

"MOVEMENT IN TRANSITION"

We have read in a church bulletin that a special series of Wednesday night lectures was conducted on the theme, "Movement in Transition: A Vision for the Future." Accompanying comments on the series stated: "According to many, our Restoration Movement is very much in the midst of a period of transition. Many of our churches are struggling with their identity, their mission, and their purpose. Scripture as well as church history teach us that we're only one generation away from apostasy." We offer a few observations on these statements.

First, the writer uses "our Restoration Movement" in almost a sectarian sense. With some, the so-called "restoration **movement**" has almost become the end itself. Some are so dedicated to the "movement" (as a historical phenomenon) that they are not concerned with faithfully preaching the Gospel and thus maintaining the restored church. We admire and profit much from the work of faithful Gospel preachers of the 19th century, but our interest is not so much in a "movement" begun by men, but in the primitive church of Christ that began on the Pentecost following our Lord's ascension to His heavenly throne.

Second, the scribe we quoted at the beginning spoke of "our Restoration Movement's" being in the midst of transition, having churches struggling with identity, mission, and purpose. No wonder. This statement was in the bulletin of a congregation that has a long history of policies and practices that have created an identity crisis for any body of people claiming to be the church of Christ. There is little more to identify them as a "Church of Christ" than the sign out front, and it tells a lie every time a passerby reads it. A further irony is that among the five speakers they have invited to speak on this "identity crisis," at least three of them have made considerable

contributions to just such a crisis for brethren far and wide by their soft and indistinct doctrinal posture. The other two have hardly distinguished themselves as pinnacles of doctrinal strength. To invite such men to deal with "transitions" and "identity crises" in the church is comparable to inviting the wolves into the chicken house to help nurse the sick chickens back to health.

Third, the quotation is exactly right when it says that we are only one generation away from apostasy. The younger generation in the church from whose bulletin we quoted does not have a chance to escape apostasy; their forbears have long been apathetic toward it and unconcerned about it, if not actually committed to it. Lamentably, it is thus in many congregations.

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