

# **Review & Expositor Journal Book Review of ‘The Uncommitted’**

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February 1967

*The Uncommitted; Alienated Youth in American Society*, by Kenneth Keniston. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1965. 500 pp. \$8.50.

Kenneth Keniston made a three-year study of 36 students and has identified in this book what he calls the "alienation syndrome" in the children of affluent families who are attending American colleges and universities today. He calls attention to the way in which "our age inspires scant enthusiasm," and he says that alienation and detachment formally arising out of the thrusts of independence on the part of men toward unjust economic and family systems is now instead increasingly being chosen by men as their basic stance toward society. He seeks to understand the origins of this stance toward society, to identify the factors in the individual life, the social process, and cultural history which contribute to it. He asks the open question as to whether or not the rejection of the values and outlooks of American culture are not legitimate indictments of our affluence, our overemphasis upon success, and our inability through the swiftness of chronic change to bridge the generational gap and to establish clear identifications for the succeeding generations.

He insists that this chosen "alienation is a response to major collective estrangement, social strains and historical losses in our society." His point is that commitment is worthy only insofar as the objects of commitment are worthy. He presents a burning challenge to the religious leadership of America in that the quest for values and commitment that will give people's lives coherence is the main business of the religious establishments of our country. They probably have been largely forgotten in the thrust of American denominationalism toward the same patterns of affluence, success, and stress which produce the alienation in these young people on a cultural basis in the same way that the home does on a psychological basis.

There is meat for thought here and hard work for the serious student. But, the pastor who has time in the scramble of things to work through this meaty volume will be rewarded for having done so.

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