

Biblical differences between ICOC and ICC (Article)

Biblical Differences Between The International Churches of Christ(ICOC) And The International Christian Churches (ICC) – written by Kip Mckean in 2012.

“And this is my prayer... that you may discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.” Philippians 1:9-10

Truth is of God and confusion is of Satan.

John 8:31-32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. ”

John 8:43-44 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Indeed, the present Biblical differences between the International Churches of Christ (ICOC) and the congregations of the International Christian Churches (ICC) – the SoldOut Discipling Movement – are so profound that at stake is the hope of salvation for this very lost world.

The ICOC has its roots in the Mainline Churches of Christ through a campus ministry movement begun in 1967 in Gainesville, Florida and known as the Crossroads Movement, but also called by detractors the “Total Commitment Movement.” Through the 70’s, the congregations of the Crossroads Movement were partially composed of “totally committed,” and thus zealous, newly baptized college students; however, the majority in their adult memberships were lukewarm. Well documented at the time was that the “average” Mainline Church of Christ had a Sunday attendance of 150 and just eight baptisms a year.

The Christian Chronicle – The International Newspaper For The Churches Of Christ (February 2012) – acknowledges, “Since 2003, [Mainline] Churches of Christ have lost more than 102,000 adherents – more people than the number that attended this year’s Super Bowl. Their 2012 Directory also counts 708 fewer Churches of Christ than it did nine years ago.” The number of Mainline Churches of Christ congregations, as well as their overall membership, continues to dramatically shrink just as in the 70’s.

At the end of the 70’s, God put it on Elena’s & my heart to build a congregation entirely composed of only “totally committed Christians” – at that time not found anywhere in the world. (Of note, the term “disciple” did not become part of our primary terminology until the second year of the Boston Movement in 1980, after the initiation of the First Principles Study Series which included the “Discipleship Study” with the equation: Saved = Christian = Disciple.)

In 1979, after fasting, prayer and counsel, Elena and I believed it was the will of God to accept the leadership role in the Lexington Church of Christ – a dying congregation where only two individuals had been baptized in the previous three years. So with this vision of a “totally committed church membership,” on Friday evening, June 1, 1979, the “thirty would-be disciples” gathered in “the Gempels’ living room” where the Spirit began the “Boston Movement!” (The Lexington Church was renamed the Boston Church of Christ when we moved our services to downtown Boston in 1982.)

Unprecedented growth occurred in the first year, as 103 were baptized. In the second year, God blessed us with 200 baptisms, in the third year 252 baptisms, and in the fourth year 368 baptisms – more than daily additions! By 1988, this multiplication of disciples – and the addition of hundreds of remnant disciples from the Crossroads Movement and from the Mainline Churches of Christ – allowed us to baptize over 1,000 that year in Boston! Incredibly, by the end of our ninth year, the Boston Movement churches were planted throughout the United States, as well as in 15 different nations. Most notably in 1988, a central leadership was formed, which was called the “World Sector Leaders,” because of the charge given to each of these “Evangelist and Women’s Ministry Leader Couples” to evangelize “their” sector of the world – which collectively covered the entire globe.

By 1994, the Boston Movement Churches were in 53 nations and adopted the name International Churches of Christ. Church historian John Vaughn made a distinction between the “Mainline Churches of Christ” and the Boston Movement which he named the “International Churches of Christ.” The prime reason for this distinction was that the Mainline Churches of Christ existed primarily in the “Bible-belt” of America, whereas the Boston Movement churches had an almost equal number of congregations in and outside of the United States. As well in 1994, I penned – and every World Sector Leader signed – the Evangelization Proclamation, in which was inscribed the goal to plant a discipling church in every nation of the world with a city with a population of at least 100,000 by the year 2000. Through God’s power this came to pass in just six years, as the ICOC spread to 171 nations of the world’s 195 nations by the end of 2000!

Then only a few months later, the most tragic years in Elena’s and my lives began. Ron Harding – the historian of the SoldOut Movement – records this on KipMcKean.com, A History Of The Spread Of Christianity In Modern Times: At the beginning of 2001 as a college student in Boston, the oldest of the McKean’s children began to question her faith. Though everyone who falls away must take full responsibility for this decision, it must be noted that this young woman was unjustly and heavily criticized – largely because of the high profile of her parents – and feeling unloved by many in the congregation contributed to her no longer attending church. **(Luke 17:1-2)** This single event caused uncertainty in the McKean’s leadership among many of the World Sector Leaders, as well as among the Kingdom Elders and Kingdom Teachers. In September of 2001, the World Sector Leaders “forced” the McKean’s to go on sabbatical – though later, some deeply regretted this decision.

Unbiblically applied to Kip were the qualifications of an elder, not an evangelist. The reasoning was that to “oversee” a church, one had to “manage his own family [well or] how can he take care of God’s church.” **(1 Timothy 3:4-5)** Also cited incorrectly was **Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and... he will not turn from it.”** Left out from this quote is the phrase, “when he is old.” Disregarding what is obviously implied in the phrase “when he is old,” is that during their younger years children may not be faithful to God, but will return to the kingdom because of their good training when they are “old.” (This has now been seen in the SoldOut Movement and the ICOC over and over again.) Even sadder is the lack of grace by almost all of the World Sector Leaders, Kingdom Elders and Kingdom Teachers. In the Scriptures, some of God’s and Israel’s greatest leaders had unfaithful children – Aaron, Samuel, and even the Old Testament’s “man after God’s own heart,” David – yet they continued to victoriously lead “all Israel.”

Clearly in retrospect at this juncture, [just one year later] a “domino effect” of “God’s ironic justice” was beginning to occur: as the World Sector Leaders had drawn back from the McKean’s, so now most of the World Sector Leaders were being likewise undermined with no mercy by those under their leadership for similar issues: marriage dynamic, children’s behavior, and leadership style.

This created a leadership vacuum. It was at this point that the Kingdom Elders and Kingdom Teachers chose to elevate themselves. Of note, these two groups were composed entirely of people with their roots in the Mainline Church of Christ. They were fueled by their feelings of under-appreciation and entitlement. Very sadly, their bitter “Absalom spirit” and common denominational roots bonded the Kingdom Elders and Kingdom Teachers. Like Absalom, they initiated a very calculated campaign to “steal the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Samuel 15:6)... They heightened the issue of “unbelieving children disqualifying men from leadership” through a series of articles appearing on the Los Angeles ICOC website, [which they later recanted]. Here, they also introduced their “Mainline doctrines” of “consensus leadership” and [autonomy].

After our sabbatical began, Elena & I never made another decision for the ICOC. In retrospect, God was disciplining me through these hardships for my arrogance and lack of concern for the weak. (Hebrews 12:7-11) Yet, personally devastating to us were the false accusations by those we once held as dear brothers and friends, who “used” our weakened state and now voiceless position to undermine our influence through character assassination.

As Ron Harding in his “eye-witness history” reveals, an “Absalom group” arose – composed of a few of the World Sector Leaders, the Kingdom Teachers and the Kingdom Elders – who meticulously guided the rest of the ICOC leaders to return to a Mainline Church of Christ theology. This was officially executed at the November 2002 Long Beach Unity Meeting. The Central Leadership of the World Sector Leaders was dissolved and called “unbiblical.” Embraced was a church government of local autonomy, where the elders “ruled over” the evangelists – a complete reversal of the early Boston Movement teachings. “The dream” for the evangelization of the nations in a generation was renounced and called by one of their foremost teachers, “A good idea, but impossible.”

With the advent of the “Kriete Letter” in February 2003, discipling in most congregations was eliminated or called “optional.” Viciously negative open forums ripped up once thriving congregations and several thousands walked away or fell away. At this horrific moment in 2003, all would agree that “the ICOC as we knew it ceased to exist.” From my perspective, a plague of bitterness descended on several in the membership as they simply mirrored their leaders’ bitter response to their leaders.

In July 2003, broken-hearted and devastated by the Satanic destruction of our life-long labors for the Lord, the Spirit carried Elena & me to Portland, Oregon. After much prayer and soul-searching, all we could do was to begin again because we believed in “the dream” and that making disciples through “discipling” was God’s only way to accomplish it. The Portland Church – through the healing process of repentance and forgiveness – began to grow bringing hope to many. (Luke 5:31-32) In fact, during our three years in Portland, God moved in disciples’ hearts to move to Portland from 25 different states in America to once again be in a

discipling church. A miracle was unfolding – God was beginning “to gather” His remnant from the “farthest horizon.” ([Nehemiah 1:8-9](#)) With these additions and the scores of baptisms, the Portland Church grew to almost 500 disciples and became the fastest growing congregation in what was left of the ICOC. In fact, several church leaders from as far away as Santiago, Chile – Raul & Lynda Moreno – sought discipling from us.

Seeing “no remedy” ([2 Chronicles 36:16](#)) for the decaying and dying ICOC fellowship, at the 2005 Portland World Missions Jubilee, I felt compelled by the Spirit to call out a remnant from what was left of ICOC churches, as well as from those that walked away or fell away. In response, courageous disciples such as Chris & Sonja Chloupek in Phoenix began small groups of sold-out disciples who broke away from lukewarm ICOC churches. Often, for these heroic stands, they were disfellowshipped. ([John 12:42-43](#)) We called these valiant new churches: “remnant groups.”

Our stand for the honor of God resulted in several letters against Elena & my convictions. Two of these letters were particularly harmful to the faith of many remaining in the ICOC. The first was signed by 65 ICOC church leaders, and the second – after a campaign for more signatures – was signed by 85 ICOC elders and evangelists, who opposed this radical calling and labeled every member in the Portland Church as “divisive.” Implied by the gathering of so many signatures was the question, “Can 85 brothers be wrong and one man be right?” As with Caleb’s and Joshua’s “minority report,” as well as with Elijah’s challenge to the 450 prophets of Baal, often in the Scriptures only “the few” are on the narrow path. ([Matthew 7:13-14](#))

Between these two letters, the Portland leadership penned our response – Our Concern For All The Churches. Yet, a little less than a year later in September 2006, everything came to head when Kyle & Joan Bartholomew, asked Elena & me to disciple them and their congregation in Hilo, Hawaii. Evangelists and elders of what was left of the ICOC traveled hundreds of miles to publically oppose my preaching and teaching during a three day workshop on discipling for the little Hilo, Hawaii Church. So after praying for two weeks about this final rejection of the truth, by October 2006, it was clear to me and to the remnant who moved to Portland that the Spirit had begun a revival movement out of the ICOC similar to the Boston Movement coming out of the Mainline Churches of Christ over 25 years earlier. Some called us the “Portland Movement,” but ironically our detractors mockingly named us the “SoldOut Movement,” because of our strong preaching against lukewarmness and our call to be “sold-out” for the Lord. (Matthew 13:44-46)

Almost daily, I am asked, “What are the differences between the ICOC and the ICC?” The simple answer is that from 1979 to 2001, the Boston Movement (ICOC) and the present-day SoldOut Movement (ICC) have almost exactly the same core Biblical convictions. (Prayerfully, one key difference in God’s new movement – since we have been greatly humbled by God – is that we make decisions with much more prayer, mercy and grace.) Interestingly, for most current ICOC members upon visiting an ICC Church, the differences in love and commitment are so apparent between the two fellowships that almost always the “visiting disciple” says, “Now this is the church I was baptized in!” The following are the five Biblical differences:

1. A Bible Church vs. A New Testament Church.

The Mainline Church of Christ is an off-shoot of the Restoration Movement begun in the United States in the early 1800's by Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone to name a few. Their plea was to "restore the New Testament Church." Therefore, they believed that though the Old Testament was divinely inspired and historically accurate, only the New Testament would be their sole rule of faith and practice in deciding matters of doctrine including ecclesiastical structure. This is now the conviction of the most influential leaders in the ICOC. However, we in the ICC believe like Paul who wrote in late 66 AD – some 35 years after the beginning of the church, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16) Technically speaking, the word "Scripture" in this passage refers to only the Old Testament. Now, through the inspiration of the Spirit, we believe that it applies as well to the New Testament. Though we believe "the Law" is no longer binding (Colossians 2:13-14), the Scriptural concepts in the Old Testament such as "calling out the remnant," "dating and marrying only disciples," and "a central leader and leadership for God's movement" are in the New Testament, yet the Old Testament is much richer in its depth on these vital issues. Also, the "Jethro Principle" of leadership in Exodus 18 allows us to lead and take care of thousands of God's precious people. Therefore, we believe we are commanded by God to build congregations based on both the Old and New Testaments – a "Bible Church," not simply a "New Testament Church."

2. Interpretation of Scripture.

Thomas Campbell is credited with the "interpretation of Scripture" for the Restoration Movement. The Mainline Churches of Christ and the most influential leaders of the ICOC now share Campbell's mode of interpretation: "Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." In other words, there must be "a command, example or an inference" in order for a practice to exist in the church. For example, the Mainline Church of Christ only has non-instrumental services and they believe only men can baptize men and women, because these are the only "examples" in the New Testament. Though the ICOC is mixed in these practices, at the 2002 Long Beach Unity Meeting, there was a call to eliminate World Sector Leaders, Lead Evangelists, and Women's Ministry Leaders, because these "titles" could not be found in the New Testament. Thus they were deemed "unbiblical."

As for the interpretation of Scripture, I and the ICC believe the opposite of Campbell: "Be silent where the Bible speaks and speak where the Bible is silent." In other words, we are free to practice or name something as long as it does not contradict the Scriptures.

Genesis 2:19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

1 Corinthians 10:23 "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is constructive.

We are more than comfortable with the terms and practices of Lead Evangelists, Women's Ministry Leaders, and the authority of our Central Leadership Council over all of the SoldOut

Movement churches. Let us not forget, the word “Bible” is not in the Bible, but we believe it is of God!

3. Discipling is a command of God and not optional.

After a person is baptized, Jesus commands that the new convert be “[taught to obey everything \[He had\] commanded.](#)” ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)) This is discipling! Discipling is detailed in the “one another” passages: “love one another,” “instruct one another,” “confess your sins to each other,” “pray for each other,” etc. In our modern world with such busy schedules in such an individualistic and highly structured society, we have found that the only way to guarantee that every member in our congregations is being disciplined is to have structured discipling – discipleship partners. The dynamic in this relationship begins as a teacher/student relationship, and then matures to a more adult/adult relationship. Also, every member in each of our congregations is organized into Bible Talks – our practical implementation of following the example of Jesus evangelizing with His apostles.

4. A Central Leadership with a Central Leader vs. Autonomous congregations.

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. In fact, in 2005, some of the most influential ICOC leaders came to me and begged me to be on a “team of leaders” if I would only say that autonomy was “a matter of opinion.” I said, “No. It is sin.” Since I disagreed with them, I was labeled “divisive” which is what Jesus understood would happen if you preach the truth.

[Luke 12:51-53](#) Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. 52 From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. ”

5. 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!

Since these five changes were never formally announced in the ICOC – thus in my opinion deceitfully and sinfully implemented – many in the ICOC became confused. (2 Corinthians 11:2-4) Therefore, some individual disciples in the ICOC churches still believe one or all of these five distinguishing Biblical convictions, because these were the principles that I taught “everywhere in every church” while I served the Lord by leading the ICOC. ([1 Corinthians 4:15-17](#))

Three things prove the truth and magnitude of these Biblical differences:

1. Almost every ICOC church changed their name. Recently, in the City of Angels International Christian Church, Courtney Irwin married Joel Parlour. With her “status” dramatically changed from single to married, she is now called Courtney Parlour! In the aftermath of the 2002 Long Beach Unity Meeting and the Kriete Letter, almost every congregation of the ICOC changed their name to signal a change in doctrine. For example the Chicago International Church of Christ became the Chicago Church of Christ. This evidences the undeniable reality of the return to Mainline Church of Christ theology by the ICOC.

2. An all pervasive lukewarmness continues in the ICOC congregations, because of no or optional discipling. Most of the key leaders of the ICOC want to “divorce” themselves from the five distinguishing doctrines of the Boston Movement and meld with the Mainline Church of Christ. For example in Porto Alegre, Brazil, this once dynamic church had declined and lost its distinctiveness so much so that members were told to disband and go to the local Mainline Church of Christ. Without discipling, is it any wonder that divorces are now common in the ICOC, when at one time they were extremely rare? I believe that “marriage discipling” in the ICC will once again make divorce extremely infrequent and only for Biblical reasons. (Matthew 19:9)

3. A monumental reduction in the number of disciples in every ICOC congregation around the world after the Kriete Letter. In Portland, the church went from around 300 members in January 2003 to just 25 at mid-weeks by the time that Elena and I arrived in the summer of 2003. Another “proof” of the destruction by the return to the Mainline Church of Christ theology of autonomy is that several ICOC churches had their regions become autonomous. For example, (at the time of this article) there are now six different “ICOC churches” in London; seven former ICOC churches in Los Angeles, and 12 different congregations with ICOC roots in Atlanta.

Lastly, there has been a severe reduction in the number of nations in which the ICOC has a presence and in the past ten years only a handful of church plantings by the ICOC have occurred around the world.

Essential to grasp: no longer can one generalize and say an “ICOC member” believes this or that. Some still sincerely and fiercely believe the five or at least a few of the distinguishing Biblical doctrines exactly as I taught in the Boston Movement from 1979 to 2001 and presently teach in the SoldOut Movement.

However, all are fully aware that “something has changed.” Paul’s words to the Corinthians are my words as “the father of faith” to the ICOC, “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you the one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be lead astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.” (2 Corinthians 11:2-5)

Let me be clear, I believe there are still thousands of faithful disciples in the ICOC, though no longer are the ICOC congregations composed of only “totally committed” disciples with a “sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” Consequently, without a dream to change the world, without Jesus’ plan of multiplying disciples through discipling, and without a central leadership to guide the movement making difficult but unifying “judgments,” the world cannot be evangelized through the ICOC. The ICOC is no longer a unified movement that is expanding numerically and geographically, but merely a loose fellowship of autonomous churches with various standards of commitment even within each congregation.

Today, in God’s SoldOut Movement our prayers are being answered that “the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.” (2 Thessalonians 3:1) As well today, the City of Angels International Christian Church celebrates the Fifth Anniversary of its planting! The Holy Spirit sent 42 sold-out disciples from Portland to LA in May of 2007. In just five years, we have over 900 at Sunday services, a weekly contribution of over \$25,000, and daily additions! (Acts 2:47)

During this short span, the Spirit has sent out 125 of our most mature disciples to plant six churches: Honolulu (2008), New York City (2008), Portland (2009), San Diego (2010), London (2010), and Sao Paulo (2011).

Globally, in five years, the SoldOut Movement is not merely adding but multiplying daily, as the Lord has established through plantings and the gathering of remnant groups some 40 churches in 19 nations! Excitingly, this summer new SoldOut Discipling Movement churches will be planted in Boston, Mexico City, Orlando, Paris and San Francisco! With so many being saved around the world, the truth seeker will joyfully acknowledge that this is not a movement of men, but a movement of God!

Again, let me be clear, there will be a few ICOC churches that will grow and have “lots of baptisms,” but this has occurred for years in the dying Mainline Churches of Christ. However, a

few “with it” congregations will not build a movement to change the world. Paul in **1 Timothy 2:3-4** teaches, “God our Savior... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” God’s will is for “all men to be saved.” Is God’s will, your will? If it is, then it is imperative that you are in a movement of disciples that has Jesus’ dream of world evangelism, not in an autonomous congregation.

My daily prayer is that every confused disciple will prayerfully study the Scriptures to “discern what is best” and Biblically correct. Then courageously act upon these convictions by joining God’s new movement! The Apostle John challenged everyone who believed in Jesus and in His first century movement, but did not have the purity of heart to join, when he wrote, “Because of the Pharisees ‘they’ would not confess their faith for fear ‘they’ would be put out of the synagogue – [disfellowshipped]; for ‘they’ loved the praise from men more than praise from God.” (**John 12:42-43**) In short, to be in God’s new SoldOut Movement one must be sold-out, even to the point of choosing God over relationships that were once of God. (**Luke 14:25-26**) God’s grace and mercy allowed the Israelites to conquer the Promised Land on “their second try,” and likewise, I believe that for the faithful remnant, on “our second try” that God’s Spirit will propel His new movement into all nations in THIS generation! And to God be all the glory!

Kip McKean