

# Distinguishing Marks of IFCA International



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In light of the rise of the number of new church and ministerial associations and the continuing controversy between differing theological positions, it is needful for us to identify the distinguishing theological positions that identify IFCA International and make it unique among the various Christian associations. This is not to say that IFCA International is the only correct and true association or fellowship and that all other Christian groups are unbiblical or apostate. But rather that these marks are the historic principles that guided the founding of the IFCA International over eighty years ago. These marks seek to identify the just cause for our existence, and provide the reasons for individuals and organizations for joining the IFCA International.

The following six marks are taken directly from the Constitution and By-Laws of IFCA International and are the summary marks that identify the special theological position held by our organization.

## AUTONOMOUS LOCAL CHURCHES

We believe in the autonomy of the local church, that each local church has the right to govern itself under the leadership of Jesus Christ. Such local churches believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible and are governed by the Holy Scriptures.

“Whereas, in the providence of God, we believe the time has come for an advance movement among these independent churches and groups of Christians to thus unite in a closer fellowship and cooperation in the defense of the faith and in the proclamation of the gospel of God’s grace” (Preamble to the 1930 Constitution)

“The mission of IFCA international is to glorify God by providing an arena of individuals, independent churches, and organizations to participate interdependently in the common cause of advancing biblically authentic, dynamic, compassionate Christianity to all people groups” (Article III The Mission)

“We believe in the autonomy of the local church free of any external authority or control...” (Article IV, 1-12c).

“The recognition of the sovereign, independent position of the local church in its own government” (By-Laws, Article I, 3).

“The preaching and teaching of all the doctrines of God’s Word, including the scriptural emphasis on the independence of the local church...” (By-Laws, Article I, 4)

## BIBLICAL SEPARATION

We believe in the Biblical mandate to separate from all forms of apostasy and groups contrary to faith, as well as all forms of worldliness. IFCA International seeks to maintain the position of Biblical separation in a healthy balance with love, striving to model the Lord Jesus who was full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

“Whereas, the large, established denominations, generally speaking, are now in the deadly grip of ‘modernism’, with its blighting and paralyzing influences and, since prevailing conditions have cause many to withdraw therefrom, and to seek elsewhere the faith and fellowship most satisfying to their spiritual needs in consequence of which, many independent groups of earnest Christians have been formed...” (Preamble to the 1930 Constitution).

“We believe that all the saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Savior and Lord; and, that separation from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices and associations is commanded of God” (Article I, Section 1, 9).

“We believe that these movements (ecumenism, ecumenical evangelism, neo-orthodoxy, new evangelicalism, new conservatism) are out of harmony with the Word of God and the official doctrine and position of IFCA International and are inimical to the work of God” (Article I, Section 2. Movements Contrary to Faith).

“The provision of a common ground of fellowship for churches and ministers that have separated from denominations which include unbelievers and liberal teachers...” (By-Laws, Article I, 1).

“Biblical separation: first, from the apostate ecumenical movements of today, such as the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches and their affiliated organizations, and secondly, from such carnality and worldliness as is condemned in the Word of God” (By-Laws, Article I, 2).

“The preaching and teaching of all the doctrines of God’s Word, including the scriptural emphasis on the independence of the local church, and its separation from apostasy and worldliness” (By-Laws, Article I, 4).

“The recognition that both positive and negative sides of separation must be presented” (By-Laws, Article I, 5).

### **CESSATION OF SIGN GIFTS**

We believe in the cessation of the sign gifts such as speaking in tongues, and with that we believe in a closed canon of Scripture. The Bible as we have it now is sufficient for faith and practice. Hence we stand against the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, and all those who claim to be “open but cautious” regarding the validity of all the sign gifts for today.

“We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowment of all His gifts, and, that the gifts of evangelists, pastors, and teachers are sufficient for the perfecting of the saints today; and, that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles gradually ceased as the New Testament Scriptures were completed and their authority became established...” (Article I, Section 1, 11a).

### **DISPENSATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE**

We believe in the dispensation approach to the interpretation of Scripture and thus see at least three divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purpose; these are the age of law, the age of the Church, and the age of the millennial kingdom. Hence we maintain a distinction between Israel and the Church and see the future, literal fulfillment of the promises made to Israel. As Dispensationalists, we differ also from those who hold to Covenant Theology.

“We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations or rules of life which define man’s responsibilities in successive ages. These dispensations are not ways of salvation, but rather divinely ordered stewardships by which God directs man according to His purposes. Three of these—the age of law, the age of the Church, and the age of the millennial kingdom—are the subjects of detailed revelation in Scripture” (Article I, Section 1, 13)

### **EVANGELISTIC IN MISSION**

We believe in the total depravity of man and the divine necessity of the new birth for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That new birth is only through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, the Church is under mandate to preach the Gospel to the whole world.

“We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam’s sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and, that man is totally depraved, and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition” (Article IV, Section 1, 5).

“We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins” (Article IV, Section 1, 6).

“We believe that it is the obligation of the saved to witness by life and by word to the truths of the Holy Scripture and to seek to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind” (Article IV, Section 1, 10).

“We must never lose sight of the fact that men are lost and that our first business is soul-winning” (By-Laws, Article I, 1).

### **FELLOWSHIP OF INTERDEPENDENT CHURCHES/INDIVIDUALS/GROUPS**

Although we believe in the autonomy and independence of the local church, we also believe in the interdependence of the local churches and groups for the purpose of fellowship and cooperation in fulfilling the Biblical purposes of the church. Hence we exist as an organization because we believe that we can accomplish more by working together. We believe that the “lone wolf” mentality is detrimental to the life and existence of the independent church movement and the furtherance of the Gospel.

“Whereas, in the providence of God, we believe the time has come for an advance movement among these independent churches and groups of Christians to thus unite in a closer fellowship and cooperation in the defense of the faith and in the proclamation of the gospel of God’s grace” (Preamble to the 1930 Constitution).

“Believing, therefore, that God still calls His Church to work together in fellowship, to promote the proclamation of the gospel and the teaching of the historical doctrines of the faith, to send forth missionaries and to

promote the worship of our great God and Savior, we ... establish this Constitution for IFCA International” (Preamble to the 2003 Revised Constitution)

“The mission of IFCA International is to glorify God by providing an arena for individuals, independent churches, and organizations to participate inter-dependently in the common cause of advancing biblically authentic, dynamic, compassionate Christianity to all people groups” (Article III, The Mission).

“The provision of a common ground of fellowship for churches and ministers that have separated from denominations which include unbelievers and liberal teachers; and, the encouragement of each other in the prosecution of God’s program for world evangelization...” (By-Laws, Article I, 1).

“We aspire to become healthy churches who work together to achieve the Great Commission” (IFCA International Statement of Ambition).

### **CONCLUSION**

These six marks distinguish IFCA International from apostate groups, from movements contrary to faith, from the recent rise of the Charismatic movement, from cults, and from groups of genuine brothers holding to a different approach in interpreting the Scripture.

Our primary motive for joining the organization of IFCA International should be doctrinal. This was the historic reason for the formation of the organization in 1930.

Our second motive is for fellowship, for mutual encouragement and for partnership in accomplishing the Great Commission. IFCA International has developed into an organization that services both churches and organizations in numerous ways.

To join or not to join on the basis of “what can the IFCA International do for me” is to lose sight of the historic reasons for our existence: “to thus unite in a closer fellowship and cooperation in the defense of the faith and in the proclamation of the gospel of God’s grace” (Preamble to the 1930 Constitution).

We would again, like our founding fathers, invite those of like biblical convictions and objectives to join us in the defense of the faith and the proclamation of the gospel. Become and remain faithful members of IFCA International.