

"My Kind of 'Summit'"

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In August, 1984 a meeting styled "The Restoration Summit" was held in Joplin, Missouri. It was attended by about 50 each from the Independent Christian Church and the churches of Christ. It consisted of several brief lectures and small group discussions that tip-toed around a few of the many issues that separate the two groups. Only those were invited who were deemed "irenic" (peaceful) in nature and the atmosphere was carefully orchestrated to be one of harmony, agreement, and good will. Confrontation was studiously avoided. Those who dared raise any objection to such meetings were called "knuckleheads." Printed materials that accentuated causes of division were confiscated, banned, and ridiculed. At the same time materials by men who have proved themselves to be radically liberal on the subjects of fellowship and unity were freely distributed. This original "Summit" spawned several other such meetings which, for the most part, have been conducted with about the same format and atmosphere.

They have accomplished absolutely nothing toward unity so far as I can determine. They have "succeeded" in getting some of our compromising brethren to declare that they are quite willing to extend fellowship to the Christian Church without their making any move whatsoever back toward the Truth from which they have departed in so many ways. This has been a somewhat predictable outcome of the meetings, given the doctrinal stance of the planners and most of the participants.

Many of us who have observed the "unity" meetings with trepidation have suggested all along that such meetings will accomplish nothing toward Biblical unity until some of the principal issues dividing the two religious bodies are forthrightly addressed. The planners of the meetings have steadfastly refused to do this, doubtless for fear of causing alienation. (They have apparently forgotten that there would be no need for "unity" meetings if absolute alienation did not already exist.)

It became necessary for the required confrontation on the polemic platform to be arranged apart from the scheduled "unity" meetings. Such arrangements were consummated and resulted in the oral debate between Alan E. Highers and Given O. Blakely, April 12-15, 1988, in Neosho, Missouri. At issue was the Scriptural authorization for use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. As expected, the issue focused to a great extent not only on

the use of instruments, but on the more basic issue of Scriptural authority for any and every practice. Any open-minded listener could see just how high and how many the hurdles really exist on the road toward Scriptural unity with the Independent Christian Church. I agree with a brother who said, "This is my kind of unity 'summit'."

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, May 5, 1988, of which I was editor.]

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