'm raising questions about those doctrines and their implications for atheists, heathens, non-Christians, and Christian heretics who live in the society that Reed aims to re-create as a *laissez-faire* theocracy. That is, *laissez-faire* for the private sector, and zealous government interference for the rest of us."

William Lacy, chief strategist for Dole's presidential bid:

"Without having significant support of the Christian right a Republican cannot win the nomination or the general election."

Congresswoman Marge Roukema (R-NJ):

"Ralph Reed and the Christian Coalition will create a lot of trouble for the Republican Party."

Michael Hudson, executive director of People for the American Way:

"There are two faces to the religious right—the moderate face that meets Bob Dole and the grass-roots state chapters that are still bashing gays. Ralph Reed is trying to create a big tent in the religious right, but can he sell political expediency to his grass-roots movement?"

Frank Luntz, Contract with America pollster:

"The Christians are close to winning the whole war; they might do it by '96."

he pitched his pack of Marlboro Lights out a car window one day and never bought another. Booze was also a problem, so he went instantly dry during the summer after graduation.

At about that time, he had seen a politician he admired—a pro-family, traditional values type—drinking and fooling around with someone to whom he was not married. The sight disgusted Reed and helped

lead him toward being "born again." He apologized to one of his political victims, picked up a phone book, found an evangelical church at random and started attending.

Even as he courts centrist voters, Reed has been determinedly pressing Republican politicians to move toward the Coalition's right-wing policies. Presidential candidates are dropping in on Reed for counsel. Bob Dole's advocacy for censorship via Hollywood was the result of consultations with Reed. He is so hot a commodity that the presidential campaign of Senator Phil Gramm of Texas offered to hire him as its political director, the No. 2 staff job. Reed declined. It would have been a demotion.

As executive director of the Christian Coalition, Reed is master of a much more powerful and effective machine than is almost any presidential candidate. By mobilizing volunteers down to the precinct (and local church) level and handing out 33 million voter guides—often in church pews—prior to last November's election, the Coalition is credited with providing the winning margin for perhaps half the Republicans' 52-seat gain in the House and a sizable portion of their nine-seat pickup in the Senate.

Now it's payback time. With the backing of prominent Republicans, the Contract with the American Family now proposes a constitutional amendment

to protect "religious expression" which includes a voluntary moment of silence in schools, the use of religious symbols in public places and religious invocations at public ceremonies. The bill would also expend \$30 million to fund an experiment in "school choice" in low-income regions; it would end federal funding for such allegedly liberal efforts as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Department of Education.

That the religious right could virtually dictate an important part of the congressional agenda was unimaginable when the modern movement began in 1979. After

Robertson's unsuccessful bid for the Presidential nomination in 1988, he converted his huge mailing lists into the Christian Coalition and turned its operations over to Reed, then 27. Reed sought to build the organization from the bottom up, making it largely community-based, with activists much more involved in local issues. The strategy paid off: the Christian right now exercises considerable control of Republican parties in 13 states and completely dominates 18 others.

Says Reed, "If the Coalition grows large enough, then everyone running for President will be pro-family; they'll have to come to us." And so they are.

Dark Ages revisited

Reed and Robertson maintain that the Bible *must* be accepted as divinely inspired, literal truth that's an infallible blueprint for action in the "political realm." This leaves little room for those of us who reject such a view. Believers and non-believers whose interpretation of the Bible differs from the Coalition's would end up branded as sinful enemies and "bad Americans." Theocracy and freedom are antonymous, and if the Christian Coalition is ever in a position to dispense with our present system of rights and laws, what lies in store for us sinners and miscreants?

With his resolution to organize, build and train, Reed speaks about forming a cadre of at least 10 workers in each of the country's 175,000 political precincts, raising his budget to between \$50 million and \$100 million and gaining access to 100,000 churches, compared with his current reach of 60,000 churches. "If we do all that, we will be larger and more effective and will reach more people than the Republican and Democratic parties combined."

