

Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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CAPTURING THE ROBES

by Gary North

Robes are a symbol of authority in the West. The man who wears a robe as part of his profession has been invested with a degree of formal authority that other men do not possess. In the West, three groups wear robes: judges, university professors, and ordained ministers. High school graduates and college graduates wear their robes once, and rent them. University professors are entitled to wear robes at special formal university affairs, and some (though probably very few) buy them. Only judges and ministers in the pulpit normally wear robes. Choirs also wear them, as agents of the church.

At the turn of the century, political and conspiratorial elites began a long-term program to "capture the robes" of American culture. They recognized the importance of judges, professors, and ministers. I remember hearing a speech by a former Communist, Karl Prussion, in 1964, in which he told of the assignment he received from the Party. He became a theology student at Union Theological Seminary in New York. The Party knew what it was doing. The conservatives have not known what they were doing.

Left-Wing Theologians

This World is a new scholarly journal, published by the American Enterprise Institute. Its perspective is that of the "neo-conservative" movement, that is, men who are no longer convinced concerning the wisdom of Federal intervention into the economy, hostile to pacifism, and conservative on social issues like abortion. The Summer, 1982 issue presented the results of a remarkable opinion poll conducted by the Roper organization. It surveyed the political and economic opinions of 1,112 seminary professors. Over half of the 2,000 professors originally contacted responded by giving answers to over 200 questions. The results are worse than we might have imagined.

The professors, as a group, are self-consciously left of center. As Ladd and Ferree summarized the data, "Those who teach in schools of religion and theology resemble fairly closely a larger community of **academic humanists** of which they are a part" (p. 84). On questions of marriage and abortion, they are conservative, but not on politics and economics. Michael Novak writes: "Would you have guessed that, of all professors at all the Bible colleges, divinity schools, and seminaries in all fifty states, only 17 percent would call themselves Republicans (Q. 42)? Meanwhile, 62 percent call themselves either Democrats (30%) or independent, closer to Democrats (32%). Only 7 percent are pure independents. These figures help explain how 56 percent voted for McGovern over Nixon (34%), 66 percent for Carter over Ford (28%), and 52 percent for Carter over Reagan (30%) and Anderson (11%)" (p. 102).

"Eighty percent think the competition between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. is fundamentally a struggle in power politics, only 20 percent fundamentally a moral struggle (Q. 103) Seventy percent think U.S. multinational corporations hurt poor countries in the "Third World," 30 percent think they help (Q. 104). Thirty percent think the U.S. treats Third World countries fairly, 70 percent unfairly (Q. 105)" (p. 104).

Are these all theological liberals? While only 27 percent believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, 64 percent claim it is infallible in matters of faith and morals. Some 59 percent say they have had a born-again experience. Half claim they experience a special closeness to God daily (p. 105). These are people, in other words, who for the most part would be considered theological brothers by the editors of *Christianity Today*, *Eternity*, *Christian Life*, and virtually all of the denominational magazines of America. Three quarters of these professors think the Moral Majority is politically and religiously harmful (pp. 105-6).

Ladd and Ferree make an interesting comparison between prestige universities and liberalism, and liberalism and the Ph.D.

In various publications including *The Divided Academy* Ladd and Lipset demonstrated that within academe, confounding a "class theory of politics," the "top" is more liberal than the "bottom." When one arrays faculty, for example, by the intellectual standing of the college or university at which they teach, one finds that with every step up the institution-quality hierarchy there is a greater measure of faculty liberalism. Similarly, within any type of university or college, professors with greater academic attainments — measured, for example, in terms of levels of scholarly publication — are consistently more liberal than their less-attaining colleagues. . .

One sees reflections of this signal relationship in the political orientations of groups within the theological faculty. Those whose career emphasis has been nearest the academic and scholarly emphasis of the "mainstream" American professorial community appear consistently more liberal in sociopolitical outlook than those less involved in conventional academic work and attainment. For example, **theology faculty who hold the rank of Ph.D. are more liberal on every social and political issue measured in the survey** than are those with other academic degree experience — persons with doctorates in religion, with masters and bachelors of divinity degrees, and so forth. This holds for the entire religion faculty as well as throughout the various denominational groups" (p. 86).

The obvious conclusion is simple: conservative fundamentalists who run the handful of colleges that fundamentalist students attend must cease requiring the Ph.D. from their faculty members. Indeed, anyone holding the Ph.D. in the humanities must be screened extra carefully to insure that he is not a liberal. What, in fact, are these colleges doing? "Upgrading" their faculties by requiring the Ph.D. The suicide of the fundamentalists, institutionally, is assured. The liberals have convinced them that they must structure their colleges "the liberals' way." The academic inferiority complex of the fundamentalists is used by the Left to capture their schools, from Biola College to Wheaton, from Westmont to Gordon-Conwell. Even the six-day creationist school, Christian Heritage College, sought and gained accreditation. Jerry Falwell has hired a lawyer to force the accreditors to accredit his Liberty Baptist College. In short, **the fundamentalists simply will not learn.** They seek certification from those same elitist groups that they say are undermining Western civilization. **The very same people who the fundamentalists regard as followers of Satan have set up the accreditation system, and the fundamentalist leaders have rushed to submit themselves to them in order to get their certificates of academic acceptability.**

Who are the most liberal faculty members? Episcopalians, who were 78 percent liberal. Who were the most conservative? The Pentecostals, who were 75 percent conservative (p. 72). Regarding the question of "the biblical view of creation," 63 percent oppose the requirement that it be taught alongside of evolutionism in the public schools (Q. 22). (59 percent of the "other" group favored it — the tiny splinter groups, and independents, such as Pentecostals.) Regarding the requirement that the public schools set aside time daily for silent prayer, 68 percent oppose the idea (Q. 21).

An obvious conclusion is that the two favorite campaigns of the fundamentalist leadership — to get prayer back into the public schools and to get six-day creationism into their curricula — are doomed. Neither will find support from the theologians, and both will encounter overwhelming opposition from the humanists and liberal lawyers. It is unwise to devote any more energy or money to these two causes. This is what the fundamentalist leadership will not acknowledge. They would rather tilt at windmills than use the money to set up additional independent Christian schools, or to finance six-day creation curricula for the existing Christian schools.

Antinomianism and Liberalism

Another aspect of the survey which is important is its discovery of a fact that the Christian reconstructionists have pointed out for years, namely, that those who say that the Bible provides no blueprint for society's institutions tend to hold social views that are similar to those held by non-Christians in the community in general. **They simply "baptize" the pre-**

vailing opinions of their non-Christian peers. In academic circles, this means the opinions of the intellectual elite.

To the question, "Do you think the Bible offers a blueprint for the ideal social system or not?", 77 percent said no. Two-thirds of the "others" — fundamentalist independents — agreed with the liberals on this point (Q. 24). **Do you see why the "others" — the intellectual leaders of the fundamentalist movement — are incapable of sustaining a successful challenge, theologically or institutionally, against the liberals?** Do you see why the liberals have captured Christian seminaries and colleges? Do you see why each succeeding generation of graduates of these schools is more left wing politically and economically? Do you see why Ronald Sider's book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, received no published criticism until David Chilton wrote *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators*? Only because Chilton believes that biblical law is still binding on economics and politics could he refute Sider's "liberation theology." **The fundamentalists are social antinomians. By rejecting God's law, they have necessarily accepted rule by the prevailing opinions of the day.** These opinions are humanistic. (For documentation of this assertion, see my essay, "The Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right," in *Christianity and Civilization*, vol. 1, no. 1, published by the Geneva Divinity School, 708 Hamvasy, Tyler, Texas, 75701; \$9.95.)

Conclusion

The battle for the mind, some fundamentalists believe, is between fundamentalism and the institutions of the Left. This conception of the battle is fundamentally incorrect. The battle for the mind is between the Christian reconstruction movement, which alone among Protestant groups takes seriously the law of God, and everyone else. There is no really serious "battle for the mind" between fundamentalists who accept accreditation and the liberals who control the accreditation mechanisms. The fundamentalists, by accepting the liberals' view of social antinomianism — that the Bible offers no blueprint for social institutions, and therefore no program for Christian reconstruction — have become **epistemological humanists** in the realm of social theory. Fundamentalists have adopted the **myth of neutrality** in educational theory and social theory. There is no "battle for the mind" here; only a loud debate between rivals for control of the accreditation committees and curricula development committees. And for three generations, the fundamentalists have been losing the debate. It is a debate which should end with the fundamentalists walking out, leaving the liberals with no fundamentalist institutions to accredit. **Christians must stop fighting the battle for the mind by rules that the humanists have rigged in their favor.**

(For a copy of *This World*, send \$4 to them at 210 E. 86th St., New York, NY, 10028. Ask for the Summer, 1982 issue.)

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