

The International Churches of Christ (ICOC) and International Christian Churches (ICC)

Page 1 of 2

- The ICOC is also known as: The Boston Movement, Discipling Movement, Crossroads Movement, Multiplying Ministries, (City) Church of Christ e.g., Boston Church of Christ.
- The ICC is also known as: The Sold-Out Discipling Movement, (City) International Christian Church, e.g., City of Angels International Christian Church, Chicago International Christian Church.
- They have alternative names to disguise their identity or alternate fronts such as: Campus Advance, Christian Students Association, Alpha Omega, Disciples on Campus (not to be confused with the Disciples of Christ group with the same name), HOPE Worldwide, MERCY Worldwide, Disciples Today.

History

In the 1800's, a number of Protestants were concerned about the fragmenting Protestant Church, over what they perceived to be minutiae of beliefs. Instead, a number sought to return to "First Century Christianity" and "only the Bible" and tended to ignore any creed and statement of faith as only "man-made", as well as ignoring any Christian history, and look over their own traditions. This became the Stone-Campbell American Restoration movement or the Mainline Churches of Christ. Even though most of the contemporary Mainline Churches of Christ that have roots in this movement and healthy and grace-filled, this movement has also produced legalistic and even cultic fruit. One example is Jim Jones and Jonestown. The other well-known groups are the International Churches of Christ (ICOC) and a rising splinter group known as the International Christian Churches (ICC).

During the 1970's, the Mainline Churches of Christ membership numbers had plateau-ed. In Gainesville, Florida, Chuck Lucas, the mentor of Thomas "Kip" McKean and campus minister for the Fourteen Street "Crossroads" Church of Christ, realized having every member 1) focus on recruitment ("evangelism") and 2) tied into the church via "prayer partners" would allow his church to rapidly grow.

A number of Crossroads trained leaders, especially Kip McKean, took these strategies and took over a number of churches and formed their own movement within the Mainline Churches of Christ, then dubbed the Boston/Discipling/Crossroads Movement. A number of controlling techniques were employed, ranging from breaking sessions where multiple members would confront a member on wrongdoings, to verbally coercing recalcitrant members to do what leaders and disciplers wanted. As criticism mounted from within the Mainline Churches of Christ, including former Boston Movement leaders, Kip McKean discovered a new doctrine: Matthew 28:18-20 taught only disciples – those who were sufficiently broken over their sins, living the Christian life in the ways McKean defined them and agreed with his interpretations of Scripture – were fit to be baptized. This new-found doctrine allowed McKean to schism from the Mainline Churches of Christ. Christian sociologists termed McKean's movement the "International Churches of Christ" (1994).

In 2003-2004, a series of events rocked the ICOC's world. McKean's own oldest child, then a Harvard student, did not worship at or fellowship with the Boston Church of Christ. Since McKean had dealt with leaders whose children were not members by removing them from leadership, numerous leaders asked Kip to step down from his role as World Missions Evangelist, the ICOC's top leader. Eventually Kip admitted he had to step aside from ministry to work on his marriage. Henry Kriete, a high level Evangelist in London, wrote a lengthy letter, admitting to abuses, problems and areas needed for change, vindicating what numerous former church members and critics had been saying for 2 decades. Kip eventually was appointed the lead evangelist of the Portland, Oregon, International Church of Christ, and became convinced that his strategies were still correct and attempted to call other churches, leaders, and members to align with them. Instead, over 80 lead evangelists and other church leaders signed a statement against McKean's conduct and vision and responded against his divisiveness. McKean decided to schism again, calling his new movement the "International Christian Churches" or the "Sold-Out Discipling Movement." Kip McKean's City of Angels ICC is the flagship of the movement and can be found at www.caicc.net; the ICOC has become a loose federation of churches with steering and leadership committees and their website is www.disciplestoday.org.

For more information, see www.reveal.org

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Page 2 of 2

Why are they considered an abusive/destructive group?

Both groups teach the same doctrines, but the ICOC's current practices of these doctrines aren't as extreme as the ICC's. Either way, both groups are still very dangerous and destructive. Numerous ex-members complained of legalism, heavy-handedness of treatment, lack of grace, lack of forgiveness (e.g., past sins brought up and used against them), manipulation, forced uniformity and conformity to church agenda, browbeating on all matters, even opinion. Numerous former members have noted a lack of ability to make their own decisions or diminished critical thinking skills. As members, students have dropped out, reduced their course load, or changed to easier majors due to the number of church-related meetings and events, which are deemed "mandatory" or "very important." These meetings are considered spiritual whereas anything non-church related is not. A typical non-leader member can spend between 6-15 hours per week in church events. Numerous members and ex-members have noted personality shifts and personality falsification towards the group norm. The church is also synonymous with God, making pronouncements into members' lives. To disobey or not obey the church is to stray from God's good graces and could result in condemnation. Numerous members have cut ties with former friends and families even if the friends and family were devout Christians. They teach a Gnostic Gospel: one that elevates "spirituality" and the spiritual e.g., becoming a minister as opposed to the mundane (e.g., studying, secular work). They teach a false man-centered Gospel of Works where the power and reliance on the Holy Spirit is unnecessary.

Doctrines and Some distinctives of beliefs

Disciple: Members of the ICOC and ICC believe that only committed Christians who are involved in cold-contact evangelism, who have made the decision to follow Christ, agreeing with core ICOC-/ICC- defined tenets, are disciples.

Baptism: Members of the ICOC and ICC believe in baptismal regeneration, that the act of full immersion in water procures forgiveness of sins and subsequently gives the indwelling Holy Spirit; that baptism must be done to only a disciple. It is not a valid baptism if: 1) one does not hold to these beliefs, 2) the baptism is done by a church that does not have the same doctrines and beliefs as the ICOC/ICC. Individuals must start living the life as a disciple before they are baptized. (This is a contradiction as they teach that people are lost and not a disciple before they are baptized.)

True Church: The only true churches are congregations that have the same doctrines and practices as the ICOC and ICC respectively. No other churches are true churches.

Evangelism: The litmus test for many ICOC/ICC churches of a disciple is whether they evangelize, meaning they practice cold-contact invitation. They also tend to target relatively innocent and idealistic college students and other vulnerable people.

Strategies for discussion with members of the ICOC/ICC

1. Don't focus on baptism, which is where they want to fight.
2. Do not agree to meet with multiple members or their friends alone.
3. Be actively involved in a healthy church and Christian fellowship.
4. Get them to define their terminology: don't assume that they are saying the same thing you are.
5. Discuss justification by faith.
6. Show them other mature and devout Christians – one can have a spiritual life outside of the ICOC/ICC.
7. Emphasize spiritual unity of Christians outside the ICOC e.g., the Lord's Prayer, the Nicene Creed, para-church organizations that work with multiple churches (e.g., Cru, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Navigators, National Association of Evangelicals, Christian Apologetics Alliance, etc.) although members may demonize all of these groups.
8. Discuss the personhood of the Holy Spirit as well as the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian; the dual nature of Christ (fully human and fully God); their continuous and unrelenting focus on falling short instead of walking with the Spirit.

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