

This article by E. R. Harper is from *The Gospel Guardian*, Sept. 19, 1957, where it appeared with this note, "From 'Highland Helper,' June 11, 1956."

## The Birth of Digression

That the church stands in danger of another "digression" is easily seen if we will but open our eyes and look about us. The little "innocent things" that are being practiced today by the loyal members of the body of Christ because they do not think of the harm and cannot see the harm in certain things is alarming to those of us who have been in the battle lines for years.

### Causes Today

The same cause that took us away in the century just closed is the same thing that is leading us in that direction today. People are not "familiar" with the truth of the Bible. They do not "know the issues" that are troubling the church of today. They are not "hearing them" discussed from the "pulpits of today" as we did when we were growing up. Now the church members do not have "convictions against certain practices" as they at one time had. We are anxious for "prestige" and for "popularity." We are trying too much to be like the "world about us." Too "much show" and not enough "teaching." Too many churches saying, "We are not bothered with this or that," why preach on such things "here"; preach on subjects that will "build the church." Too many people are coming into the "fold" not "converted" from their errors due to the "soft, compromising preaching" that is being done too generally. We have a "false" conception of what it "means and takes" to be "spiritual."

This list could be multiplied, but this is enough. From here we will start with those things that are steps in the wrong direction; "straws" that show which way the wind blows; that show the laxity on our part in general to watch every corner lest we "let them slip" and fall from our steadfastness.

### Instrument Brought In

If you will study the beginning of digression in England, Australia, and America you will find it first began just as it is here. It was innocent-looking then, and honest people were deceived in its danger. It did not look to them like it could do so much harm. They would not have taken the church away at all had they been able to see its future destruction. Just so today—good people are "bringing the instrument into their various affairs" connected with the church. To brand them as digressive in purpose would be to wrong them, for they do not so mean. But for me to point out to them that it is the beginning of a digression that they little see; a practice, if continued, that will take their children into digression, is in order and certainly not out of place. Hence, as we discuss this, it is not "branding" anyone as "meaning digression" but to warn them of the danger ahead.

### Practices Dangerous

In the beginning the instrument was brought into the Bible School Classes; for young peo-

ple's singings; for general practice, all in the "basements" of the congregations with the promise that it would never be brought into the worship. Innocent people, rather than to have trouble in the church, agreed to this plea upon the part of those who wanted such things. It was not long until they began bringing them up into the regular "11 o'clock worship hour." By this time they had broken down the "convictions" of the people against the instrument, especially the young people, and they demanded of their parents that it be used. The story is too well-known to demand space in this article for discussion. Digression swept the church and took our meeting houses, schools, and most of our members.

#### Fort Worth Church

There still live in Ft. Worth, Texas, those who saw it introduced into the worship there. They brought it into the basement for such things as above mentioned. The story was told me by one who was there. They gave way to the "basement idea," and one morning when they came to worship, **there it was**. The church "split," and they were branded as "trouble-makers" for objecting to such a thing, though an **honest promise** had been made that they **would not do such a thing**. Such **promises are violated** today, but there is nothing you can do about it but teach the people the truth.

#### Instrument in Weddings

Fast becomes the setting for digression through weddings. Churches are beginning to bring in the **instrument** for such. I can't

get you to see that it is wrong by showing you what **has** happened. The church members **want** it; the **young people** want it; they see **no harm in it**; they say the building is **not sacred**, etc., etc., and thus into some congregations they bring it. The Highland congregation will **not permit** such to be done, **now**. What will happen later when the men who are now elders, are gone, we do not know. We **now know** that there is **absolutely no protection** in a deed if the people want the instrument, without the **old fashioned kind of trouble** the "sound" element went through during the beginning of **digression** 100 years ago.

#### My Humble Prediction

I want the members of Highland; our young people and children of Highland, to keep this article until you are "old" and here is what I am saying to you, the time will come when we will **lose** our children to the Christian Church because of our bringing into our various activities the instrument, Easter observance with the sectarian bodies; the corruption of worldliness in the schools and the church; and because of the **total ignorance** of the people on such matters due to the failure of the pulpit, classrooms, and elders to preach, teach and function as they should. Churches, many of them, that today are what we call sound will be digressive 50 years from now. The building of chapels and bringing the instrument into them for singings — weddings — funerals — young folk activities, etc., is a **certain** step toward digression. Such congregations within the next two generations will either

be digressive or so nearly so that their children, when leaving there and going to other cities, will not go to the church of the Lord but will seek out and find the Digressive congregations and go to them because of the "common ties" they have in the above practices. **It is coming**, and those of us who point it out and oppose such things in the church today are to be hated and fought and connived against just as they were 75 years ago. This going "into sectarian churches" and taking our children for church weddings seems a little thing now, but it is the "straw" that "shows which way the wind blows."

#### Instrument in the Basement

I know of a large church in our brotherhood that brought the instrument into the basement for a "sing-song." This became rather bothersome, and one of the men just brought one in. They kept it there. A little lady whom I know very well moved there and found it in the basement, and

she **exploded**. Just what happened to the instrument I do not know, but a former "singer" for the congregation who told me of the affair said they hadn't been able to find it since. In one of our western states I am told they are bringing them into the basements for such things and leaving them. Brethren, think of me as you may. **Such** is the **first** step toward **digression**. Unless the church is to undergo a great period of "old fashioned indoctrination" the church we know today is in for a "ride," and the men leading them will be the "big men" of the church today; not the "little fellow," for they will not listen to him.

The future of the church is at the Cross-Roads, and it is not time for men with faint hearts, but for men who know the truth, love the church and the souls of men and who are not afraid to step forward, raise the banner of truth, unsheathe the sword of the Spirit, and **attack** while the church is still the church.

---

### New Congregation in Australia

A new church of Christ has of recent weeks come into existence here in Brisbane, Queensland, (Australia). Another one has been recently started in Gympie, about 100 miles north of Brisbane.

The Brisbane congregation has about eight members. The Gympie congregation has a radio program every Wednesday and Sunday afternoon at 5 p. m.

—B. A. Bust, **Firm Foundation**

---

### Reads Every Article

Below are a few names you may recognize, to add to your mailing list at the \$1.50 club rate, for which you will find check enclosed. I sure look forward to receiving the **Digest** and read every article.

—L. C. Forrest, Newport, N. C.