

RESPONSE TO A FRIEND

Steve,

Peace!

Thanks for your friendship and love. I respect your frankness, and I love you too. Although I am open to listening to your opinions, even grateful for them, I'm afraid we must disagree about H2G.

Since several brothers have asked me to re evaluate my letter and perhaps express a retraction or an apology of sorts, and because of the recent letters from LA, Portland and Seattle which pleasantly referenced my name, I have decided to give my own perspective on things.

According to a couple of these letters I should be blamed for the bulk, if not all, of the problems facing the ICOC right now. I want to offer a humble defense. I care very little about being humiliated in public. That's a cost I counted before I wrote H2G. (And probably the only thing Kip and I share in common these days.) I want to set the record straight because I take exception to being used as a scapegoat for the present chaos which developed over the past 25 years, and I detest being used as a tool to somehow bolster and justify the plans of these men with their bold visions of the future. Henry ruined London! Henry caused all of this chaos and made most of you bitter! How desperate is that? Even absurd?

I believe the ICOC has passed through the fire of God's judgment and its foundation has been revealed for the wood and straw it was. Period. It was not built on the word of Christ alone, as we boasted all along, or it would not be in such a mess today. Christ himself *promised* this would happen, but we refused to listen. (Matt. 7) The ICOC was built, not on the pure foundation of Christ alone, but on a seriously inadequate version of the person and work of Christ, and on a very deficient understanding of the grace and truth of Christ. In short: a different Jesus, a different gospel. Kip's version of Jesus. As we followed Kip's leadership in the ICOC, this was the 'different' Jesus that he himself was following... and follows to this day.

Because of this woeful weakness, most of our leadership were weighed in the balance and found wanting. LA and Portland and a host of other leaders can blame me if they want to, but that only shows that after more than two years these men are no closer to finding their way back to the Biblical Christ than before. It's sad really, embarrassing even. And from what I can gather, this point is not lost on the many who think about such things.

Although a sincere love among the saints was truly shared by many, it must be obvious by now that our fundamental unity as a movement was not a Spirit based or Spirit derived unity. It has always been a contrived unity, based on conformity to the ideals, traditions and sectarian language of men. Especially one man in particular. That was our constant weakness, our Achilles' heel you could say. Dietrich Bonhoeffer gives a sober warning of this phenomenon, and Lee Harrington gives a pretty good analogy:

Bonhoeffer: "God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own laws, and judges the brethren and God himself accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of the brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of the Christian community, as if his dream binds men together."

My paraphrase of Lee Harrington: *"Kip was like mother Russia holding all the pieces of our beloved movement together, as the leader/dictator. The unity and peace was mostly coerced, an outward conformity to the will of one supreme leader. When Kip was ousted, the ICOC balkanized. And the same process was repeated again and again among individual churches"*

The more radical and 'outward' fallout came after my letter to be sure, but it was, in fact, a fallout based on honest reaction to the twisting of Scriptures, to warped loyalties, to authoritarian and often harsh shepherding finally being admitted to, and to the revelation of greed and hypocrisy in the highest levels of leadership. **Nothing** was new in my letter-it resonated so powerfully because I simply put into words what was on the hearts and minds of a vast number of Christians, perhaps the majority (and from all over the world, I might add). Their unspoken *beliefs* and suppressed feelings were set down for the leaders themselves to read. This gave hope and courage. A letter *by* a leader and *to* the leaders! And an *open* letter at that. (Sent out a couple of weeks earlier than my original intent, and not without heated argument, by my friend, Matthew Wolpert.)

One letter from some middle management brother does not cause this kind of disruption on its own. I don't know why most of the remaining leaders in what's left of the ICOC still can't accept this. God shook, God burned, God humbled. The way I see it, (a la Animal Farm, or should I say Animal Kingdom?) God intervened to rescue his flock from Napoleon, his attack dogs, the hirelings, the fleecers and the brutal. Mind you, that kind of wholesale rescuing from *the mouth of an entire movement* will indeed tarnish *all* of the shepherds, including the carefully nurtured reputations of some. Even the good and gracious shepherds, unfortunately. And I am deeply sorry for that. But we all memorized Hebrews 4.12-13 in First Principles, so we should not be surprised. God's knife is painful and bloody when it cuts out sin. How about the sins of an entire movement?

But the good shepherds shouldn't be angry or bitter themselves, because the sheep have been rescued and that, after all, is what a good shepherd really wants! They will praise God for His intervention, painful though it was. The good fruits of *their* lives and the thorns and thistles of the false shepherds will be revealed soon enough (and become obvious to all). While I'm on this point, let me just say that this is the inherent problem with every 'proud' and 'anointed' leadership group, whether corporate or religious-everyone *does* get lumped together, like it or not. See Enron. See Matthew 23. And that's why Biblical self governance (ahem, local autonomy) will also *prevent* this from happening. See Rev 2&3.

You may be genuinely surprised to hear this, but to this day, I cannot recall one fulltime ministry leader who has asked me *why* I wrote my H2G letter. I really can't. Not even BF, a good friend, and I have been in Vancouver for over two years. Assumptions, guesses, accusations and speculations but never, "Henry, why did you feel, at that particular time, it was necessary?" "What moved you?" "What were you thinking as you penned it and sent it?" Not one person has asked this of me.

I never intended to burn the house down. I never invented open forums, and I certainly never advocated bitterness-but these things did happen. Open forums were *recommended* by me, certainly, but *only* peaceful and respectful open forums. This should be obvious to anyone who bothers to sincerely read my letter to completion, and not falsely accuse me of calling for violence and widespread bitterness. See H2G Now What? Pg.36-38

I was hoping my letter would bring serious reflection, repentance and then healing. And I was certainly counting on a display of forgiveness across the board. The reality, however, was that the general feelings were deeper and the stored up resentments were stronger, than I or probably anyone except the abused and wounded could have imagined.

The intensity of feelings shocked me as well. But wasn't that just a further verification of the points of my letter and another indictment against us -the ICOC and our leadership sins? Wasn't it a blow to the hubris and high walls of our ordered and compliant relationships? Wasn't it simply the first floods from the *undamming* of our control mechanisms? Where did so much pent up anger and frustration and lack of trust come from all of a sudden? Did my letter create it, or was it already there? I think DJ said it like this: 'Henry whistled while walking through the Alps and the avalanche started.' I like that. The snow was already there, waiting to crash down. It was immanent and inevitable. We were so out of touch!

It's true, unfortunately, that sometimes the open forums were abused and even hijacked by a few false brothers or deeply embittered souls. But for the most part they were simply the outcry of

pain and disappointment and sincere questionings. Some Christians had great quantities of pain hidden in their hearts and could finally speak out without fear of repercussion. Now look out!

But so what? For the most part, our Christians were smart enough to know what was happening, why, and with whom. I still think an outright brokenness in sackcloth and ashes would have been a more appropriate response than blaming someone else, even now, *including me*.

From my understanding, many open forums were very productive. Unnerving, perhaps, but productive in the end. Things seemed to turn hostile only when a smugness or stubborn refusal to repent was displayed. Or when doublespeak and stalling was evident, instead of clear answers and contrition. *That* is what happened in London.

Genuine contrition, when appropriate, usually let off the steam (at least a lot faster than it would have been without it!) A lack of earnestness and double talk was our undoing. However, I also believe it was not our call to radical commitment, our doctrines or even abuses of authority that caused the greatest outcry-but the double standards and newly exposed hypocrisy of those so readily demanding sacrifice from our members. I think even Kip sees this point now.

Someone urged me to reread my letter and so I did, this week-for the first time in two years. I still agree with what I wrote. I'm sorry, but that's just the way it is. The only difference now is my convictions have become stronger with the passing of time, and with further revelations coming to light. It's true, I advocated 'slapping back' and 'the overthrowing of temples'-powerful metaphors I thought- but *only* if no change or repentance took place. Those statements were a call to serious and immediate action. That is all. No more delays, no more excuses, no more stalling for time.

The equation is simple: If I am 'yoked' by the doctrines and schemes of men, if my freedom in Christ is being compromised by weak and miserable human principles, and if the men who 'yoked' me in the first place won't take *their* yoke off my neck, or worse- won't let me escape the slavery without a curse flung my in my direction-what am I supposed to do? Read carefully once again all those *arrogant* and overweening statements from our highest ranking evangelists and elders and editors, especially Kip, Al Baird and Roger Lamb. And did I say *truly* bold statements..."We are the true movement of God". "We are God's one true church in this generation". "We are calling everyone to God's modern day movement." "God raised up Kip in this generation-one man for one movement" "Our Founder, Kip McKean" (O my-who slipped that one in without a discussion? The desire for historical importance has ruined many hearts.) "Make no mistake, their is no one else like us, we are the one true church"

What is the logical conclusion to this arrogant and cockeyed fallacy? **To leave the movement was to leave God!** How could it have been otherwise when it was framed so skillfully and preached so passionately? To this day, tens of thousands of our members *still* think that to leave the ICOC is to leave God. Or at least believe it is probably so .And now that same kind of hubris has spawned a calling out of the remnant from within the ICOC itself! Shame.Shame.Shame. That my friend, is the real reason for the damage, the 'human wreckage'.

There is no getting around this widely (but not entirely) accepted teaching and belief. I think it's utterly laughable that our highest level leaders try to deny it or act evasive. For heaven's sake humble out! Just recently though, I heard Kip spill the beans once again, "Mark my words, we were/are God's modern day movement" So I did.

This begs the question: What room is there for escape when you are oppressed by those chosen by God Himself ? What room to question and where to run? The internet is littered with these kinds of quotes, but they were never clearly refuted and denounced *publicly* by current leaders in the ICOC,even by the likes of you.

Pause before you or anyone else throws a stone at me for my letter. Don't you think, letter or not, these claims alone would arouse God to act forcefully? Somehow? Someway? Even

'violently', to use your words? Remember this: How many *hundreds of thousands* did we lose before my letter? London alone lost more than eight thousand prior to 2003, nearly five hundred from just one reckless 'pruning'. The costly effects of that misguided and heartless action linger to this day. (A practice, by the way, we routinely carried out in almost all of our churches in some form or another). But you will still say *my letter* caused untold damage? Can't you see where the *real* damage came from, or the widespread anguish?

Imagine if someone said a couple of years ago, 'You are hurting me. I am hurting here. I have to leave the ICOC. I must transfer my submission to another church that rhymes with **Achish**' We can't even imagine it! But now, Kip is twisting even these words to justify his elitist and divisive plans once again. Same story, different Scripture. It really is like gangrene, to use the apostle's term.

So, was the outcry surrounding my letter from God or from the Devil? Ask King David-you know both of the texts as well as I. (As for that incident, seventy thousand innocents were slaughtered because of the sin of one King's arrogance) I also believe the ICOC leadership will *still* have to give an account to God for what has happened to the sheep over the last 30 years-me included. It is not over yet, by a long shot!

I ask you humbly, how can you (or I for that matter) be so sure God did not want me to write and distribute my letter just the way it happened? On what grounds, really? I too am in awe of what happened. It really is like a dream, like an out of body experience. I had no idea the letter would make such a huge impact- for 'good' or 'bad'. No one is more blown away than me. Or more humbled.

How can you and others be so certain God merely 'allowed' my letter and did not, in His own anger and judgment, *want* my letter to be written and sent out exactly the way it happened (uninspired, and sped along by Matthew's hand)? The ICOC has clearly been wrong in their assessment of the ways of God before! I say this with caution and deliberation: perhaps, just perhaps, a stupor from God is upon all who refuse to repent, even now, to finally make an example of men who pretend to speak for God, or even speak like God. I don't recuse myself from this judgment either, but pray for grace. Why do so many, still, want to claim the Spirit's blessing or leading, I wonder?

Why must my strong words and strong rebuke and strong appeal be merely a tool of the Devil and not the first cause from God's own hand? Or why is it perceived as simply 'unfortunate', to use Seattle's words? When something like this happens, how can any of us know what God's true intentions are? Was it allowed? Was it caused? I don't know. But neither do you. And that should make us all very, very humble before Him. I am appalled when people say I wrote my letter in bitterness and not from my love for Christ and the church. I poured out my life for our fellowship. I too made sacrifices, I too fought the wars, I too had many wonderful friendships-and no one can deny me that! God himself will judge what was more damaging-our sins or my letter exposing our sins.

Many have said, "But so many leaders and people got hurt! Intentional or not, the language of H2G incited a violent reaction". Not my intention, but not really a 'violent' or even surprising reaction either. In fact, I think a pretty *normal* reaction in light of our history and religious culture. How could the extraction of sin from a global leadership group be a painless affair for anyone involved-leadership or membership? When Christ denounced the Pharisees, when he challenged their religious system and overturned the tables of the Temple Mafia it was, no doubt, very disruptive and embarrassing to every last Pharisee and Sadducee. (That's a cost you have to count before becoming a member of an exclusive religious sect). When Paul called the Judaizers 'mutilators of the flesh' he certainly was not gentle, but he was right. Sometimes you simply have to speak that boldly, that urgently, to get someone's attention and communicate your point! How do you think *they* felt in the fellowship afterwards? But Jesus, your statements are so sweeping, your generalizations so unfair! But Jesus, now everyone mocks us! But Jesus, you have damaged the trust beyond repair! But Jesus, when you say these things you **insult** us as well! So be it! **As it is written:" Leave them, they are blind guides"**

The ICOC's leaders and the institution itself are simply going through what most of the rank and file have gone through for years. The big difference being, the ordinary saint was never allowed to complain as loudly and as openly and as whiney as we have! JM seems *unbelievably* out of touch with the voice and yearning of the sheep. And thus, at least to me, he appears more like a hireling than a shepherd. Why is there so much complaining about the discomfort caused to the leaders and elders(still) and not more grieving over the sheep, and more retrieving of the sheep(still)?

Jesus offended that insulated and out of touch 'brotherhood leadership' group known as the Pharisees and for good reason: When you win a single convert 'he becomes twice as much a son of hell as you!' Who *us*? A brood of vipers? Stealing from widows? Shutting the kingdom in men's faces? Greedy? Whitewashed tombs? You must be mad! 'Blind Pharisee' was said for a reason. *Even after the resurrection* they could not see! *Even then* they were still politicking and scheming and handing out bribes to Roman soldiers. *Even then* the arrogance and secret parlor games! Like I warned all of us before: That is how powerful a religious system can be. It will ignore the voice of conscience, the voice of reason and even the voice of God.

Why was such an unsparing attack against the Pharisees called for? Has Israel (or the world for that matter) ever seen such a sustained and provocative attack on the leaders of God's own people? I am convinced it was for us—a warning to the religious leaders in every generation.

In my letter, I only spoke of the things that were happening before our very eyes. Nothing was made up. Nothing I said was not known to almost all of us who had been around for even a short length of time. If you will read Kip's RR1 and RR2 once again (those much vaunted 'historical documents') you might be embarrassed to see how easily, cowardly, and shamefully we all fell in step. If you merely glance through the LA Story's 20th anniversary issue once more—you also might see, like I do, we were a cult, plain and simple. I have no doubts about that anymore.

I guess my main question is this: Could radical, life saving changes have truly occurred any other way besides a sweeping, detailed and blunt facing of the facts? Especially when we were all knee deep in a culture of religious suppression? I strongly believe 'No' and you strongly believe 'Yes'. We disagree on this point and I think we always will.

You cannot throw off the yoke of that kind of slavery without a revolution. You cannot have a revolution without consequences. You cannot have consequences without pain. The revolt was a peasant uprising against all those World Sector Generals and their ministers who were willing to shed every last ounce of *other* people's blood. (A strong, but not unfair analogy from John Engler).

How many papers did you write to change things? Or Doug? Or the many others for that matter? How many more talks, pleadings, discussions and markings was it still going to take? In spite of these more cautioned and 'gentler' efforts, change was not happening fast enough or radically enough. Or to put it in terms you may better appreciate, it was changing, but in the same way everyone thought Kip might eventually change. But look! His hand has become stronger, not weaker. His 'non-apology' apology sounds exactly like all the others he's made before, and with no change. His lack of fear and respect for the Boston and Seattle warnings—his utter lack of regard— is breathtaking indeed. And now, he even boldly insinuates himself into the whole LA process! (Which I predict will shipwreck it for good)

Of course, I too grieve over all the pain and trauma. I really do. And I too have suffered and have caused suffering. I accept that. Where I am to blame, where I am guilty, where I was a coward—I am sorry. But now by the grace of God I am emancipated, I am making restitution, and believe I am forgiven. But I still will not renounce or reword my letter. My conscience and the events unfolding in London compelled me to write it in the first place. The internal pressure was simply too much. (And may I *permanently* remind you and everyone else, the London church had already unraveled and was going through a leadership crisis *before* my letter was sent to a single person. Thanks for taking note of this)

All those who left the ICOC have not left God. In fact, for many, the only hope of remaining saved *was* to leave. Others are so defeated in their spiritual search, so mixed up, so unsure of where man ends and where God begins anymore, we can only pray for their healing and God's mercy towards *you and I*. And sadly, yes, many have truly fallen away from God. Once again, let us pray it was not at the hands of men! God be merciful to all of us who led in the ICOC. We cannot deny what was good, but we surely cannot deny what was bad. It would be better never to have been born...Those who teach will be judged more strictly...You have shut the kingdom in men's faces....

Steve, let me be painfully honest. I have come to believe the ICOC **was** a cult or if you prefer: a cult-like/ authoritarian Christian sect. Or, how about the softest version of all? Over time we evolved into three different kinds of groups in various stages, in various degrees and in various places :some more church-like, some more sect-like and some more cult-like than others. But for me, we were a cult. God knows I tried not to come to this conclusion, but I just can't see it any other way. And I think I can prove it a thousand times over (remember-I have the testimony of nearly 10,000 emails, calls and letters, not to mention 22 years 'inside' and two years' outside') And although the ICOC is radically reformed in many places-which is great, you still have a few unrepentant/unreformed cult leaders kicking around (imho). That is intolerable, in my view.

The fact that a former WSL could sit idly by and let Kip blame London on me (even after a four hour meeting to revise the first draft) proves this to me. That another will not return the widow's money he stole-or that it be demanded of him by other 'sold out' disciples- proves this to me. That Kip himself has openly confessed his love of applause, his abuses, his arrogance and his creating a culture of silence-even if he does repent- proves this to me (and even more so now).

And to this day, the fact still remains, that the books in virtually every ICOC church have not been truly opened to show how past contributions were spent-with only a few exceptions- proves to me, even now, that my letter was at least somewhat justified! (Kip thinks he is fooling everyone by stating, 'With no central leadership to answer further charges such as the misuse of money...') Why do you need a centralized group for that? Good grief! Do it now! Prove your innocence to the world and to the Christians who sacrificed so much! Do we know the severance package of *even one* former WSL yet?)

The fact that *tens of thousands* of former members of the ICOC -loyal and faithful and sacrificial for years-now call the ICOC a cult proves to me *and them at least*, my letter was justified. Of course, many more than this do *not* call the ICOC a cult. But the glaring truth remains: Those *who do* claim this were not enemies of the gospel or angry outsiders bent on ruining us from the outset, but dear and beloved Christians in our fellowship at one time, many of them heroes of the faith, including evangelists,GSL's,FG leaders and missionaries. Even some of our best friends.

There are wonderful Christians in the ICOC, the 'reformed' ICOC or whatever your new affiliation/denomination may choose to be called. In the past, God used us to reach out to millions and to baptize hundreds of thousands. But now, because of what has transpired in the last few years, including the heart break and distress of the majority of those baptized, and the many unseemly revelations that have come to light, I simply don't worry or even care what happens to the 'movement' per se anymore. It's all in God's hands.

However, although I'm convinced that the faithful among you are firmly in the kingdom, the fact that genuine repentance seems lacking in some quarters to this day means that the heartbreak and bleeding is not over yet. It seems that Portland and several other churches are still craving the garlic and onion soup of Egypt, and exclusive membership in the 'bonfire' club. I hope I'm wrong.

If I read my Bible correctly, the ICOC as an institution is no longer sustainable-especially on your present course. The LA letter is very disturbing to me. It seems to violate all of what was emphasized and bragged about in our brief history concerning the doctrines and denominations of men. Of movements' starting in caves and dying in cathedrals' etc.. It is going backwards, not forwards. And in my humble estimation, is a cleverly devised attempt at power and holding on and dare I say it, more control. A few guys sitting around one day (including Kip-but we'll see) and then

nominating themselves? Gee, could I be wrong? The plan from LA has not a shred of divine authority or approval. It will divide you faster than you can imagine. It already *is* dividing you!

The answer to every problem the ICOC has right now-*the* vital ingredient for peace and healing-is to be found in the central character of 1 Corinthians 1.1-18. Christ is all, Christ is perfect, Christ is enough. Or to borrow those happy words from J.B. Phillips, 'Christ is all that matters' Apart from Him, it's all straw for the fire, it's all about men, it's all for nothing.

My greatest personal lesson in all this? God will not allow anyone or anything to rob Christ of His pre-eminent glory. Nothing wrought outside the will and pleasure and purpose of Christ will stand. Christ must be all and in all. God will have it no other way. I believe God is doing in the ICOC what He has been doing throughout all of history: leading us away from the world, our sin, and from human wisdom towards His beloved Son. 'Apart from me, you can do nothing'. 'I will not give my glory to another'

This whole messy business, in the end, will be seen as an act of grace. It's all about finding Jesus once again, or perhaps, for the very first time. Somewhere between hierarchy and anarchy we will find the cross of Christ. At the foot of that cross is level ground. On that level ground you will not find Rabbi's or Fathers or Teachers, but only brothers. And only when we honestly accept each other as brothers, in equality and in humility, will there be true peace and healing. And unity.

I urge you to stop others from calling the ICOC 'the kingdom'. It only angers or saddens those who hear that kind of language. You are not *the* Kingdom. We are all *in* the kingdom if we are disciples of Christ.

One last thing, about the so-called Unity Meeting in the Fall of 2002. A heated five to four vote among nine World Sectors does not sound like the "vast majority" love fest LA seems to want everyone to think it was. Perhaps I'm mistaken. If so, I'm sorry.

Anyway, that's where I'm at these days and that's my lengthy but straightforward take on things.

I will pray for you to wisely negotiate these very challenging times. And again, thank you for caring about me and for keeping up. I hope you are not offended by my letter, as indeed I was not by yours. We are united in Christ already. Paul never enjoined us to create the unity of the Spirit, but to *keep* it through 'the bond of peace'.

Love, Henry