

THE SIDNEY HOOK MEMORIAL AWARD

From time to time, the National Association of Scholars bestows the Sidney Hook Memorial Award on a distinguished scholar, honoring a notable contribution to the freedom and integrity of academic life. On Saturday, 22 May 2004, in New York City during our eleventh national conference, the NAS so honored Stanley Rothman, Mary Huggins Gamble Professor emeritus of government at Smith College, Northampton, MA, and director of the Center for the Study of Social and Political Change. *Academic Questions* is pleased to print NAS President Stephen H. Balch's remarks in presenting the award and the important research essay that Professor Rothman chose to highlight as his acceptance paper.

Presentation: A Canticle for Rothman

Stephen H. Balch

The plot of one of the classics of science fiction, *A Canticle for Liebowitz*, opens in a world struggling to emerge from a second dark age. The hero is a monk residing in a monastery located in what had once been the American Southwest. His life's mission is to secure canonization for the blessed Liebowitz, a scientist who had perished centuries before trying to defend his laboratory against Luddite mobs. The work of the monastery largely consists in copying and recopying the technical papers of Liebowitz, which—though no longer understood—are venerated as relics of a more enlightened time.

Liebowitz is urged for sainthood because he stands as a symbol of reason and learning in a world where both have dimmed, and because he is recognized for having fought the good fight on their behalf. After centuries of petitioning, New Rome, located somewhere in Alabama, finally gives Liebowitz his halo.

The NAS has our own Liebowitz—the blessed Stan Rothman—who has similarly held up the torch of reason and learning, while making a very good fight on their behalf. By any test, Stan has achieved high distinction as a scholar, having authored 19 books and over 100 journal articles. But his very special accomplishment has been to describe the decay of so much of our culture through modalities which express one of its peak achievements—the ideal of disciplined and honest scholarship.

I first encountered Stan Rothman's work while I was still on the faculty of John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I spent several bus commutes into the city reading *Roots of Radicalism*, his book on the origins of the New Left. I was

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acquainted, of course, with psychological dissections of the right, having encountered the writings of Theodore Adorno and other Frankfort School exiles during my graduate work in Berkeley. But I had never before seen one done on the Left or at such a high level of rigor. *Roots of Radicalism* confirmed my own suppositions about the aggressive foundations of all political extremisms, even those that employed the rhetoric of compassion and humanity. Since then, Stan has produced a large shelf of important works examining the attitudes and behavior of virtually every segment of American elite opinion—the media, Hollywood, philanthropy, law and—now—the academy. The reoccurring theme emerging from his inquiries has been the disillusionment of so many of our elites with traditional American institutions and the liberal ideals on which they are based. No one has documented this more thoroughly and systematically than Stan, nor analyzed its cultural origins to greater effect.

Stan has already received much recognition for his work, though not nearly the amount he deserves. I enjoy telling him, however, that if his gloomier prognostications ever come to be fully realized, he has an excellent chance eventually to take his place in that long line of Hebrew prophets that includes Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekial, and, yes, even Saint Liebowitz, who spoke bravely about great wrongs and helped revive a recognition of how to do right.

The Sidney Hook Memorial Award, presented in the name another heroic academic truth-teller, is given at each of our conferences to a scholar who has made distinguished contributions to the freedom and integrity of the academy. Among the past recipients have been James Coleman, C. Vann Woodward, Donald Kagan and Gertrude Himmelfarb. It is my high honor to bestow the tenth Sidney Hook Memorial Award on my true, and justly celebrated, friend, Stanley Rothman.