

The ICC and the ICOC

An In-Depth Distinction

Steve Staten, Chicago

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DISCLAIMER

This "unofficial" paper contains brief background and examinations of Scriptures on five pertinent topics. These statements will have been reviewed by colleagues for their soundness.

The supporting perspectives gained through my personal experiences are not necessarily shared by my reviewers.

-Steve Staten

Purpose Statement

This paper reviews five philosophical differences between the International Christian Churches (ICC) and the International Churches of Christ (ICOC). It utilizes a combination of Scripture, history, personal experiences, and lessons learned. Who is my audience? Anyone inside the ICOC, the ICC, or with any connection to our past who are curious of where the two movements differ. The paper is also written as an informational bridge aiding those in the ICC considering a transition to the ICOC.

A mistake is made in comparing most movements. One is not necessarily *this* and the other *that*. The ICC is broadly uniform because the culture, methods and styles are determined by one man. Even the websites largely use all the same articles. The ICOC is consistent on core doctrine but varied on cultures, styles, and methodologies. And the vast majority of our churches cooperate and our leaders are increasingly collaborating within their flocks. In this way the ICOC possess an uncontrived *unity* along with sometimes messy *diversity*, similar to what can be observed in the New Testament churches. Fortunately, it appears that both the ICC and the ICOC share the same core doctrines based on Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:36-41, Ephesians 4:3-6 and other substantive doctrinal passages.

I am increasingly convinced that it is easy to lose touch with the state of a flock or movement until something comes along and gets its attention. Usually it is membership losses, crisis, conflict, widespread immaturity, low morale and tapered growth. The ancient Corinthian congregation had some of those things, prompting the apostle Paul to deliver assessments, directions and follow up.

Paul called upon members in Corinth to do three smart things: examine themselves to see if they were "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5), ensure that they are learning from the past troubles that served "as warnings" (1 Corinthians 10:1-11), and confirm that "each one should build with care" (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). In other words, Christians should be *really in, always learning, and mindful of their steps*.

In the spirit of seeking sincere faith, learning and self-reflection, I've provided a historical backdrop that preceded the two movements, and a breakdown of five philosophies of the ICC, contrasting them from the Bible and the ICOC.

Prologue

The forerunner of the ICOC originated in a revolutionary period in US history in the late 1960s in one of the more conservative branches of the Restoration Movement, the southern Churches of Christ. Unforgettable images shaped the era including the Viet Nam war, the deaths of MLK and RFK in 1968, followed by various race riots, a fast emerging environmental movement, mixed with optimism in the Apollo Moon landing in 1969, more upheaval with the Kent State shootings in 1970, and a new form of journalism that was increasingly outspoken.

In 1967 the 14th Street (later Crossroads) Church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida hired Chuck Lucas. Over the next year Chuck pursued what many evangelical churches and just about every religious group was doing—reaching out to campus students. The churches of Christ and Christian Churches imagined conversion within baptismal confession, whereas, many Protestant and nearly all Evangelical groups used some form of the Sinner's Prayer, a practice that has evolved since the 1740's. The method took many forms and was put into a tract that reached printings past 1.5 billion, called the Four Spiritual Laws. It was the standard formula used by rival campus groups in the seventies. Today it is increasingly attributed to

dubious conversions and lax commitment—even by an increasing number of evangelicals.

Throughout the seventies the Crossroads Church of Christ in Gainesville was a leading pilot in the training of young ministers for deployment into traditional churches near universities. Some of most prominent church figures to come out of the early days of the "Crossroads movement" were Sam Laing, Bruce Williams, Kip McKean, Wyndham Shaw and Sam Powell. Chief tenets of this era were "one another" relationships and an emphasis on "total commitment" to Christ. The 1964 classic, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, by Robert Coleman, became an essential read for campus ministries. It properly emphasized imitating Jesus, who focused, imparted, delegated and supervised; however, it was not useful as a template for all relationships in the body. It was an early error in the movement to assume that young underdeveloped men and women could quickly be put in positions "over" others who were over others.

Meanwhile, the movement's increasing emphasis on discipling and expansion outside of Florida led to the name "the Discipling Movement." There were early campus ministries in Illinois, Tennessee, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, Colorado, California and many places in between. As young men and women were being sent out to churches throughout the US the movement was shedding its southern roots and developing "outside the box" methods and a distinct culture. This was necessary because the Churches of Christ mission work in northern cities tended to stagnate. A turning point occurred in 1979 when McKean went to work with a small church in Lexington, Massachusetts, later called the Boston Church of Christ. Hundreds of people from the campus ministries and Churches of Christ went to Boston to be trained—hence the new descriptor, "The Boston Movement." The Boston Church of Christ spread the gospel throughout the world, planting over 50 churches in its first twenty years. Chicago, London, New York, Toronto, were among the first.

During the later eighties there were pillar churches in customary geographical regions based on the spirit of 1 Thessalonians 1:6ff, with Chicago and the Midwest being the first model. Small cities would look to the larger cities/churches for inspiration and guidance. Between 1987 and 1991 there were "reconstructions," which have a mixed history. On one hand many individuals and churches throughout the US were in disarray, spiritually and otherwise. Pillar churches would send new evangelists and bring in the previous evangelist to be retrained. On the other hand, an overly aggressive roundup approach was often used, in which leaders began emphasizing authority, and a hierarchy was introduced without adequate study and consistent application. Even today people remember this era through a range of vastly different experiences.

A fissure had gradually developed between the emerging movement and the traditional Churches of Christ since the mid-seventies. By 1988 churches were taking sides, and there was a virtual cutoff and hardening between the movements by 1991, recognized in major publications on both sides by 1993. This is an unfortunate and humbling part of our history. The reasons varied, depending on the situation. Certainly there were significant issues on the mainline side, that I believe called for revolutionary efforts to help increasing numbers of people to more fully experience Christ; but this paper draws attention to flaws that developed earlier within the movement, sometimes in reaction. I believe those flaws, which I will draw attention to, largely continue in the ICC today, whereas the main body of the ICOC has been increasingly distancing itself from past blemishes and reflects a diverse tapestry of methods, attitudes and philosophies.

The Old ICOC

The movement became distinguished by a structure of geographical World Sectors under Kip McKean by 1992, becoming the International Churches of Christ by 1994. For all the good anyone may rightly feel about the following era, it must be said that the structure amplified *the strengths and the weaknesses* of McKean, but was less accommodating to people who only wanted his strengths.

Before we continue, whereby I will address our shared ICOC/ICC past, let's distinguish between a *stereotype* and a *prototype*. Stereotypes are an easy but lazy way of talking about perceptions through exaggeration. Simpler minds prefer exaggerations but stereotyping tends to be harmful. On the other hand, prototypes are models of what is clearly visible in recurring patterns but may not be as pervasive as we think. A group may be comprised of many prototypes existing alongside one another. I include this clarification because over-generalizing the ICOC, the ICC or other Christian movements doesn't do anyone a service.

Elsewhere I wrote about the old era of the ICOC, viewing one prototypical experience.

STRENGTHS. The era was marked by great faith, radical zeal, impressive growth and expansion, churches planted in every country containing at least one city with a population of 100,000, the raising up of many leaders, diversity of races including people of everyday vocations as well as artists, entertainers, and many business professionals. Captivating formulations included phrases that expressed core values: "A disciple is willing to go anywhere, do anything and give up everything for Jesus." The vision: "to reach the world in one generation" and the first global mission goal was to "plant a church in every country with a city of 100,000." There were moments where faultless disciples made courageous stands before governments and the media. It was an era when the sins of others such as cultists, Church of Christ caricatures and even careless Christians were used unsuccessfully to brand and persecute every disciple. It was also an era where lepers were cured, children were adopted, the needy were clothed and fed, treatments for HIV+ children were made available, and the sick were healed. There were exhilarating moments when disciples would gladly accept the reprisal for their faith because souls were being saved.

WEAKNESSES. It is easy, in hindsight, to analyze our weaknesses in that era—an overly zealous push for fast growth, disrespect, and ambivalence of Restoration and Church of Christ roots, top leaders largely experiencing long-distance and not local discipling, frequent failure to listen to upstanding members, and an increasing bend towards uniformity rather than maturity and allowance for differences. Critics rightly saw increasing patterns of "control" over time; leaders were sometimes called "anointed" and were almost always favored in conflicts. Too frequently criticism from the outside was labeled as persecution. Many were hurt by "predetermined outcome" group confrontations, which were preferred over more safe, investigative, open and principled options because of their expediency and support of the agenda. A world sector leadership was partly established on a misunderstanding of The Jethro Principle, implying tiers of authority, vetted only from the top. Over time there was the emergence of concepts of "making disciples," "being a disciple," and "being

unified." Problem-solving was often based on symptoms, not understanding. Too often the appearance of results outplayed a look under the hood. Growth trumped health. There were many clear exceptions to these patterns but the die was being cast.

A leadership crisis of late 2002 that extended through the membership in early 2003 left a wake of repercussions that reach the present day. During efforts to re-envision the movement in 2005, there were clear signs of those who wanted an improved version of ICOC 1.0 without all the trappings, while others sought a new movement altogether. Some of those who most dogmatically wanted the earlier culture eventually became part of an alternative movement called the International Christian Churches.¹

The ICOC and ICC Part Ways

Between 2001-2003, depending on the situation, leaders and churches began addressing and sometimes repudiating past weaknesses at the local level, though most of these repentances and retractions occurred in Spring of 2003.

Numerous events between 11/2002-2/2003 led to a meltdown that profoundly affected much of the ICOC in a variety of ways. That brief period deserves separate consideration and even good friends often see things differently. One thing most agree about—it was a collective introspective turning point following a general indictment of leadership failures.

At an informal gathering in Dallas, Texas over three days, October 3-5, officiated by Mike Taliaferro and Todd Asaad, there were clear signs of eventual recovery. On February 23, 2004 various representatives of the mainline church and the ICOC met in Abilene before a crowd of roughly 1,000 and acknowledged a variety of errors on both sides that led to the schism. The ICOC brothers who attended the sessions, staff and non-staff, were invited to an ad hoc meeting that resulted in a quick vote for the Chicago Church to host a movement-wide leadership meeting. The first formally named International Leadership Conference was planned that September.

The movement was coming together in an organic way—through relationships and meaningful discussions. A big question was, "How can we move forward with a sense of representation?", which meant old era/new era leaders as well as US/non-US. We wanted founding figures to have a seat at the table like anyone else if they would "play well."

In July of that year Chicago evangelist Tony Singh and I met with Kip McKean in Portland. We attempted to change his mind on some disparaging statements he openly made about the Chicago Church of Christ, as well as obvious errors. For instance, he reported in a paper that we took "International" out the name Chicago International Church of Christ to move towards the mainline churches, but our CCOC name hadn't changed since 1986. In fact, I don't know of any Midwest or European church that had "International" in its name.

We were hoping for more from our talk in Portland, which was friendly but puzzling. Looking back, there were signs that Kip saw leadership, authority and relationships in the Scriptures very differently than the newly emerging movement. Over the next year it became very apparent that he was going to do his own thing, and he actively recruited his new base of followers at the Seattle ILC. Those who went with Kip seemed to see the rest of us as

¹ *Renaissance: When Light Cuts Through the Haze, Part I – An Invitation*, page 10. January, 2016.

betrayers. During the latter half of 2005 many figures in the ICOC affirmed a brotherhood letter, drafted by his friend and advocate Roger Lamb, calling Kip McKean to account over his increasingly divisive behaviors.

The ICOC is not the first new movement to experience problems during the lifetimes of its founders, as any informed Lutheran, Presbyterian or other Protestant understand. Sixteenth century protest figures like Zwingli, and Luther and others became tragic figures, known in the final years of their lives for their authoritarian and mean spirited ways. We too were reminded of the dangers of holding human leaders in too high of esteem (Psalm 146:3-4).

The ICC and ICOC 2.0

A few years ago Tricia and I transitioned from the fulltime ministry. I became a self-employed organizational health consultant, and she became a certified mediator. Some of our work has taken us into troubled churches and cities where the ICC and ICOC meet a stone's throw from each other. As such I believe I can responsibly speak to the differences between the ICOC and the ICC without disparaging the average member of either group.

Each of our movements have separate stories of how we got here since the separation occurred over a decade ago. A newcomer can follow the ICOC progress on Disciples Today. The emerging ICOC, which I call ICOC 2.0, went through incremental recovery stages following the crisis and began organizing in 2007 around service teams and geographic regions. Our service teams today are Evangelists, Elders, Teachers, Campus, Youth and Family, Women, Singles, HOPE and Benevolence, Communications, and Administration. We have 33 geographical regions, each with delegates.

A google search for the ICC yields www.KipMcKean.com, and a little further down is www.Usd21.org, which contains links to their "Sold Out" churches. It seems to me that the ICC is organized around Kip McKean. After a troubled start launching the new movement in 2005 from Portland (OR), McKean recently wrote, "In many respects, the planting of the City of Angels International Christian Church (CAICC) on May 6, 2007 was the beginning of God's new SoldOut Movement!"²

In a March 10, 2015 article by McKean, *The Biblical Differences Between The International Churches of Christ And The International Christian Churches*³, he cites differences between the movements. In my mind, he misses the mark because critical topics are mixed together or left out. He titled them: 1) A Bible Church vs. A New Testament Church, 2) Interpretation of Scripture, 3) Discipling is a command of God and not optional, 4) A Central Leadership with a Central Leader vs. Autonomous congregations, and 5) The dream of the evangelization of the nations in THIS generation. Some of these labels are inaccurate. I decided to reframe the differences and still answer his allegations. I could have listed more than five differences but they are all offshoots of the same paradigm of thought.⁴

A memorable quote on facts seems helpful at this point. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an ambassador to four successive US presidents, JFK to Gerald Ford, provided a helpful reminder for controversies, "You are entitled to your opinion. But you are not entitled to your own facts." We are going to look explore old topics with clear biblical references and other

² Editor's forward to Tim Kernan's article, *Join the Revolution*, July, 2016, www.caicc.net/join-the-revolution/

³ Kip McKean, *The Biblical Differences Between The International Churches of Christ And The International Christian Churches*, www.caicc.net/gods-soldout-movement/, published in March, 2012.

⁴ McKean, *The Biblical Differences Between The International Churches of Christ And The International Christian Churches*

facts, some of which the readers may have never read before. Please use the Scriptures and other facts to form your opinion.

The following five divergences are written in a gradual conversational format, starting with ICC position, a move to Scriptural considerations and then to my perception of where typical members of the ICOC stand in relation to 1) the "one generation" timetable, 2) the leadership structure of a global fellowship, 3) the "anointed" theology, 4) the essence of church life and 5) the practice of discipling.

The "One Generation" Timetable

The mantra "reach the world in one generation" was frequently used in the old ICOC and currently in the ICC on the assumption that the world could be evangelized in one generation like it was in the first century. The main passages cited to support this is Matthew 24:14, 34, Acts 1:8, Colossians 1:6, 23.

Kip McKean stated.

The dream of the evangelization of the nations in THIS generation. This vision to change the world was rejected, because many ICOC teachers wrongly concluded that this was one of the primary reasons for bitterness in the ICOC. Biblically, God's church in the Book of Acts is portrayed as a movement – "the Word of God continued to increase and spread." (Acts 12:24) Implied in this passage is the numeric "increase" of disciples and the geographic "spread" of the movement. Jesus' vision for His church was to go "from Jerusalem, to all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Thirty-some years later in 61 AD Paul writes, "All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing... This is the gospel that you heard and has been proclaimed to every creature under Heaven." (Colossians 1:6, 23) If the world was evangelized in the first century, certainly, we can do it again in the twenty-first century!

Ron Harding, an evangelist for the ICC in Los Angeles wrote.

Some began to label Kip as a "false teacher" for this dream, believing that the pressure on the churches to evangelize the world in a generation was the primary source of bitterness in many leaders and in many churches. Yet devoid of the dream to change the world, Proverbs 29:18 would prove true again – "Without vision the people perish."

Kip and Elena reiterated at the meeting, "The dream of an evangelized world is not only possible, but it was accomplished in the first century and is the command of God." (Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 3:16, 4:9-11) After this meeting, the McKeanes were fired for these convictions.⁵

With the exception of the opening tagline and the first sentence from McKean, most ICOC members would find agreement with the rest, though the idea of "do it again in the twenty-first century" requires examination of what "do it" looked like back then. But a two-fold problem exists in the leading statement. First, Kip used his vision without sufficient examination of Matthew 24:14 in its historical context. Second, the "one generation"

⁵ Ron Harding, *A HISTORY OF THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN TIMES*, www.KipMcKean.com. In order to best understand the reasons why the "McKeanes were fired", read *Brothers' Letter to Kip McKean*, www.disciplestoday.org/commentary/perspectives/item-410-brothers-letter-to-kip-mckean#.V9p51o-cGUk

timetable is not what caused people to become bitter. What embittered people was the stream of harmful decisions through the unsuitable placement of people in key roles, and the way that they were trained to lead.

Also, we should point out that Proverbs 29:18 is often misused by preachers who attempt to rouse their congregants—"you need a vision for your life." The Hebrew word used here for vision, *chazôn*, is largely referring to the *revelation of God's will* to the prophets (Isaiah 1:1, Nahum 1:1). The wisdom writer was communicating that without prophetic revelation, usually delivered through the prophets, the people lose restraint and abandon God's law. The proverb was a reminder of the darkest time in the history of Israel when there were no prophetic visions, "The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions." (1 Samuel 3:1). The word vision from *chazôn* was *God's revelation*—not some contrived vision, plan or dream for your life, or your church, or your movement.

Let's go back to the time that Jesus spoke the words—"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14). During the week before Jesus' trial and execution he met with his disciples and spoke of events that would occur within a generation. There would be ominous signs that preceding a judgment on Jerusalem, then came the judgement in the latter 60s AD, while the gospel was being preached to the whole "world" (Matthew 24:14, *oikouménē, inhabited realm*). Taken to the most literal extreme it would have included every person from every culture of the global earth but the Roman world around the Mediterranean was all they knew, or could safely travel or even possibly reach.

We have more reasons to believe a restricted meaning. The book of Acts opens up with Jesus and his disciples having their final moments with their Lord. Jesus said, "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the "earth" (Acts 1:8, *gēs, land or ground*). Again, to what end? The answer is in Scripture. Apparently, a large numbers of Jews from around the Mediterranean world stayed in the city through the day of Pentecost. And something big was about to happen that year, something that was prophesied by Isaiah and Joel. The regions in Isaiah 11:10-16 closely corresponded to the nations represented in Acts 2:5-11. The inhabited realm was the Roman world, which was providentially set up with an advanced road system during a period when a secular form of peace brought certain governmental protections.

The Gospel-Acts story conveys that God had set up the disciples for a particular victory. For one thing, he enabled the greater Mediterranean region to coalesce around one language and a protected travel system. Some estimates indicate that there were as many as 1,000 synagogues in the Roman world at the time and that Jews represent a tenth of the city of Rome's population. Apparently God brought hundreds of thousands of Jews to Jerusalem, a city of 30,000, for the Passover. But AD30 was going to be different because of a controversial rabbi from Nazareth who was disrupting the status quo. Within one week thousands of Jews, many of them visitors, became caught up in a local conspiracy and frenzied mob that crucified Jesus.

Approximately seven weeks later large number of local and foreign Jews were convinced of their error, became grief-stricken, and confessed Jesus as Messiah and immersed in water. Many of the new believers stuck around for some time. Occasionally they would need to be nudged by providential persecution and the Holy Spirit to keep moving along from Judea, Samaria and all the ends of the land. After being strengthened, many of them went home and preached the gospel. The yearly influx of Jews in Jerusalem for the Jewish

festivities created new audiences and aided the church's quest to reach their known world. Meanwhile, the apostles scattered, mostly beyond the scope of reliable historical record. And within a generation disciples reached the nations of an imperial Roman world population approaching 100 million. There is no credible evidence or suggestion in commentaries that they reached every person. The New Testament indicates that they proclaimed "in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23, ESV), presumably within the Roman world. Columbus and Magellan hadn't yet traversed the oceans.

What about today? Every disciple today would see the great spiritual value of the much larger civilized world to be reached in our generation, but most of them wouldn't use Jesus's Matthew 24 speech, related to the predicament of faithlessness in Jerusalem as their mandate or reason. They would think of the numerous flashpoints that indicate the fragility and hostilities of the modern world: the devastation following the Arab Spring that strengthened ISIS since late 2010, immigration issues on a global level, and in the US—the divide between African Americans and police, and the leadership crisis made evident by the 2016 US presidential race, among other things. Clearly, the world needs Christ. However, there are serious problems with creating a strict "one generation" dogma.

Jesus spoke to a particular situation that involved specific prophecies and signs, and sent his disciples to a Roman world population with a population less than the size of modern Japan. And there is an elephant in the room with this whole idea. The ICC always seems to imply that it has to happen through one movement, but what movement has the legacy, character, resiliency and organizing principles to be the sole custodians of the whole vision?

The world has passed a population of 7 billion. Wouldn't it benefit from multiple movements? I pray for more gatherings that share our core convictions, and I believe it will happen as more and more people are seeing the unfulfilled promises of infant baptism and praying the Sinner's Prayer. My hope is that these otherwise orthodox believers will straighten out their conversion theology and Lordship commitments, and be part of the multi-movement effort. As that happens—and I believe the signs are there—we will see another revolution. One of the great things about living in a post-denominational era is that members of old traditions care less about the frivolous dogmas that once separated believers. I suggest that we, the ICOC members, pray for believers from other traditions, and become models of self-reflection and self-awareness, while staying true to our principles and serving as one collective light for other Christian groups.

Meanwhile, I believe that most in the current ICOC members would welcome God positioning us for a Pentecost-like opportunity to reach masses throughout the known world—in one generation. The focus should be on being worthy custodians of any such opportunity if and when it comes. As it is, we are still living with the consequences of the "one generation" dogma of ICOC 1.0—being spread thinly throughout the world with many flocks of high needs.

Frank Kim delivered a message on May 22 in his home church of Denver and July 10 at the *Reach* conference in St. Louis where he replaced the old "one generation" dogma with a more biblically principled model that he calls "Generational Evangelism". Frank cited many Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:4-7, Exodus 12:24-27, Psalm 78:1-7, Malachi 4:4-6, Acts 2:38-39 and Ephesians 6:4, as the basis for this model. The parents teach the children well, and love their children, who become Christians because of their own faith, and the faith is passed on to them. This is no formula for guarantees, because children struggle, but there is a greater overall retention because the church is their church. He said that in a "Generational Church" family teaches family, family develops maturity. And faithful families

provide more people to go out into the world. In this way we can reach "every nation, and all people" on God's timetable.

The Leadership Structure of Global Fellowships

In Kip's article he contrasted the ICC and ICOC with a statement—*A Central Leadership with a Central Leader vs. Autonomous congregations*. Assumptions throughout Kip's writings explain this either/or interpretation: 1) that the ICOC is against all forms of cohesive leadership or governance because we don't subscribe to his 'one man over all others' model, 2) that the Bible contains statements about the necessity of a prominent movement leader in a location of centralized leadership over his people, 3) that he can overlook passages⁶ about vetting of individuals for influential roles because he alone is qualified to be that leader, and 4) that self-governing churches that cooperate and collaborate can be grouped with ambivalent non-cooperating autonomous churches. This example of binary either/or thinking is most prevalent in the heart and mind of a person who is in a conflict, not someone who cares about nuances, facts and the thoughts of others.

McKean's position that they are "A Bible Church vs. A New Testament Church" is a way to infuse an Old Testament concept into the church without sufficient consideration. That was a trap that the ancient Christian Judaizers (Galatians 2:14) fell into, although on different dogmas. Kip argues that a Christian movement is supposed to be modeled, at the top, after kingdom models in the Old Testament.

Throughout the Bible, the Israelites were at their strongest with the Lord when they had a central leader: Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David. As a matter of fact, the book of Judges says of those days when they did not, "Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." (Judges 21:25) In the New Testament, Jesus is the leader of "the Movement!" Uniquely, when He ascends to Heaven, Peter takes on this responsibility as "the apostle to the Jews" since for the first seven years of Christianity only Jews became Christians. Interestingly, after Paul became "the apostle to the Gentiles," the leadership of the movement by Acts 15 had passed to Jesus' oldest half-brother James. At the Jerusalem Council, James, after listening to both sides of the circumcision issue, gives his singular authoritative "judgment" which is then bound on all the churches. (Acts 15:19-24) Even Paul after his missionary journeys reports to James and submits to his direction. (Acts 21:24) The Mainline Church of Christ and the ICOC do not believe in an authoritative central leader or leadership. Sadly, autonomous churches only produce autonomous disciples.⁷

Again, let's get the facts. The passage in Judges is relevant about the need for leadership in Israel but there were two models for Israel to choose from—one from the world (kings) and one from precedent that Moses established (judges). God was pleased with the model of judges paired with prophets. In those times judges were either vetted by the people (Deuteronomy 1:9-18) or recognized through divine measure such as being "called" and confirmed by the priest (1 Samuel 3). A judge, *shaphat*, provided a threefold role as a law-giver, problem-solving, and one who reminds the people to seek God. He wasn't in charge of people's lives. But Israel opted for having a king, which had serious downsides that are

⁶ The New International Version (Deuteronomy 1:9-18)

⁷ McKean, *The Biblical Differences Between ...*

covered later.

In the New Testament we see the prominence of James and Peter. James was half-brother to Jesus and an elder, perhaps the first among equals. Simon Peter was a spokesman for the apostles (Matthew 16:18-19, Acts 2:14ff, 15:7). More importantly for us today, their moral authority was evident by how they managed a challenge involving two sides of a new and potentially divisive issue. The two men: 1) held open and transparent hearings, 2) reasoned with the use of past precedent, witnesses, and Scripture, 3) took in feedback and obtained full support, 4) proposed a position that lasted for a few years, and 5) called upon the church to select those who executed the proposal. This passage is not a basis for centralized leadership inasmuch as it is a case for appealing to the most credible and trusted sources of answers.

Though we don't have any half-brothers to Jesus or apostles in our midst, we can utilize approaches like the one in Acts 15. Our Delegate processes and meetings are derived from this example. The ICOC supports a first-among-equals approach of officiating service teams. Basically, it is facilitated leadership. Key roles are vetted and selected in rotations. We tend to use the criteria for deacons as minimal requirement for most roles (1 Timothy 3:8-10). Leadership is not geographically centralized because it is based on representation of regions and roles.

During the 1990s Kip used to lead the ICOC movement through the needs and lens of Los Angeles. By contrast, today the ICOC has over thirty regions with at least two delegates each, and more, based on size. This regional approach helps us to avoid being lopsided in our perspectives, whereas centralized leadership in one location has always tended to create blind spots. In the year 1054, it certainly created a fission that erupted in a split called The Great Schism or the East-West Schism, which lasted for seven centuries. The leaders of the Rome in the west, and Nicea and then Constantinople in the east tended to project their own value system on other regions of the Church. This kind of centralized leadership fails because it is nearsighted.

A Christian movement no more needs an authoritarian centralized leadership in one location than Israel needed a king (1 Samuel 8:7).

The “Anointed” Theology

By far the most serious difference between the ICC and the ICOC is how leaders are viewed. The ICC co-join the global and local “anointed leaders” who are “over” all the rest of God's people, and a concept of “bringing in the remnant.”

I will focus on the anointed leader concept, from which the house-of-cards argument for a unified remnant under Kip McKean originates. In Kip McKean's, *Revolution Through Restoration III*, released in 2003, he spoke to the issue.

“Being anointed, or chosen by God, does not at all imply infallibility (like the Catholic Church's belief with the Pope) or even that the individual will be saved when they die, i.e. Saul and Judas. It does not necessarily mean they are even the people of God; i.e. the Lord called Cyrus “his anointed” in Isaiah 45:1. I believe being anointed of God is a principle that is still at work today. However, I realize some do not believe this principle applies today.”

Let us be patient with each other, by not looking down on or condemning each other. (Romans 14:3, 4)⁸

Ron Harding describes the evangelists who had Kip McKean removed from his role.

*These men swayed those who held positions on the Board of Directors to use the authority given to them by the "laws of the United States" to supersede the "laws of the Scriptures" and force out the leader that even all of them for years had wholeheartedly agreed was "God's man" – placed in authority by God to lead His movement and maintain unity ... only one time in all of Scripture is the leader of one of God's movements ever "forced out" of his leadership position by the people he led. This occurred in Absalom's rebellion against David with Absalom suffering the consequence of death. (2 Samuel 15-18) In time, God raised-up David to lead again – just as He has now done with Kip! In the Bible, God always "raised-up" and "took out" His leader in "His" timing. God expected His people to trust Him and to wait on His timing instead of rebelling against Him and His leader.*⁹

It will be clear why the modern use of the anointing principle is not a matter of opinion—but of major significance to the safety and health of a people. On this dogma stand all the other issues between the ICC and ICOC.

We once held that God raised Kip up to inspire and train ministers. When members heard him called "God's man", it was a term of appreciation and endearment—not initially as anointed. The anointing concept slipped in around 1990. After becoming a teacher, sometime around 1995 I began frequently and openly disparaging Gene Edward's use of the anointing concept from his book, *The Tale of Three Kings*. I called the publishers, Seedsowers Christian Books, with my concerns. The person who answered the phone informed me that the popular paperback had been misused by some authoritarian movements to protect abusive leaders. For instance, leaders in the now-defunct Shepherding movement would use it to escape accountability. After all, like Saul, they were "anointed". We cautioned readers in our congregation.

By the turn of the century the ICOC was in a position that it had supported a man to have a level of executive power that most people in the church did not know he held. Kip had built a world for himself without open protocols for his removal and he made life difficult for dissenters. By this time, average members and leaders everywhere were increasingly concerned about the leadership of the movement, but no one in my circle presumed that McKean was above being removed by godly men. Discipline from Matthew 18:15-18 processes is one of the ways that God deals with recurring sin. Kip's dependence on an exception clause for "God's anointed" has been used in fringe churches that embrace "covering theology" such as the now defunct Shepherding movement. It is easy to find examples of the harm brought by this ideology with simple web searches.¹⁰

The writings of McKean and Harding raises questions. How can it be called rebellion to assess someone in authority (3 John 9-12), to appeal to Scripture (Acts 17:10-11) and to fix an error in a foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)? What was the rebellion about when no one was

⁸ Kip McKean, *Babylon to Zion: Revolution Through Restoration III*

⁹ Harding, A HISTORY OF THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN TIMES, www.KipMcKean.com

¹⁰ <http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/41542-even-god-s-anointed-leaders-can-abuse-the-flock>

seeking Kip's position for power? The principle accusers that he names have never supported anarchy. For some it was the unscriptural "anointed" position that was rejected. I reject the pyramid paradigm that can be traced back to the secular influences of the Roman Church, Frederick Taylor principles of micro-management, and the military—but not Scripture.

Let's look at the "anointed" theology from the beginning. Moses was perceived as being anointed because of the miracles that happened through him, as recording in the first twenty chapters of Exodus. After him Aaron and the other priests were anointed (Numbers 3:2-23). The sense is that the anointed person was selected for assignment by divine call, through miracles or through another objective process—not self-obtained. The concept of the anointing takes new meaning in 1 Samuel when the people of Israel want a king, just like their neighboring nations have kings (1 Samuel 8). People tend to bond with a king in an intensely deep way, even adore him—at least in the beginning. The Lord let them have their way, but not without a warning. The first three kings were vetted and "anointed" by others.¹¹ And since Israel was a theocracy there was plenty of explanation of how they got to their position.

Later on, however, beginning with Rehoboam, subsequent kings were firstborn sons who received their father's position, regardless of character. It only took a few generations to see that this development did not bode well for Israel, and later for Judah, with a handful of exceptional and principled kings—such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Those few monarchs were known to listen to seers and prophets in their lives. Following the end of the kings, the prophets pointed to a future anointed king, the Messiah. In between, king Cyrus was called anointed, because he was selected by God to support the Jews in rebuilding Jerusalem (Isaiah 44:28, 45:1, Ezra 1:1-11). But from that moment there would only be one anointed leader—the Messiah.

In the New Testament there are at least three words that are translated as some variation of anointing in the New Testament.

*Chriō—The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*¹²

*Christos— "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed."*¹³ (Christos=Christ)

*Chrisma—I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.²⁷ But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.*¹⁴

¹¹ The vetting and anointing of the first three kings, none of these kings were the firstborn son of a previous leader: Saul (1 Samuel 9:16), David (1 Samuel 16:3, 13, 2 Samuel 2:4), and Solomon (1 Kings 1:32-35).

¹² *English Standard Version* (Luke 4:18-19)

¹³ *ESV* (Acts 4:25-26)

¹⁴ *ESV* (1 John 2:26-27)

Chrisma is the only word that explicitly allows for an anointed Christian and John states that every true believer has that anointing. The context of 1 John is the necessity to safeguard believers against deceivers—those who claim to be special and possess an inside track.

The ICOC does not espouse the anointing concept for its leaders, although we would hold that there is great risk for someone opposing leadership, whether good or poor, by abandoning processes outlined in Scripture (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Timothy 5:19-20). Such safeguards protect everyone—the accused, accuser and the greater body.

Now, back to the connected concept of “bringing in the remnant.” Under the direction of the anointed, members have engaged other Christians in order to “harvest” (pull out) them, often by disparaging their church so that they become part of the remnant. The subject, *Bringing in the Remnant*, i.e., which is about harvesting ICOC members has been put on ICC conference programs.¹⁵ Not all ICC leaders agree with this practice. It is reported that Mike Patterson in Orlando doesn't believe in harvesting the remnant. So there may be some variation in practices in the ICC.

Sometimes the ICC meets next door to where the ICOC meets. Is this part of a harvesting plan? I don't know for sure. But I recently received a Facebook invite from an ICC member, and accepted it. Then a video showed up on my feed from the same individual with an “ICC Hotnews” video, having much of the same look and feel of a ICOC Hotnews video.

Interesting. It seems that Kip McKean is fascinated with the ICOC—first disparaging us, trying to harvest us, and now copying us.

What does the remnant concept mean today? We recognize that there is a strong concept of a remnant during the era of the OT kings, following various divisions and dispersions of God's people. In fact, Isaiah predicted a gathering of the remnant (Isaiah 10:20-11:16), which is what happened through the coming of “the anointed one” and his early church.

Certainly there is a scattering of saints throughout the Christian world today. We could call them the remnant but it would be difficult to determine where all the most theologically and devout followers if Christ can be found and how many there might be. Most members of the ICOC are good with not knowing. There are so many lost people in the world that it doesn't seem prudent to craftily “harvest” true converts from other churches. All that said, more people are now leaving the ICC and coming to the ICOC even though we are not trying to “harvest” them.

The Essence of Church Life

My friends Andy and Tammy Fleming were in Boston in the eighties, then went as missionaries to Stockholm and eventually through other changes ended up on the Moscow team, then to Los Angeles. When Andy left the foreign mission field to become involved in administration in the LA church he reports being shocked. The Boston years, for him, were all about pure love for God. The LA church, as he later described to me, was much more “hierarchical,” “corporate,” and “dysfunctional.” Andy was one of the various men who pressed for subsequent changes. He saw the church had become something different than it was in the beginning. During the period between 1988 and 1999 the ICOC was gradually becoming something we didn't sign up for. Critics were right to say we should have seen this coming. Outsiders, even unfriendly ones, can sometimes shed great light.

The essence of the ICC today, based on Kip's writings, and reports from ex-ICC members

¹⁵ Raul Moreno, *Bringing in the Remnant* (speech), Global Leadership Conference, January 3, 2014

reminds me of the top-down closed system that became the ICOC. Based on consistent reports of people who left, the "SoldOUT movement" has some of the same trademarks—appointing very underqualified individuals for leadership, a strong sense of hype, and an inability to manage dissent.

Dissenting, when performed properly through demonstration of respect and good process, is how people and organizations learn, and adjust to new realities, and grow. It is part of the Christian life. There are many moments in the Scriptures where individuals 'begged to differ', thought on their own, or were willing to raise an objection in the pursuit of a better outcome—a variety of prophets, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, Barnabas, and the Berean believers. There is a time to converge and a time to diverge, a time to comply and a time to question, a time to believe and a time to verify.

The heavily directional leadership is inconsistent with the "build one another up" interdependencies cited by the apostle Paul. The church is to have a strong sense of being a body (1 Corinthians 12:12-21). Interestingly, "the very word 'organization' comes from the Greek word *organon*, which is used to signify the distinguishing differentiation of the body's international organs one from another."¹⁶ Organs are not ranked as much as they are interlinked. The apostle appealed for Corinthians to depend on and respect other roles in the body. Similarly, he called upon believers in Rome to fulfill their unique contribution and serve members of the body through their gifts (Romans 12:4-8).

The church has strong family (Ephesians 3:14-15, Galatians 6:10, 1 Peter 2:7, 5:9, Hebrews 2:11), and kingdom features that establish the essence for the relationships (Colossians 1:13, 4:11, 1 Thessalonians 2:12). The church also has a judicial component (Acts 15:1-35, Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8) much like, but not the same, as the nation of Israel. Whereas the writings of Moses provide the backdrop for numerous New Testament processes, Jesus upgraded the principles of justice, as well as how to respond when being wronged and pursuit of forgiveness.

Some might argue that since the word "corporation" derives from *corpus*, the Latin word for body or a "body of people" and that the church has a corporate aspect. That depends of what is meant by corporate. It certainly is beneficial to think in corporate terms to the degree that it helps with formal legal and fiscal responsibilities (such as managing money, 2 Cor. 8:19-21). No one I know in the ICOC contends the church should become like a company that is run by many complex and veiled policies; but we do want to be legal and responsible.

The essence of the ICOC is about being family locally, a brotherhood collectively, as members of Christ's kingdom. We have been improving our judicial character by improving practices for resolving conflicts. For instance, there have been significant improvements in appeals processes and mediation. The elders service team receives periodic requests for help when problems cannot be resolved regionally. Disciples Today helped me establish www.BridgingInternational.com for this purpose. That said, we have a way to go in some churches.

Each congregation is self-governing in making their own decisions, as they were in the New Testament. Many of our churches have an understanding with nearby and pillar churches to collaborate on problems and obtaining ministers. In other words, their autonomy includes intra-dependence—sharing resources, and cooperation for greater needs, and deferring to

¹⁶ Gibson Burrell, *Styles of Organizing* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), 34.

expertise. Most of the ICOC practices the same intra-dependence, although, we have some congregations on the fringe that err in this principle—from my perspective.

The Practice of Discipling

Ron Harding, an ICC writer and compiler of ICC history, explains the origins of “one over one” discipling, which became mandatory in the older ICOC, and today’s ICC.

With so many new Christians in the Boston Church of Christ, Kip felt that the “buddy system” approach was not effective. Building upon the concepts of “shepherding” and “prayer partners,” he came up with “discipleship partners.” In these relationships, the evangelists, elders and women’s ministry leaders – after discussion and prayer – arranged for an older or stronger Christian of the same sex to give direction to each of the younger or weaker ones. (This principle of mentoring is clearly seen in Jesus’ relationship with the Twelve, Paul’s relationship to Timothy, as well as in Titus 2:3-5 where the older women are commanded to train the younger women.) Each pair was expected to meet weekly and have daily contact. This “one-over-one” discipling paradigm was also applied to marriages; thus came the innovation of “marriage discipling” – a mature married couple mentoring a younger married couple.¹⁷

At this time, a movement to eliminate a structured outreach (Bible Talks) and structured discipling (Discipleship Partners) arose.

Another significant testimony of God pouring out His blessings when authentic discipling was restored is in marriage and family. For years, the ICOC “boasted in the Lord” to have very few divorces. With discipling abandoned, divorce became rampant – even with couples who were at one time in the fulltime ministry! In sharp contrast, in God’s new movement once again divorce is non-existent in most congregations, as the marriages and families are “rejoicing in the Lord.”

It’s necessary to get a more accurate picture of the old days. By the mid-eighties the practice of scheduled one-with-one discipling was the ideal. Most members never had “daily contact,” except for those in ministry training situations. The marriage discipling was one of the best things that ever happened to most people. Hence, the low number of divorces. When I first remember hearing of one-over-one, sometime around 1990, it meant those with more experience and wisdom providing guidance the other person but gradually became authority “over” another person. Hence, the problems that came. For many, what began as a vehicle for personal growth, learning, maturity, accountability, and meaningful covenant relationships went in the direction of a structured way to achieve numerical results.

Another change happened that affected discipling. In the beginning we experienced “pull” leadership, which engenders loyalty, and creates community that inspire people to join. I remember the “pull” of inspiration and hundreds of people I have talked to, including former members, remember the beginning similarly. “Push” leadership was emerging, evident by giving orders left and right with less upward accountability. It occurred in different places at different times. By 1999 “push” leadership began pushing people right out the door in many

¹⁷ Ron Harding, *A HISTORY OF THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN TIMES*, www.KipMcKean.com

places, such as Chicago.

In 2000 large US churches were taking a closer look their membership roll. Spiritual Recovery, an idea co-developed by Marty Wooten and Reese Neyland was introduced. Small groups of struggling members were facilitated by shepherding figures would meet on a Friday night, have a meal, and discuss openly their spiritual life and frustrations with the church. I became an elder early that year and we adopted this approach. We extended open invitations to members and created seven such groups, one for each region. We also surveyed the participants and discovered ten recurring problems, which we went to work addressing. In fact, I renounced all ten of them the following year at a 2001 congregational meeting.

One of the big things discouraging our members in some but not all regions was the feeling that they had to accept the assigned and structured over-under discipling. We banished it, and people selected their own discipling. But it wasn't a problem with discipling, it was the push, treadmill style of discipling that had emerged. The treadmill was caused, in part, it was reported by pat answers to deep issues: "Get advice," "Just trust God," "Be unified," "Don't be prideful". It's understandable that immature, performance-driven leaders will give this kind of advice when they are swiftly put in positions 'over' others. It appears to me that the ICC has not learned from this error.

The word "expected" that Ron Harding uses also symbolizes a turning point from pull (desire) to push (compulsion). Leaders in the old ICOC would talk of high "expectations", the push for baptisms, and more contribution, and the motivation for reaching out was changing. Many felt that we went from a "we get to" sacrifice or evangelize in the eighties towards "we need to" do this or that in the nineties. In my opinion and the opinions of many people, the drive for expectations eventually became annoying and needling and undermined our original motivations.

The abandonment of discipling has incorrectly been seen as the main focus of the increase of divorces in the ICOC. In my view, weak discipling has been certainly a factor in cases of divorce, but it is difficult to make many qualitative or quantitative conclusions because of the relative infrequency of divorces in each ICOC. Of those whom my wife and I have known to get divorced, the majority of them were in consistent discipling relationships. Our first divorce in the downtown ministry of Chicago occurred in 2007 and involved a couple who never missed a beat in getting together with a more mature couple, even throughout the chaos of 2003. The one consistency that we have observed in most divorced couples is that they seemed to have been originally won over to the church, perhaps for social reasons, but very shallow in relation to Christ. Those conversions came during the 1990s during push for growth periods.

I perceive from ICC writings, sermons and from talking with ex-ICC members that this small movement embraces the very discipling model that led to the troubles of the old ICOC.

Let's quickly refresh our understanding of what is meant in Scripture by the term *discipling*.

1. The meaning of the verb *matheteuein* is "to be/become a disciple" or "to disciple". It appears in the Gospels three times (Matthew 13:52, 27:57, 28:18-20) and once in the book of Acts, where it is translated as "strengthening" (Acts 14:21-22). It is this word that is most associated with discipling. Initial discipling draws attention to becoming a follower of Christ, and subsequent discipling is about strengthening as a follower.
2. The verb *manthano*, "to learn", is used about 25 times. It means "to learn with a moral bearing and responsibility" (Matthew 9:13, 11:29, 24:32, John 6:45, Acts 23:27, Galatians

3:2, Philippians 4:9, Titus 3:14, and Hebrews 5:8).

3. The noun *mathetes* refers to "a learner" or one who accepts instruction. It appears about 250 times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:2, Luke 5:33, John 3:25, and John 9:27, among others).
4. The terminology in the New Testament changes slightly from *discipling* (or strengthening) towards *maturing* in the epistles (Colossians 1:28-29). Both discipling to be like Christ and maturing in Christ require learning and result in personal growth.
5. Some examples of strengthening relationships are Jonathan and David, both committed to looking out for each other (1 Sam 23:15-18), and Paul and his mentoring of Timothy (2 Tim 3:10-4:5).

Over the last thirteen years the ICOC did not give up on discipling, but has varied in its application, and in varying degrees it is often too weak or inconsistent. Throughout the last thirteen years many Christians felt the need to return to the wells of Scripture to explore how discipling can work outside the previous model of one person discipling another, which certainly still has its place. I often hear of variations of such strengthening relationships—trainer/trainee, leader/young leader, peer-to-peer, small group, triad, all tangible situations where we look out for each other's growth on a formal basis.

Assigned discipling is widely practiced as part of staff supervision and for new Christians. For a time, young disciples can make much initial progress with just one more mature Christian. As we age as Christians, we will develop specific areas where we become capable of strengthening others, and tend to seek guidance from more than one person. Most Christians work out their own discipleship out of desire rather than being assigned. All that said, not a few people in ICOC churches have less than optimal discipling.

Someone coming from the ICC into an ICOC should not expect to see churches filled with Kung Fu discipling constructs of Master-Student. The ebbs and flows of change, transition, and limited mature members have led to more hybrid approaches. That reality is more fitting with the organic sense that I see in the New Testament, as long as the discipling is intentional and recurring (Hebrew 3:13, 10:24-25). The ICC has become accustomed to a mandated hierarchical approach that isn't required by Scripture and has its downsides.

It's best, from my experience, to have a combination of identified individuals consistently in our lives for personal openness and the benefits of "one another" values we bring to each other's lives (John 13:34-35, Acts 2:42, Philippians 2:5ff, Colossians 3:16, 1 Peter 4:9, 5:14, Hebrews 3:12-13, 13:1, 1 John 3:11-24), and in addition, to seek out our models for specific areas based on what we see in their outcomes (Hebrews 13:7). This approach is sustainable and superior, in my view, to placing a whole congregation in a top-down pre-arranged pyramid structure. In the past, the pyramid only encouraged openness in one direction. It can't be Scripturally bound on someone, and it has no remedy for blind spots further up the discipling tree. I think that some liked it this way.

Questions Remain

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:18)

If you are a member of the ICC I don't assess you through the strong prototype established by Kip McKean and his close circle. You have your own story and experiences. It would be helpful to learn what diversity of belief and dissent really exists in the ICC.

Imagine that you and I are sitting in a Starbucks and find out that we have a common faith in

Christ, know some of the same people, and seek many of the same goals. After we become more comfortable with each other and go a little deeper, we probe some of the current reasons of the estrangement between our two movements.

For an hour or so we talk about the five differences. Your views, then mine. I learn, you learn. We use our smartphones to check Scriptures, sip our drinks, and listen to each other. In the most casual way, in order to get clarification, I ask for your answers to the following questions.

- 1) *Do you really believe that Kip is "God's man" and "God's anointed" in the way it is stated in an article on the home page of Kip McKean's website?*¹⁸
- 2) *Do you know for certain of an ICC document that describes how "God's anointed" can objectively be removed without his interference?*
- 3) *What do you believe about the legitimacy of the Bachelor's, Masters or Ph.D from the ICC's, The International College of Christian Ministry (ICCM)?*¹⁹

The first two questions are more important and I have covered these over many pages, but I would like your answer. But the third question addresses a development that surprised some of us in the ICOC. I've seen the pictures where Kip donned a professor's robe, and effectively gave himself a doctorate. In Illinois where I live, this would have been disgraceful or laughable to the public. But the state of California has become a cottage industry of mail-order degrees, so it probably doesn't flag everyone the same way.

As you probably know the ICC appealed to the California Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education. California. Kip reported that "We received the 'Verification of Exempt Status.'" I looked it up to see what it means. The Bureau is transparent and posts organizations it accepts and rejects. States like California created an "exempt status" to avoid prosecution that could entangle them if they rejected the degrees of an off-the-grid religious university. So naturally, the ICCM is not listed.

Higher Education consultant Alan L. Contreras, author of *College and State: Resources and Philosophies*, which includes a chapter titled, Do Religious Exemption Laws Result in an Ungodly Number of Diploma Mills? He describes the accreditation situation in states like California, where "schools [are] formally exempt from state authorization requirements on religious grounds."²⁰ The phrase "exempt from state authorization" means no accountability and no way to determine legitimacy or quality. And according to the ICCM website not even its president (Kip McKean), Chairman (Michael Kirchner) or other key figures have even a Bachelor's degree in Bible from an outside college or university

The Twelve apostles were "unschooled, ordinary men" so my concern is not about college degrees. However, in contrast to more legitimate educational approaches for training people to understand and spread the Word of God, the ICC's approach lacks competent instructors, sufficient standards, and transparency. What it doesn't lack, however, is pageantry. What is your perspective? Feel free to send your thoughts and questions prompted by this paper. I will accumulate them and do the best I can, given time and resources to answer them. If I have any facts wrong, I will correct them.

¹⁸ Harding, *A HISTORY OF THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN TIMES*

¹⁹ www.caicc.net/the-international-college-of-christian-ministry/

²⁰ Alan L. Contreras, *College and State: Resources and Philosophies* (Eugene: CraneDance Publications, 2013), 23. Contreras added a footnote, "Religious exemption is controversial, raises a variety of legal and policy issues, and is allowed in fewer than half of the states."

I have no skin in the game. I am a self-employed consultant who has worked with single and multisite churches of in Hawaii, California, Florida, the Midwest, the Northwest and the UK. I even recently began consulting in denominational churches—a real eye opener and opportunity. I see the future opening up all sorts of possibilities beyond the "us and them" posturing that is part of the mainline COC/ICOC/ICC legacy. It is unbiblical, tiring and unfruitful. At Disciples Today and Bridging International we pray for ways to send the right signals for the fast-changing times we live in.

In a year of turbulence, 1964, Bob Dylan sang, *The Times They Are a-Changin'*, and the lyrics still rings true.

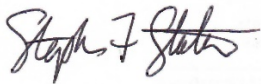
*If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.*

King Solomon reminds us that it's best to do what's appropriate for the times we live in.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

Please receive these words as an effort to build, heal, mend and seek peace everywhere—not just among our small tribes.

To the shrinking number of people who actually read twenty-page papers, thanks for making time,



Stephen F. Staten
organizational health consultant | conflict specialist | trainer
Steve@BridgingInternational.com
www.BridgingInternational.com
773-910-3777

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