**What Is The Difference?**

Irvin Lee / continued from the front – circa 1960’s

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, hair-splitters, 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 (**Matthew 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 (**1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 4:7; Ephesians 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 place at the same time or 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 and 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 re-organized 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 some one's living room, a store building, a court room or a school house. 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 building 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.