

AMONG THE SCHOLARS (A Review)

In this book David Hester relates his experiences as a participant in a session of The Christian Scholars Conference. He augments that report with his observations on various doctrines and practices of those preachers and educators among us who are promoting the agenda of the change movement. The author is well-read and familiar with the literature and activities of the promoters of change. He clearly understands the problems this movement creates and lays them out for his readers to see. He demonstrates how the change agents have used the Christian Scholar's Conference to promote their agenda (p. 43 ff).

Hester sees the similarity between the apostasy of the late 19th century and that occurring today (p. 23). "The teachings being promoted are not new; they are the same ruminations of error which have plagued the Lord's church for generations" (p. 88). To illustrate the mistaken thinking that prevails in many of our younger brethren, he cites historian Paul Johnson who observed, "It (is) assumed that humanity, led by the enlightened minority, would always progress in a desirable direction. It (does) not occur to (them) that this minority...might lead (them) into the abyss" (p. 20).

This book provides helpful information about the "new hermeneutic" by which the promoters of change are able to dismiss any Bible verse that might stand in their way. Also it has an excellent discussion on II John 9-11 which warns against just such teachers. He replies to and refutes their claims that it speaks only of the nature of Christ. He provides good discussions on the issues of instrumental music in worship and special singing groups for worship.

The author sketches a helpful picture of those who are demanding change for the church. He prefers to describe them as "the new left" rather than liberal. He does so because they deflect the latter label by insisting they don't question the miracles, virgin birth, creation and inspiration of the Bible. He observes that most of those in the forefront of the change movement are little known men, with limited exposure. In the past most who became liberal were immediately recognized and isolated because of their outspoken advocacy of their views and their public record in the church. Change agents have followed the strategy of being careful, quiet and coy about their views until they have solidified their position and are safely and fully in control. Only then do they openly declare themselves (p. 87-88).

"Almost to a man, these men say they came out of backgrounds that were narrow-minded, legalistic and restrictive...that the majority of sermons (they heard) were angry polemics which were used to beat up people" (p. 32). This seems to be their justification for their embracing the new faith. "This points up the radical nature of the left. Coming out of extremist backgrounds, the leaders (and followers) of the movement (often jhw) resort to their radical past when pressured" (p. 96). Change agents, devote (much time), both in print and from the podium, in speaking against legalism. They decry the arguing, bickering, hatred, and division which they say, have been brought about by those who are willing to contend for the faith" (p. 90).

Hester discerns similarities between the youthful rebels of the 1960s and modern change agents. Our change agents "are the lost boys and girls who never grew up. They... want to break free from their past, from their parents, from their former beliefs, from what they see as legalism. Like selfish children they emulate, they will demand things be done their way or they will leave" (p. 122). Comparing the two he sees: * "Rebellion against authority." * "Rebellion against rulers." * "Rebellion against rules." * "Overflowing selfishness" (p. 32). * And "intellectual snobbery" (p. 33).

* Another "characteristic of the (religious) left...is a denial of reality" (p. 99). They have a hard time acknowledging the success of our brethren in the 20th century. They are too busy trying to discredit their efforts as unworthy. They refuse to admit that they are abandoning the faith long held by our people.

* "One can detect an overwhelming sense of anger directed against the church and hatred toward anything which they perceive as restrictive of their 'freedom'" (p. 32).

* "Those who are leading the new left will invariably call for openness and dialog between opposing sides of doctrinal disputes. They demand a hearing for their views, but do they sanction airing the views of those who oppose them? This is where their openness disappears" (p.96).

* He cites Benjamin Brooks who describes the psychology that seems to drive change agents, "Persons who have embraced sentiments which afterwards appear to them to be erroneous, often think they can never remove too far from them; and the more remote they go from their former opinions, the nearer they come to the truth, they think" (p. 55).

Of our Christian Schools he says, "These institutions provide 'safe haven' for subversive faculty members, they produce books attacking the church...these universities are abandoning the very charter which began them" (p. 14). "There is a group of academicians who have succeeded in their 'long march through the institutions.' Biding their time until they were in positions of tenure and with a sympathetic board of trustees behind them, these activists professors and teachers began to push their false doctrines with impunity, becoming more arrogant as time passed. Realizing they would not be dismissed, they began to influence preachers and elders in large metroplex congregations who were already sympathetic. Whenever opposition surfaced, the response was either silence or hiding behind academic freedom" (p. 113). "The radicals are getting bolder every day and are targeting established metropolitan congregations for the purpose of renewal" (p.147). "The leaders of the current movement are... clamoring for a revolution within our congregations, and they will not countenance any opposition" (p. 158).

Those who read Bro. Hester's book will be well rewarded for their effort. It is a useful weapon for those who must do battle with the forces of the change movement. (The book may be ordered from **The Gospel Advocate Co. 1006 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37210 JHW**)