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## PROGRESSIVE SPIRIT

An instrument of music was introduced into the worship at Midway, Kentucky, about 1858. This innovation moved slowly among churches in the North and finally came to the South about 1900. Of course, the church support of the missionary society and other central collecting and disbursing organizations came with the instrument. The intra-church organizations also came along about the same time, as well as church-sponsored entertainment and fraternization with the Protestant denominations who taught that one is saved at the point of faith before obedience.

If a stranger had come to some little town in the early part of the century and had inquired as to the location of the meeting place of the church, some local man might have asked, "Which one?" The stranger might then have asked, "What is the difference?" He would have been told that one used instruments of music and the other did not. Division usually came when

the instrument was added. Actually, the social and the church support of man-made institutions also marked the difference, but these facts were not so conspicuous to the neighbors at first. Even the churches themselves gave almost nothing but lip service to the societies with an occasional small token gift of money.

The greatest difference of all was not seen or generally realized. The real difference was in the attitude toward the Bible. Those who brought in the innovations would say that the Bible does not say that we should not have these things. To them, the silence of the Scriptures meant liberty to add samples of human wisdom. Those who did not approve of the instrument and the societies pointed out that these things were without New Testament authority. They were not commanded, implied, or taught by approved example. To them, it was a sin to go beyond that which was written (II

Jn. 9; Rev. 22:18, 19; I Pet. 4:11; II Pet. 1:3).

Those who approved the changes thought of themselves as progressives. They were bringing in the things that were similar to the practices of the neighboring religious bodies so they would not be so "narrow" (different). In their sight, those who opposed the innovations were non-progressives. Then, as always, the church division was accompanied by bitterness. One group thought that the others were fanatics, hairsplitters, moss-backs, anti's, and non-progressives even though they were teaching and practicing what their fathers and grandfathers and the Bible taught.

The "progressives" carried most of the members in this movement which was more popular with the religious organizations about them. It was a move in their direction. The "progressives" wanted to be more acceptable to their neighbors. They were tired of the word "narrow" even though our Lord spoke of the way that leads to life as being narrow, (Matt. 7:13, 14). Finer buildings were erected, kitchens were added, and plans were made to have more fun and "fellowship." There was less emphasis on the fellowship often mentioned in the New Testament. That fellowship was with God and with fellow soldiers in earnestly contending for the faith. The battle with denominational errors in faith and practice gradually came to a

halt where the instrument and other innovations came into favor. The progress of the "progressives" was not in winning the fight against error in the good warfare. (I Tim. 1:18; II Tim. 4:7; Eph. 6:10-20).

Emotionalism and sensationalism came with the "progressive" movement. The interest came to be in numbers, prominent members, good buildings, and social recognition in the community. These ideas and practices did not come to every member to the same degree. There was a package of things to be accepted, and some would offer resistance at times, but the machine was moving rapidly by the time the instrument was added. Big changes in attitude had already come or it would never have been added. Changes continued to such an extent that those who first added the instrument would be shocked by the "Disciples" today if they could come back to life and walk in among their descendants in religion. It would be hard for them to believe that they were more than distant cousins.

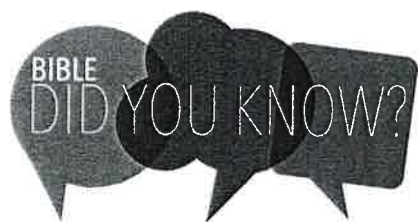
Typical arguments for the instruments of music were: (1) David used them; (2) Others use them; (3) We like them; (4) The Bible does not say that we cannot have them. These arguments are as strong as they could make; they are not indications of their desire to please God in the church that is

according to His eternal purpose. They had recognized the church until they could speak of “our church, our money, and our business.” Their desire was the final and highest law. To speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent was too narrow for them.

The only choice the “non-progressives” had was to go along with the innovations or get out and worship with the few kindred spirits they could find. They might meet in someone’s living room, a store building, a courtroom, or a schoolhouse. In several years, they would reach a point where they could build a meeting house of their own on some little inexpensive lot. These “anti’s” were almost always the members with less money and with less social prestige. There was a sense of responsibility (often too weak) that caused them to start one little church after another in communities all around the good buildings where the “progressives” met and continued to become more and more progressive. By the late thirties, this growth of the more conservative people became rather amazing.

In the more rapid growth of the forties, many came to these conservative churches from the religious groups about them. Some of them were not fully converted, and teaching was inadequate in many places. They were not grounded sufficiently in the basic teachings of the one body and the

importance of doing all things according to the pattern. The progressive, social gospel, and institutional spirit started among them. In the last thirty or so years, history has been repeating itself in a very vivid way. It is easy to see that attitude, arguments, bitterness, and the back-to-denominationalism movement are the same as they were a few decades earlier. – Jarrod Jacobs



***“The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened. The hope of the righteous is gladness, but the expectation of the wicked perishes. The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright, but ruin to the workers of iniquity.”***  
***Proverbs 10:27-29***



# MONTHLY CHALLENGE

**DIRECTIONS:** Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

## 1) Bible Reading Challenge

*John 1:38-39* "And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' They said to Him, 'Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?' He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.' So they came and saw where He was staying." It's amazing what a simple invitation can turn into. For Andrew, this invitation turned into changing the lives of both he and his brother, Peter, forever as they became disciples of Jesus. Let's follow this example and do some inviting of our own this month. At the Brooke County Fair, we will have a booth set up where people can test their bible knowledge with bible trivia questions. How about coming out and inviting those at the fair to come try it out? You never know, one simple invitation to come and see what it's all about could potentially turn into a loyal devoted follower of Jesus. We also have our gospel meeting coming up this month. How about doing some inviting for others to come and visit during the meeting? As was in the days of Jesus, some will say yes and some will say no. The odds of having those say yes greatly increases the more we invite!

## 2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

*John 10:7-17*

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again."