



Freed-Hardeman "Contemporary Discussion"

October 14, 2006

David Faust

Session One: "What Will It Take to Be Together Again?"

Thank you very much for inviting me to be here today. I'm grateful to Ralph Gilmore for his foresight in setting up this event and his persistence in persuading me to come. And I'm grateful to President and Mrs. Sewell for their kind hospitality to me and my colleagues from Cincinnati Christian University.

I'm not here today to quarrel. I'm here to talk with you from my heart.

I'm not a trained debater. I'm a preacher with a heart for the Lord, for the church, and for lost people.

I'm not here today to bash a cappella music. Over the last few years I've gained a whole new appreciation for a cappella singing. I have no desire to drag you across the keyboard and make you conform to my opinions.

I'm not here to tell you why you are wrong. In some ways, we have all been wrong, because we have perpetuated division in the Lord's church. We've done a lot of finger pointing. Now it's time to join hands and learn from each other so that we can become all that the Lord is calling us to be.

But at the same time, I'm not here to dodge important questions. I am going to be honest and straightforward about what I believe, and I am eager to listen and understand where my brothers and sisters in the a cappella churches are coming from.

I'm not here to defend everything every church does that uses musical instruments. I freely concede that instrumental music is not always done well. Sometimes it's too loud and overbearing, sometimes the leaders are poorly-prepared, sometimes the songs and the musical styles have not been appropriate for the occasion, and sometimes it appears that the musical leaders are more interested in performing than in ushering us all into the presence of God. (Of course, you might say the same thing about some of your experiences in a cappella churches, but I'll leave that for you to decide.)

I am not here to speak for others. I'm part of a loosely-connected fellowship of independent churches. Each congregation is autonomous under the leadership of its own local elders. I speak only for myself—although many others within the independent Christian churches share the convictions I'm going to talk about today.

(By the way, isn't it sad that we even have to call ourselves "Independent" and "A cappella" churches to distinguish ourselves from one another? I dislike anything that smacks of denominationalism and sectarianism, and I wish we didn't need to use those adjectives at all. We're simply the Lord's people.)

I believe in the ideals of the Restoration Movement. I like the way our Restoration Movement forefathers put the emphasis on Christ and the church in the book of Acts. I agree with the slogans that say, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." "We are not the only Christians, but we are Christians only." "In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; and in all things, love."

My great-grandfather was led to Christ by a Restoration Movement evangelist back in the 1800s. I was blessed with godly parents who believed in these ideals. And today I'm doing my best to pass along this same faith to my children and grandchildren.

I was baptized at the age of nine in a Church of Christ in southern Ohio. I preached my first sermon there when I was 15. It lasted eight minutes. (I don't know if my Bible lessons have gotten any better, but they've definitely gotten longer!)

I was a teenager before I learned that some Churches of Christ didn't use instruments like our church did. In the rural county where I grew up, there were 18 other congregations called Churches of Christ, and all but two of them used musical instruments. Tomorrow I will speak for the 150th anniversary of my home church, the Pricetown Church of Christ.

Over the years, those principles I learned as a boy have stood the test of time. I've ministered in different cultures and interacted with people from many different backgrounds. I married a woman from New York whose father and mother helped to plant Churches of Christ in New York City. My wife and I served for 10 years with a church there on Long Island, and we found many of our neighbors eager to embrace the idea that we should follow the Bible alone and call ourselves Christians only.

Today I serve as president of a Christian university dedicated to uphold, defend, and spread the New Testament

faith. One of the core values of Cincinnati Christian University is to be true to our Restoration Movement heritage.

I am confident that you share the core convictions I'm going to talk about this morning.

I believe in God, who created the heavens and the earth. I believe everything the Bible says about Him. He is holy, faithful, just, and true. He is the source of life, the giver of every good and perfect gift, the author of hope and grace.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, who is the Lord of the church and the Savior of my soul. He is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and the main theme of the New. He's the Lamb of God foreshadowed by the Jewish Passover—the perfect sacrifice for sin. He's Heaven's spokesman who's greater than Moses.

He's the perfect High Priest who's greater than Aaron, the leader of God's army who's greater than Joshua, the Good Shepherd that David wrote about in the Psalms, the King who's wiser than Solomon.

He's Immanuel, God with us, the baby born of a virgin in Bethlehem—the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He's the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, "pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities."

He's the King foretold by Jeremiah who would bring a new covenant and write God's law on our hearts.

Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. He healed the sick, walked on water, and made blind men see. He died on a wooden cross so real that if we were there we could have gotten a splinter from it. He rose from the dead and over a period of 40 days, He gave His disciples "many convincing proofs" that He was alive again (Acts 1:3).

His miracles were indisputable, His character was unshakeable, His words were unforgettable, His love was unquenchable. His suffering was unimaginable and His resurrection was undeniable!

In the grand scheme of eternity, it was God's will for His Son to be exalted to the highest place and given "the name that is above every name" (Philippians 2:9).

I assume you believe these things about Jesus also, but I don't apologize for reminding you about them, for the apostle Paul said these are matters of first or primary importance. Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again according to the Scriptures

(1 Corinthians 15:1-4). This is the core of the gospel. We can't say enough about Jesus, because our common faith in Christ is crucial if we are going to be unified.

How did Matthew the tax collector ever get together with John the Son of Thunder? How did Peter the impetuous fisherman get together with Paul the former persecutor? How could Jews and Gentiles both be called Christians

in Antioch? How could slaves and masters worship side by side? They came together in Christ.

A Christian university or a national convention can't unite the church, but Christ can. A denomination can't unite the church, but Christ can. A talented preacher or a fancy building can't unite the church, but Christ can. A great history and heritage can't unite the church, but Christ can. We're pieces of scrap iron, but Christ is the magnet that pulls us together. He's the focus of our unity.

I love Muslims, but I am not united with them in Christ. I love Buddhists, but our world-views are fundamentally different. I love my unbelieving friends, but I can't just shrug my shoulders and say "It doesn't matter what you believe."

The Bible says, "For He Himself [Christ] is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14).

- Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Latinos can come together in Christ.
- Males and females, urban dwellers and country folks, can come together in Christ.
- The older generation and the younger generation can come together in Christ.

Instrumental music isn't the focus of my faith; Christ is. It's our mission to preach Christ and to fulfill the Great Commission—to make disciples, baptize them, and continue teaching them everything the Lord has commanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

Because I love Jesus Christ, I also love His church. The "church" doesn't mean a building made of stone and steel. The church is the *ekklesia*, the called out people of God, the body and bride of Christ. We don't go to church; we *are* the church.

God's spiritual house isn't just a museum to visit; it's a hospital where hungry, broken people are fed and nurtured back to health. It's a training center where we are equipped to serve the King of Kings.

The church at its best is a beautiful thing—like the believers in Acts chapter 2.

Because I love Jesus, I also love His inspired Word, the holy Scriptures.

I believe the Bible is completely true. At Cincinnati Christian University we require every member of our faculty to affirm the full inspiration and truthfulness of the Bible as a condition of being employed as a teacher.

Second Timothy 3:16 says all Scripture is inspired by God or "God-breathed." The Word of God tells us what to believe, what to do, and how we should treat one another. I reject any theological liberalism that denies the deity of Christ, casts doubt on the miracles recorded in the Bible, or rejects the accuracy and authority of God's Word. I am determined to obey and defend "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Those of you in the a cappella Churches of Christ love the Lord and His Word just as much as I do, and I love the Lord and His Word just as much as you do. In fact, we have an interesting historical connection you may not realize.

Back in the early 1900s, theological liberalism began to invade the teaching of the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky, where faithful men like J. W. McGarvey had served and taught. The Academic Dean at the College of the Bible was a gentleman named Hall L. Calhoun. Because of his desire to remain true to the Bible, Calhoun resigned his position with the College of the Bible, wrote a series of articles for the *Christian Standard* magazine that detailed his concerns, and later went on to join the faculty of Freed-Hardeman College—in fact, he served as president here for a short while. Soon afterward, Cincinnati Bible Seminary (now called Cincinnati Christian University) was started in 1924 as a direct effort to train faithful, Bible-believing people for ministry. Hall L. Calhoun (1863-1935) had a direct influence on both Freed-Hardeman University and on the development of the school where I serve as president today. See Adron Doran and J. E. Choate, *The Christian Scholar: A Biography of Hall Laurie Calhoun* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1985).

Here's my point. Ephesians 4:4-6 says, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

What part of this don't we agree about? Why shouldn't we accept one another in full fellowship and brotherhood? Isn't this what the Bible tells us to do?

First John chapter one says, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). The independent Christian churches and the

a cappella churches of Christ differ on some points, that's true. But we do not differ about basic matters of salvation. We believe in the same Lord. We've been baptized the same way and for the same reason. We share a common love for the gospel and we're called to fulfill a common mission in the world. First John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin."

I may not agree with you on some points, but because you are my brothers and sisters in Christ, we do have fellowship. We can hardly escape it. We are part of the same body. We already share this bond. Wherever God has a son or daughter, I have a brother or sister. That's just the way it is. Romans 15:7 says, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

I do accept you. Can you accept me? Even if all of our opinions don't match on every point, can we receive one

another as part of God's family and do our best to serve together for the glory of God?

The topic Ralph and I have agreed to discuss today is, "*What Will It Take to Be Together Again?*" I want to mention seven things I think will help:

1. A deeper concern for the biblical doctrine of unity.

Ephesians 4:3 says, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Notice it says, "*Keep (or preserve) the unity of the Spirit.*" We don't create unity. Unity comes from the Lord. We just preserve, keep, and protect it.

But this deserves our best effort. Paul says to "Make every effort" or "endeavor" to keep this unity.

Christian unity is a plain biblical doctrine—one of the clearest you will find anywhere in Scripture—clearer, in fact, than many of the other doctrines we tend to quarrel about.

The theme of unity runs all the way through the New Testament.

Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16)—not

hundreds of denominations and competing factions that hate one another and hurt one another. Jesus prayed for His disciples and said, "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me" (John 17:23).

In the book of Acts, Luke records that "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (Acts 4:32).

In Romans, Paul wrote, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5, 6).

Paul appealed to the Corinthians and told them to "agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

He told the Galatians, "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another" (Galatians 5:26).

Ten times in Philippians, Paul used the word we translate "like-minded." He said,

"Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (Philippians 2:2).

He told the Colossians, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace" (Colossians 3:15).

He warned Timothy to watch out for those who have "an unhealthy interest

in controversies and arguments that result in envy, quarreling, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction" (1 Timothy 6:4, 5). He said to "pursue righteousness,

faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

James wrote, "Brothers, do not slander one another" (James 4:11).

Peter said, "All of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love

as brothers, be compassionate and humble" (1 Peter 3:8).

John said, "Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21).

Jude warned about false teachers. He said, "these are the men who divide you" (Jude 19).

And in the book of Revelation, those who worship God around His throne are not

identified by denominational labels, by what Christian magazine or journal they read, or by what university they support. They come "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9).

The New Testament says a lot more about unity than it does about music. Unity is not something we achieve by compromising sound doctrine. Unity IS sound doctrine. I believe in Christian unity because I believe the Bible. Thomas Campbell was right when he wrote in the *Declaration and Address* "That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him in all things according to the Scriptures . . ."

Unity is part of our DNA in the Restoration Movement, but we have not done a good job of living out this part of our heritage, and this has hurt our witness to a lost world.

In the second part of my presentation later this morning, I want to talk about the instrumental/non-instrumental issue. But our divisions are not just about musical instruments. We've been divided by cultural differences: large churches from small churches . . . rural churches from urban churches . . . Northern churches from Southern Churches . . . new churches from old churches . . . traditional churches from contemporary churches . . . black churches from white churches. We've criticized each other, slandered each other, quarreled with each other—and maybe worst of all, we've simply ignored each other. It's time for this to stop. It's time to stop wounding the body of Christ. We need a deeper concern for the doctrine of unity.

2. A deeper love for lost people.

Thomas Campbell went on to say that "there ought to be no schisms, no uncharitable divisions" among God's people. He wrote that "division among Christians is a horrid evil." It's "antisciptural," "antinatural," and "productive of confusion."

Psalms 133:1 says, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in

unity!" Unity is good and pleasant in the eyes of God. It's good and pleasant for us. It's even good and pleasant for those who don't know Christ yet, because our divisions are confusing to unbelievers. The majority of our neighbors would find some of the issues we debate about irrelevant and bewildering.

It's a terrible thing when we in the church have been too preoccupied with our internal battles to seek the lost. We've been like two lifeguards who get into a fistfight on the beach while a swimmer is drowning in the water.

Joe's One Visit

Joe, the non-Christian, once went to church,
For he was engaged in a spiritual search.
A tired, hungry soul who wanted release –
Joe needed to learn of the Lord, Prince of Peace.

One Sunday he walked to the church and went in,
Searching for love and forgiveness of sin.
Inside he was met by a man with a frown,
Who glumly said, "Come, and I'll show you around."

"Your name is Joe? Well, Joe, here's the scoop:
We really are quite a diversified group.
Mrs. Smith never speaks to old Mrs. Jones.
The preacher is rotten clear down to his bones.

"Some sit in pews while the rest prefer chairs.
Our elders are known for their long-winded prayers.
The sermons are boring, our building is cold.
We need some new flooring, our hymns are too old.

"This woman's too stubborn, that man is headstrong.
The preacher's wife's wardrobe and hairstyle are wrong!
This child is too loud, that man is too quiet...
But it's great to be a Christian, Joe! You really should try it!

"And, oh yes, our church dinners – how very sublime!
We picnic and nitpick at the very same time!"

"We argue and fight, and it's easy to see:
On doctrine and methods we seldom agree.
But, Joe, in spite of all of this fuss,
We hope you feel right at home here with us!"

But Joe wasn't listening. He had walked out the door.
In a world filled with quarrels, Joe didn't need more.
He longed for true friendship; instead, he found fights.
Why didn't God's people just point him to *Christ*?

When the prodigal son came home, the joyful father threw a party complete with music and dancing. I don't know whether the music was a cappella or it included

instruments. I just know I don't want to miss the joy of welcoming the lost son home.

3. An attitude that promotes harmony instead of discord.

Earlier I read those familiar verses from Ephesians chapter 4, where Paul lays down some basic truths we must never compromise—"one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and others. But along with the right doctrine, he tells us to have the right attitude. In fact, he deals with the attitude first.

Ephesians 4:2 says, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). Even when our position has been right, our disposition has often been wrong.

We may debate what it means when the Scriptures speak and the Scriptures are silent. But the Scriptures are NOT silent about LOVE. We use the slogan, "In essentials, unity

... in opinions, liberty." And we debate what's essential and what's non-essential. But don't forget, there's a third piece of the slogan: "in all things, love." Love is one essential we can all agree about!

We don't have to give up our convictions, but we do need to give up our pride. We need to have an attitude that promotes harmony instead of discord.

4. Recognition that unity does not require conformity in all matters.

Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 describe a church that is united in basic doctrine but diverse in gifts and ministry. Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 10, and other Scriptures teach that the body of Christ can be flexible enough to allow some diversity of opinion on issues that do not relate to the core of the gospel. We will never conform to one another in all of our opinions. Here in Tennessee, you probably don't like the fact that I'm a fan of the Ohio State Buckeyes and the Cincinnati Bengals—but I hope you still accept me as your brother.

5. Willingness to work together however we can, despite our differences of opinion.

I'm not interested in unity just for unity's sake. God has work for us to do, and our divisions are getting in the way. Some say, *How can we collaborate when we have so many differences?* "Collaborate" simply means we are "co-laborers," joining together in God's work.

- Can't we work together to reach university students on college campuses where young adults are finding their faith under attack from secularism?
- Can't our preachers and elders come together and pray for the salvation of our cities and towns?
- Shouldn't our missionaries mutually encourage one another when they are working in cultures hostile to the gospel?

- Can't our academic leaders discover common ground and help each other equip servant-leaders for the church and the world?
- Can't our Bible translators and publishers work together to spread God's Word through the printed page? (Shawn McMullen's new book on *Energizing Smaller Churches* includes chapters written by both Chr Church and CoC authors.)

Earlier this year I attended the Tulsa Soul-Winning Workshops. I met a brother there who preaches at an a cappella Church of Christ in Mississippi, and he told me how thankful he was for the help his community received after Hurricane Katrina. Many of the helpers came from Christian Churches in other states.

He said, "When you wake up one morning and find everything you own covered with mud, it changes your perspective. You don't have much interest in the things we usually fight about." He said, "When you see people working together to clean up the mess, it takes the hard edge off the things you used to say about them."

He's right. We need to quit slinging mud at each other, and get busy cleaning up the mess.

6. Willingness to pray more and quarrel less.

When things become a priority in our prayers, they become a priority in our lives. And when we come together in prayer and genuine repentance, our differences begin to fade.

The Lord told Solomon, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and will turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

7. Willingness to listen, get better acquainted, and respect each other more.

As I've gotten better acquainted with my brothers and sisters from the a cappella churches, I feel like my Christian family has doubled. There are great preachers I haven't heard, great books I haven't read, great college campuses I've never visited, great churches I haven't known about, great friendships I've been missing. I'm sorry that I have been missing these things, and I don't want to miss out on them anymore.

I can only speak for myself, but I believe that we in the independent churches have often been guilty of the sin of inattention: we've not even noticed or reached out in love to our brothers and sisters in the a cappella churches. At times we've been guilty of pride and insensitivity: instead of trying to understand where you're coming from, we've had the attitude that "instrumental music is not a big deal and you simply need to get over it." When we've acted that way—when I've acted that way—we've been wrong, and I'm truly sorry.

This year I served as president of the 2006 North American Christian Convention, and the theme for this year's NACC was "Together in Christ." The NACC is not a denominational gathering. It started back in the 1920s as an alternative to the denominational gatherings that many could no longer support. It's very much like the lectureships you're familiar with in the a cappella churches.

The NACC has no delegates, it has no power over local congregations, and it conducts no business except to pick the folks who will help to plan the next year's program. It's simply an annual time to come together for Bible teaching, mutual encouragement, and uplifting music. By coming together in Louisville last June at the NACC, it did NOT mean anyone was trying to speak for all of our churches, or exercise some sort of denominational control. We believe in the autonomy of the local church.

But this year's NACC theme focused on unity with the a cappella churches because many of us are coming to the realization that we need to believe in unity enough to do something about it. We need to repent of our own wrongdoing and confess our own part in our brotherhood's division. We need to celebrate our common heritage, and then get busy accomplishing our common mission.

Back in the early 1830s, Barton W. Stone, Raccoon John Smith, and others gathered in Lexington at Christmas

time. They were all part of a new and growing movement to restore the New Testament church. There were still many differences among them, and a lot of things about the future they hadn't figured out. But they simply agreed to let the Scriptures be their guide and to love each other as brothers.

Raccoon John Smith said, "Let us then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights. But let us come to the Bible and the Bible alone, as the only book . . . that can give us all the Light we need."

They shook hands, they sang together, and on the next day (a Sunday) they shared the Lord's Supper as one body.

I believe this can happen again. I believe we can bring comfort and hope to a world full of suffering. I believe we can preach the gospel, baptize new disciples, make a difference in our communities, send missionaries to other lands, feed the hungry, nurture families, save marriages, teach children, care for the elderly, meet the needs of the poor, and change our cities if we serve together.

I believe we can once again be a movement that shapes America and the world, but we don't have to do it alone. I believe the Lord wants us to do it together.