Muslim Conversions to Christ

A Critique of Insider Movements in Islamic Contexts

EDITED BY Ayman S. Ibrahim AND Ant Greenham
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Insider Movements: Sociologically and Theologically Incoherent</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joshua Fletcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Biblical Basis for Insider Movements: Asking the Right Question,</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in the Right Way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kevin Higgins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or Unknown-God Insiders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fred Farrokh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ant Greenham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Messianic Judaism and Deliverance from the Two Covenants of Islam</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Durie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Word Games in Asia Minor</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duane Alexander Miller</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>&quot;Son of God&quot; in Muslim Idiom Translations of Scripture</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donald Lowe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Tawḥīd: Implications for Discipleship in the Muslim Context</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mike Kuhn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>A Practical Look at Discipleship and the Qur’an</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M. Barrett Fisher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Part III</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Essential Inside Information on the Insider Movement</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paige Patterson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>A Response to Insider Movement Methodology</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M. David Sills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Silver Bullets, Ducks, and the Gospel Ministry: Should We Seek One</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best Solution for Winning People to Christ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George H. Martin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Radical Discipleship and Faithful Witness</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timothy K. Beougher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Watching the Insider Movement Unfold</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Georges Houssney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. *Word Games in Asia Minor*

**Duane Alexander Miller**

**Preface**

Antioch is best known by Christians as the place where the disciples of Jesus were "first called Christians." While we do not usually think of the Apostle Paul as having a sending church, he did, and that was the city-church of Antioch. He departed from that city, and returned to it after his missions.

Established in 301 BC, Jews were encouraged to settle there. With a population reaching some 500,000 people, it became the third largest city in the Roman Empire. "Religiously, Antioch was a mixture of the best and the worst. The groves of Daphne and the Apollo sanctuary were scenes of orgiastic rites." At the same time, "Christians were able freely to preach to Jew and gentile." Initially founded as a fortress like many Roman cities, the initial area inside the city walls was not large—about one square mile.

Those who have studied early church history also know that Antioch produced one of the most influential of the ante-Nicene Church fathers. Ignatius was the bishop of the city (think senior pastor over the city church) and as he was on his way to Rome for trial, he wrote several epistles which are still with us today and which did a lot to make an episcopal form of church government the norm. A few centuries later, Antioch was also the hometown of Nestorius, a pious monk who went on to hold the enormously influential position of bishop of Constantinople. Fairly or unfairly, Nestorius was charged with having an unbiblical and un-apostolic doctrine of the Incarnation, and was removed from that position.

Antioch was such an influential church that it had a unique status of being a patriarchal church. Along with Rome, Constantinople and Alexandria, the city church's head pastor (bishop) could wield great influence. (Jerusalem also was eventually recognized as a patriarchate, but that was more an honorary status
because of the city’s ties to Jesus’ ministry, rather than a recognition that the church there was particularly energetic or numerous.)

Today, Antioch (Antakya) is a city in southern Turkey. The Christian community in the city is a shadow of its former size and influence. The oldest community in the city is the Greek Orthodox, and they have a beautiful church in the city center. To this day, the Patriarch of Antioch remains one of the main leaders among global Orthodox Christians, but he resides in the city of Damascus rather than the small city of Antioch. Much of the liturgy of the Orthodox Church of Saints Peter and Paul is recited in Arabic, as this southern Turkish city has a sizable Arab population, and most of the Orthodox Christians are ethnic Arabs. Part of the homily may be given in Turkish, as younger Arabs often know that language better due to the public school system and since it is the common language outside of Arab homes.

There is also a Roman Catholic congregation. Here, the liturgy is recited in Turkish, and the frescos on the wall are accompanied by Bible verses, also in Turkish. The sanctuary itself is obviously a converted salon—a large hall for family or community events. It is, as the priest told me, a house church, albeit one in which the decorations have been modified. Many of the Catholics are Turks who do not come from Christian families, but have decided to become Catholic Christians.

Our main interest in this chapter is the Protestant/evangelical community. There are a handful of small, evangelical churches scattered around the city. Some of them meet at homes, but others do have their own facilities. In the summers of 2015 and 2016, I spent several weeks in Antioch, and while there I interviewed a number of local BMB evangelicals (believers from a Muslim background) to try to discern their own impressions about insider movements (IMs). I spoke with a pastor, his wife, another BMB, and the Arab pastor in a neighboring village. I also interviewed numerous foreign workers, but my main interest was to gain an understanding of the opinions of the indigenous BMBs. This research was followed up by interviews with BMBs in Ankara and Istanbul, though I found no appreciable difference in the various cities.

The Apostolic Practice and Insider Movements

Before I summarize my findings among the BMBs in Antioch (and Istanbul and Ankara), I want to outline the overarching structure of this chapter. In August of 2013 an article was published by Abu Daoud (a patronymic) in St Francis Magazine titled “Rebecca Lewis and Kevin Higgins against the Ropes: Sounding the Death Nell [sic] of the Insider Movements and the Victory of Apostolic Faith.” This chapter seeks to test the argument in that article.
The author starts by commenting on the common IM theme of being a light within one’s household:

“If IM advocates are right, then Christianity never should have become a religion in the first place. I mean, IM advocates say that we (Christians) should not force them (Muslims) to become like us. Rather, they should remain as they are, but follow Jesus, within their oikos (house, a reference to Mt 5:15).”

However, this principle is not what we see happening in biblical Antioch. In Acts we see Jews and Gentiles coming together to form a distinct socio-religious community:

The implication is that when the Christians in Antioch started to go by the name “Christians” they had invented a new religion. Or maybe it was imposed on them. It doesn’t really matter. But there in that cosmopolitan melting pot of cultures, they really broke this rule of IM, didn’t they? According to IM, the Jewish believers who started to go by the title of “Christian” were leaving their household (oikos), which, IM advocates appear to say, represents preferring religion over Jesus. Furthermore, when the non-Jewish believers (Gentiles) accepted the label “Christian” they were doing something similar. They were leaving their oikos and joining a new oikos, like the BMB who joins a Christian church, and to some extent severs himself from his Muslim religious-cultural community.

This, the author argues, means that Paul, in the confrontation with Peter (which Paul relates in Galatians 2) was actually in the wrong. Peter, who was seeking to remain within his oikos as a Jewish believer, was in fact justified. So,

“If IM advocates are right, then Christianity never should have existed in the first place, and the Antioch Church... was a mistake. Think about it: had they understood the true meaning of the incarnation (the theological basis for IM), the Jews would have stayed Jews (just as believers), and the pagans would have stayed pagans. If IM is right, then Paul in his confrontation with Peter (Gal 2) was wrong. Peter was remaining within his oikos by observing kashrut (i.e., keeping kosher).”

As a matter of fact, Paul’s problem with Peter is not that he should not live like a Jew. (Sorry for the double negative.) What Paul says is that Peter was not living like a Jew most of the time, but expected non-Jews to live like Jews. “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Gal 2:14, ESV). Basically, Peter was holding the Gentiles to a standard that Peter wasn’t meeting.

The author then goes on to ask why there is no peer-reviewed evidence that self-initiated IMs actually exist, and takes aim at the Wikipedia page, composed and protected by Dave Bogs (a pseudonym) featuring an “Insider movement,” calling this, more or less, propaganda and not scholarship. Finally, he critiques the
material from the January 2013 issue of *Christianity Today* on worshiping Jesus in the mosque.

But those arguments are not of primary interest to us in this chapter. The key insight we wish to explore is that there is an apostolic pattern to church planting which contradicts IM. The author asserts:

Let me return to my original observation in this article. If Lewis, Higgins and Dave Bogs are right that IM is a recuperation of the real meaning of the incarnation, then logically, there never should have been One Apostolic Church to begin with. The Jews should have stayed on as Jews who follow Jesus, and the pagans should have stayed in their various cults and philosophies, trying to be light and salt there. The mixed church of Antioch (where they, both Jew and Gentile, were first called Christians) was really a mistake—one that represented a failure to understand Jesus’ Gospel and that to honor their God-given identities (Rebecca Lewis’ phrase), the Gentiles and Jews should have stayed within their own social-religious communities, rather than embracing this brand new one—being Christians.

Further, the mixed churches in cities like Rome and Galatia were likewise errors. These believers, both Jews and non-Jews, had mistakenly supposed that they in some way had come into a new oikos and a new identity, and Paul, lacking wisdom as usual, taught them these things.10

Driving this point home, the author clarifies another formulation of his thesis: “[The] theology of IM, if indeed correct and biblical, must lead us to the conclusion that the Apostles, all Jews, should have remained within their oikos, rather than contributing to the formation of a new body that reached across ethnic boundaries, regardless of ‘cultural forms.’”11

Here, then, is the main hypothesis we wish to test in this chapter: That there was an apostolic pattern to church planting, that this apostolic, biblical pattern intentionally created a distinct community, and that it intentionally incorporated, when possible, both Jews and non-Jews into a new assembly or gathering (the Greek word for assembly being, of course, *ekklesia*). We will then explore later patterns from church history and the contemporary Christians of Turkey.

In the following section, we will explore the various Christian communities we know about from the epistles. We will see that in several cases the authors of the epistles are addressing mixed churches, and that the formation of a new Christian identity that transcends socio-ethnic customs is of central interest. In other words, the apostolic practice, for what it is worth, was intensely interested in drawing people from different oikoi into one new community.

**Antioch and the Pauline Churches**

There were many ethnic groups in Antioch. If we follow the logic of IM of having a Jesus-community for each socio-cultural group, then it follows that not only among the Jews but among the Gentiles as well. And it is not just a case of a Jewish-Circumcised Gentile church being the only mixed church. As the material above shows, when Gentile churches were established, they usually looked to the leaders of Antioch to solve the question of inclusion. That is, Gentile churches sought a Gentile leader to solve the problem of whether a Gentile could be a Christian. As the book notes, “The church is open to all.” But what of a Jewish Christian, who was presumably not a Gentile? This question becomes even more pressing when we consider that Paul, who was a Jewish-Christian, was possibly the first to publicly establish a Gentile church in Ephesus. If he were to adopt the logic of IM, he would have had to adapt to his Gentile church. He was surely interested in the idea of extending his apostolic practice to other ethnic groups, but the logic of IM would have required him to draw from all oikoi into one new community.
should there not have been a single church (as Acts portrays, and as Paul indefa-

tedly defends in his epistles) consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, there should

have been one for each group: the Romans, the Greeks, the Syrians, the Copts,

the Macedonians, and whatever groups were in fact present. Let us not forget

that “Gentiles” are not members of one socio-cultural group. “Gentiles” is simply

a shorthand for “not Jewish” and literally means “the nations.” What we find

happening in Antioch is that the creation of a new people—one founded on faith

in the one God and Jesus Christ whom he had sent—was precisely what proved

attractive. In a large, densely populated, multiethnic city like Antioch it appears

that it was precisely that creation of one Church into whom all people from all

ethnicities, sexes, and economic classes could be incorporated was what proved

successful.

And what of the other churches planted by Paul? Drawing on the best histor-

ical and Scriptural resources, we find a recurring theme: “we can conclude, apart

from external influences through rival missionary activities, the Pauline churches

solved the problem of the relationship between Jewish and gentile Christians on

a Gentile-Christian basis.” Though not planted by Paul, the church in Rome

followed this pattern:

As Jewish Christians, Aquila and Priscilla, together with other Jewish-Christian

believers, were evicted from Rome by the edict of Claudius (Acts 18:1–2). The

Gentile-Christian segment of the church was apparently not affected. This means that a

church that had grown out of the synagogue now became a Gentile-Christian church.

The churches in Thessalonica and Corinth were majority Gentile and resolved the

question of Jewish-Christian believers the same way.

Some may point to Paul’s insistence that Gentile Christians need not be cir-
cumcised as evidence of IM. But that is not the case. First, Paul did not let the

Gentile believers stay within their socio-religious context en toto. Indeed, the

practice in all the Pauline churches is resounding—that Gentiles had to intention-
ally leave and renounce their former religious practices, whatever they may have

been. Second, Paul did teach that Jewish Christians should adapt to the largely

Gentile-Christian ethos and identity of the churches he planted or counseled.

But what of the Jerusalem church? The Jerusalem church, led by James, was

a Jewish Christian church that was living as such, and any Gentile believers there

were presumably expected to respect the Jewish identity of the church. What is

notable is that Paul was emphatic in maintaining a relationship with Jerusalem,

and went out of his way to personally bring financial help to Jerusalem in order
to publicly establish this connection, all the while not insisting that the Jerusalem

church adapt to his Antiochian-Pauline practice, which was that Jewish Christians

should adapt to and settle into Gentile Christianity. The inherent tension in this

approach—insisting on unity with Jerusalem while simultaneously deploying and
advocating for a different style of Christianity—is palpable in Galatians 1 and 2, wherein he is adamant that he received the gospel from Jesus Christ himself, but that his mission to the Gentiles was being carried out with the blessing of Jerusalem, even if he had to oppose Peter “to his face” in Antioch.

The episode in Antioch warrants our attention. Was not Peter, in withdrawing from the Gentile believers and following Christ within his own socio-religious setting doing precisely what advocates of IM propose? Yet Paul opposes him, in front of everyone, and tells him that he is compromising the very nature of the gospel.

How can one make sense of all of this? On the one hand, Paul is teaching Jewish Christians to adapt themselves to the Gentile Christianity of his churches (after the model of Antioch). At the same time his contentious link to Jerusalem is so important to him. The answer seems to be that Paul clearly envisioned the church to be a distinct oikos and identity that superseded any existing socio-religious identity that believers may have previously had: In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile.14

Many Jews, as they adopted Christian beliefs particularly about Jesus as Messiah and God, found themselves on the outs with their Jewish friends and families, they were suddenly heretical, crazy, or bad. It became necessary, then, to offer these disciples replacements for those things they were giving up or they had lost. After all, no one will join a group if the negatives of doing so outweigh the perceived positives. In his epistles and actions we encounter “Paul’s presentation of the group as a viable option, as a group which offered members some benefit through membership.”15

The Early Church’s Mission to the Jews

But what of the Church’s mission to the Jews after Paul? Did the church continue to deploy the (successful) Antiochian-Pauline model of folding new Jewish-Christian believers into the largely culturally Gentile-Christian congregations, thus bringing them into a distinct oikos—one founded on a common faith and koinonia in Christ and not on socio-religious background?

It was believed for a long time that after the initial apostolic burst of mission, it quickly died out. After all, long into the age of Christendom there were synagogues scattered throughout Africa, Asia and Europe. And the rabbinic Judaism of today can indeed be traced back to the Pharisaic Judaism of the first century—of today can indeed be traced back to the Pharisaic Judaism of the first century—but while the distinct Judaisms of the Sadducees and Essenes died out. But the other forms of Judaism that the early church helped shape were another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church: Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church. Here was another key way of being Jewish in the centuries of the early church.

The Christians, and he is named the Son of God, lived for almost a thousand years in the Hebrews; a Son of God lived for almost a thousand years in the Hebrews; a Son of God lived for almost a thousand years in the Hebrews; a Son of God lived for almost a thousand years in the Hebrews; a Son of God lived for almost a thousand years in the Hebrews. Thereupon the Jews and the Christians kept showing those of the people who are become family of God. So then to the Jews and Christians kept showing those of the people who are become family of God. So then to the Jews and Christians kept showing those of the people who are become family of God. So then to the Jews and Christians kept showing those of the people who are become family of God.

But how is this possible? First, advocates of IM argue that other forms of Judaism and belief systems, such as Hinduism or Buddhism, have failed to maintain historical and religious continuity, whereas Judaism and Christianity have maintained their continuity throughout history. This is why Christians believe that they are the true religion and that it was always meant to be. However, this argument fails to account for the diversity within Judaism and Christianity, as well as the influence of other religious traditions on both. For instance, while Judaism has maintained its continuity throughout history, it has also been shaped by the influence of various cultural and political forces, such as the Babylonian exile and the Roman occupation. Similarly, Christianity has been influenced by a variety of cultural and political factors, such as the Roman Empire and the rise of the Byzantine Empire. Therefore, it is not accurate to argue that Judaism and Christianity are the only religions that have maintained historical and religious continuity throughout history.
particular place at a particular time, and God understood that Jews living among the nations in the Diaspora could hardly be expected to live according to all these rules.

What happened to the large portion of the Jewish population in the Roman Empire outside of Palestine, many of whom were Hellenized? We know from Scripture and historical evidence that some of the first disciples were Hellenized Jews. We also know that the Bar Kokhba revolt, and the decision of the Palestine Jews to expel Jewish Christians from their synagogues made a small impact outside of the Holy Land. This is important because it means that the main impetus of forced Jewish Christians to choose between Judaism and Christianity did not originate within the Church, but originated within the synagogues of Palestine. Christianity allowed for multiple identities in a way that Palestinian Judaism apparently did not. It is also important because that impetus was of little significance outside of Palestine.

We also know that by the fifth century, at the latest, Christians had developed a sense of belonging that was not based on their previous ethnic or religious affiliations, but a common faith and confession:

The Christians, then, trace the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah; and he is named the Son of God Most High. And it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh; and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man. This is taught in the gospel, as it is called, which a short time was preached among them; and you also if you will read therein, may perceive the power which belongs to it. This Jesus, then, was born of the race of the Hebrews; and he had twelve disciples in order that the purpose of his incarnation might in time be accomplished. But he himself was pierced by the Jews, and he died and was buried; and they say that after three days he rose and ascended to heaven. Thereupon these twelve disciples went forth throughout the known parts of the world, and kept showing his greatness with all modesty and uprightness. And hence also those of the present day who believe that preaching are called Christians, and they are become famous.

So then there are, as I said above, four classes of men: Barbarians and Greeks, Jews and Christians.

But how is this relevant to the question of IM? It is relevant for the following reasons:

First, advocates of IM often rely on a parallel to Messianic Judaism in defense of other forms of IM. They argue that we (evangelicals) do not force Jews to leave Judaism and become Christians. So by analogy, we should not force Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists to become Christians. But when we learn a little about the early history we find that Jewish Christians in Palestine were quite content to belong to the town synagogue while also participating in Christian worship, and that it was not the Church that forced them out of the synagogue—it was their
fellow Jews who claimed that Bar Kokhba was the promised messiah, not Jesus of Nazareth.

Second, the church in Antioch, which is inseparable from Pauline method and theology, actually adopted the label Christian in order to form a distinct identity. The word Christian was likely a slight at first, but the believers in Antioch adopted it because the existing socio-religious categories (Jew, Gentile) were not sufficient for them to communicate the reality and depth of the distinct community in which they found themselves.18 This strategy of devising a distinct identity (Christian) that superseded ethnicity and social background was integral both to the theology of mission and ecclesiology—not only of the Pauline-Antiochian matrix, but of the succeeding generations as well.

Stephen Louy, in his detailed study of the origins of Christian identity as encountered in the Pauline letters, examines sociological and anthropological studies of how identity groups form and distinguish themselves. He then applies these studies to Paul’s letters to highlight several features that point to Christians being, if not an entirely new identity, then certainly a distinct identity, and this as early as the 40s–50s AD. These identity formers include a homeland for Christians (Heaven), common rituals (baptism, communion, agape feast, holy kiss), group memories (centered around Jesus), a sense of fictive kinship among the community, and a sense of solidarity between members.19

Third, since the Bar Kokhba revolt made little impact outside of Palestine, the Church was free to continue her mission to Hellenized Jews. Christianity offered them a venue for not remaining within their socio-religious community while also retaining a relation to God, yet reconstituted in and through the person of Jesus the Christ.

Fourth, this is important because it indicates continuity between the apostolic practice of Paul and the patristic practice of the early church. What is more historically reasonable: that the church immediately succeeding the apostles departed radically from their practice? Or that the early church perpetuated (with modifications based on context) those practices? Those who claim that IM was in fact apostolic practice find themselves in the place of our friends in the Church of Latter Day Saints: asking us to believe that somehow an apostolic practice received from Jesus Christ himself was clearly and totally repudiated by the next generation of leaders. On a purely practical level, if this was the case, then neither Jesus nor the apostles are worthy of our respect. Any preacher or teacher who fails so miserably to communicate something so central to their kerygma as IM is claimed to be, is at best a mediocrity.

Fifth, if IM is indeed apostolic, then the canon of the New Testament must be called into question. The New Testament canon was not a fait accompli. Much discussion and deliberation went into the selection of the definitive list of books we call the New Testament. Why did the inclusion of a given work end up in the New Testament? What was the generational confidence in church for determining the New Testament canon based on Christ-centered confidence in church for determining the New Testament canon? Why should we not even be surprised if IM should beg us to discontinue obvious departures from the practice of Lewis that “Believe on the evidence of the Bible,”20 is in the new context?
we call the New Testament. One of the main questions asked in determining the inclusion of a given writing was, did it have apostolic backing? Yet the novel conception of church history proposed by IM advocates would appear to inform us that the generation right after the apostles departed from their desire to plant Christ-centered communities within social-religious oikoi. Can we then have confidence in church fathers from the fourth century, when the NT canon was finally defined? Why should we, or anyone, have any confidence in these bishops and presbyters to discern what had apostolic backing, when they themselves had so obviously departed from apostolic practice? In other words, the advocates of IM should not even be using the New Testament to begin with. A genuine advocate of IM should begin with the formation of a new “New Testament.” The claim of Lewis that “Believers retain their identity as members of their socio-religious community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible,”20 is incoherent nonsense. A genuine embrace of insiderness logically entails revisiting the canon commonly known as “the Bible.”

Christians in Turkey Today

In the previous sections I established that the apostolic practice of the early church in Antioch was in fact to create one new community consisting both of Jews and non-Jews. It was clearly not to form movements in which people would remain within their own socio-cultural community. After that, I described the post-apostolic period, and how the churches in that period were successful in evangelizing Diaspora Hellenized Jews who saw in Gentile-Christianity a way of being faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Messiah, while also affording them a realistic way of living in and among the nations.

Several of the cities discussed above are located in present-day Turkey, which leads to the question, what is the practice of Christians in Turkey today? Some of the churches in Turkey today can trace their cultural and historical roots back to the early centuries of the Christian faith— for instance the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, and the Constantinopolitan Orthodox Church. Other churches—notably the various Protestant churches consisting largely of ethnic Turkish believers—are much more recent in their foundation and growth.

So how do churches in Turkey today address this question of identity? I spent a month in Turkey in 2015, and another in 2016. During this time I carried out over 20 interviews with leaders and members of various churches. Furthermore, I interviewed both local believers and foreign Christians who were involved in the lives of the churches there to differing degrees. I chose to focus on the issue of the catechesis, which is simply a Greek word meaning under instruction, and might be called pre-baptismal discipleship or
training. What better way to focus on issues of identity, I thought, than to focus on how people were prepared for the rite of initiation into Christ and his church? From the point of socio-religious identity, what could be more strategic locally for research than this public profession of faith common to almost all Christian churches throughout history and the world? Furthermore, since we are dealing with a church of converts (as was the early church in Antioch), the centuries-old debate about the baptism of babies and/or children becomes moot. So, the key areas I focused on in my interviews were: How are people prepared for baptism? What does baptism look like? After baptism, what are some of the key challenges faced by these new Christians?

Latin Catholics (or Roman Catholics, as they are called in the West) do not have an ancient presence in Turkey. Most of the Latin Catholic Christians in Turkey today are foreigners who are working or studying in the country. There are, however, a couple hundred converts from Islam in the country who belong to the Latin Church.

Let us begin with a Catholic church in Ankara. I was able to sit down with one of the priests and a sister and they kindly described to me their approach to catechesis. First, it was clear, as with Iranian Diaspora churches I have previously researched, that there was a sense that one could not be in a hurry.20 For people who were seeking refugee status in the West, their normal counsel would be to wait until they had arrived at their new home and found a church there to request baptism.

The nun answered the question, “What do you do when a person seeks to be baptized?” by saying that first they ask about motive. This concern with motive was echoed by other Catholic leaders, like the bishop in Istanbul and the Capuchin priest in Antioch, and indeed by almost all Christians regardless of denominational affiliation. The main concern is that conversion from Islam is not merely an act of rebellion against Islam or one’s Muslim family, but that it be based on a genuine and informed understanding of and attraction to the Christian faith. After someone requests baptism, the priest said, they are told to simply attend church. “What we are looking for is faithfulness,” he noted. The nun noted that it is also important during this time for the enquirer to meet other people in the church. As with so many churches ministering to Muslims, a person in a hurry to be baptized is considered a red flag.

I was also told that since Turks come from a background where they know nothing of Christianity, even before catechesis begins, there must be a period of pre-catechesis. This begins with a small group of people—up to eight—who are seeking baptism and continues for one to two years. Meeting every week, they begin with reading and studying some of the key stories from the Old Testament. When asked why, the sister explained that while Muslims suppose they know something about God, it is important of God as portrayed in the Bible. Earlier, Abraham and Noah are brought into these figures. The priest explained, “The sister said, ‘We have to get them all together.’ The sister says, ‘You become part of the community of the disciples or the scribe. We have to teach them what the Bible one can see here.”

They go on to new Christian faith. The Jesus Christ and his gospel at his head] to her. The word is the word of the apostles, “so they understand. That the question of (in Latin tradition) are confirmed by the bishop notes that it is important that the new Christian is not alone, and the community of the church is also there.

However, after one year, they have been introduced to the bishop. They realize they still struggle with the idea that believers may be able to speak to some people eventu-
something about God, in reality they need to know the personality or “new image” of God as portrayed in the Bible. Furthermore, they have heard of names like Abraham and Noah and David, but know nothing of the biblical material regarding these figures. The group dynamic is important; as the priest notes, “We growing these together.” The sister compares this to Israel’s journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The priest adds that “Our focus is on the image of God … even if some of them were not believers [in Islam] before.”

After eight months they move on to studying one of the synoptic gospels. “It is a reading group,” the priest says, “we are trying to help them to interact with the text. We are trying to help them to love the Bible.” The focus overall is on helping the enquirer to understand that the Bible is a guide for their day-to-day life. As the sister says, “Moses is like me!” Underlying this approach to interacting with the Bible one can see the Jesuit tradition of lectio divina. As the Jesuit priest says, “You become part of the text—you see where you are. Can you identify with the disciples or the scribes or the Pharisees?” He continues, “Sometimes they expect us to teach them what to think, but we avoid this as much as possible.”

They go on to note that many enquirers have already read a lot about the Christian faith. The Jesuit priest notes that “we are trying to go from here [pointing at his head] to here [pointing at his heart].” After they are done with the study of the gospel, the bishop visits and during the mass they are officially recognized before the congregation as catechumens. There is a liturgical prayer used by the bishop recognizing them in their new relation to the church. The priest notes “this is a very ancient tradition.” During this period of catechesis they read the Acts of the Apostles, “so they recognize what the church is.” It is also during this period that the question of Christian ethics and the sacraments (which number seven in Latin tradition) are discussed. After all of this, the person is baptized and confirmed by the bishop, and they receive communion for the first time. The priest notes that it is important that this be done by the bishop because this signifies that the new Christian is not only a member of that one local congregation, but belongs to the community of the Catholic Church that spans the entire globe.

However, after baptism the believers continue to face many struggles. For one, they have been preparing for baptism for years, and then after baptism they realize they still struggle with temptation and character issues. Another challenge is that believers may have a hard time finding other Christians to marry. Finally, some people eventually simply stop attending church, though that is not common. These concerns were echoed by pastors and leaders from other denominations as well.

The practice for discipleship before baptism appeared similar in Istanbul and Antioch. The Capuchin priest in Antioch said that before baptism he required each person to write a letter to his or her reason for requesting baptism. He would then
keep this letter in a file. When asked why, he said that this was important because if the church was accused of bribing or enticing a person to convert, he could simply produce the letter—handwritten and signed by the convert.

All in all there is no concern whatsoever for allowing or helping people to remain ‘inside’ their socio-religious milieu. The concern with baptismal preparation is clearly focused on (1) inclusion into the new Christian community, (2) a new (biblical) understanding of the personhood of God, and (3) teaching new believers to read, interpret and apply material from Scripture.

I was also able to spend substantial time in Antioch with Protestant Christians there. I helped to provide aid to refugees in the area, taught and preached at local churches (in Arabic with translation into Turkish), and interviewed around a dozen leaders, both locals and foreigners. At one of the small churches in Antioch I was able to converse extensively with the pastor, his brother and the pastor’s wife. All Turkish converts. During my conversations with them I was able to explicitly name the topic of IM. For them, the idea was incomprehensible.

The pastor’s wife explained: “My neighbors come to see me because they know I’m trustworthy and won’t gossip. Why would I want them to think I’m a Muslim? I want them to know that Jesus changed me!” I explained that, in terms of IM, she would be understood as a Muslim who had indeed been transformed by Jesus and his teaching. The pastor’s brother, who had become rather animated during this conversation, scoffed at this idea, saying, “Sounds like word games to me!” (My portrayal of IM was actually so sympathetic that an expatriate worker warned me the next day that the pastor’s brother was upset with me, and that he did not understand the role of the researcher as someone who asks questions without necessarily being an advocate for said point of view.)

I encountered a different perspective on baptism from a pastor in one of the main Protestant churches in Istanbul. He was well aware of the problem of sincerity and faithfulness among those seeking baptism. But his perspective was more pragmatic: who could know the heart of a man or woman? If people asked for baptism then he would grant it. Their sincerity was between them and God, at his discretion. In this he did represent a minority position among the clergy I interviewed. One of the lengthiest interviews I conducted, and one that was very difficult to be granted, was with the single spokesperson of the Armenian Apostolic Church. I had visited various Armenian churches and had been warmly received, but on asking questions about conversion I was told that there was one single bishop at the country who could grant interviews—so precarious is the state of Armenian Christians in Turkey today.

The bishop welcomed me and, since it was a nice day, we carried out the interview in the garden of the patriarchate. He did not allow me to make an audio recording of our interview, but I was allowed to take handwritten notes. I am very sensitive to the delicacy of the subject, and I am aware that many are not. Mostly, these are ethnic-Armenians who want to convert. The Church converts learn some Aramaic in the communal worship, but I do not believe that I can ethically call this a ‘conversion’.

What is clear from my interviews with local Christians is that while there are national or religious reasons for converting, there are also cultural and personal reasons. But this, for what it’s worth, is what the Church of Antioch is doing.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the Insider Movement and its implications for the apostolic practice (and practice of the apostles) in the modern world. I have argued that the very adoption of a new form is not a rejection of the old. Recognizing the continuity between the two forms of the pastor, I have suggested that there is a need for a new form of apostolic practice that is inclusive of all people who seek to follow Jesus. The Church of Antioch is doing this, and I believe that we should learn from them.

I followed up with Pauline-Antiochian work in Jerusalem, where the local form of the faith is more traditional. I furthermore argued that the cultic pagan context of the apostolic practice is necessary for the success of the ministry of the Church of Antioch. I believe that this is a model that can be applied to other contexts as well.
sensitive to the delicate situation of Armenian Christians in Turkey, and so will
only note that the Church does receive a small number of converts every year.
Mostly these are ethnic Turks who wish to marry Armenian Christians and decide
to convert. The Church is not active in seeking out converts. They do require that
converts learn some Armenian so they can understand the liturgy and participate
in the communal worship of the body of Christ. Beyond these few details I do not
believe that I can ethically disclose anything else.

What is clear from my research among Protestants and Armenian Apostolic
Christians is that while their practices of the Christian faith are different in many
ways, "honoring God-given identity" means accepting a new believer into the
local church, and allowing the new believer to receive a new identity in Christ.
This, for what it's worth, was also the apostolic practice of Paul, the biblical
Church of Antioch, and the early church.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to test the hypothesis of Abu Daoud's 2013 article,
"Rebecca Lewis and Kevin Higgins against the Ropes: Sounding the Death Nell of the
Insider Movements and the Victory of Apostolic Faith." That hypothesis was
that the theological theory formulated by Lewis, Higgins, and Bogs is contrary to
apostolic practice (and theology).

I have argued that the Pauline-Antiochian vision of mission represented fold-
ing Jewish-Christians into the predominant Gentile-Christian churches. I argued
that the very adoption of the word Christiane represented an intentional attempt
to form a distinct new oikos for Antiochian believers, both Jews and non-Jews. I
noted that ancient Antioch had numerous ethnic groups, and so IM (in contrast)
would have to mean one spiritual home for each of these socio-religious groups.
I also noted that Peter's apparent attempt to embody "insiderliness" was refuted
by Paul, as we saw in Galatians. Paul's embrace of the Jerusalem church, which
embodied a Jewish-Christian koinonia, enforced this point, since Gentile Chris-
tians in Jerusalem would be expected to embrace and adapt themselves to that
(local) form of the faith, rather than remain in their own socio-religious oikos.
I furthermore argued that since Paul never told pagan Gentiles to remain within
their cultic pagan contexts as disciples of Jesus (quite the opposite, in fact), that
the apostolic practice is indeed incompatible with IM.

I followed up with an argument from history: The church continued to be
successful in its mission to Jews because it carried forth (with modifications) the
Pauline-Antiochian vision of mission, wherein Diaspora Jewish Christians were
successfully folded into largely Gentile Christian congregations. Moreover this
ability to bring Jews out of their socio-religious oikos into the distinct oikos of the
body of Christ, wherein there was neither Gentile nor Jew, but there was YHWH, became precisely a key selling point of conversion.

We then visited a number of contemporary Christ-centered communities in present-day Turkey—home to many of the key cities of biblical Christianity, including Antioch. We found that the communities researched had different approaches to evangelism, discipleship and baptism. However, all of them were concerned with incorporating the new believer into a community that transcended socio-religious boundaries of identity, and folded every new believer into “one holy, catholic, apostolic Church” wherein the dividing boundary affecting the ekklesia has been abolished by Christ. This is the faith that was apostolic, was cast forth by the early church, and is embodied in the mission of the various Christian

I am aware that some proponents of IM will read this chapter and say something like, “But you have not even touched on what we are actually arguing for!” Perhaps the best response to that is captured in the words of the BMB leader from Antioch: “Sounds like word games to me!”

Notes

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. This is in response to a brief comment left by Rebecca Lewis in the comments section of the Biblical Missiology page. At the time of writing, Lewis had not replied to Abu Daoud’s request for a response to his article; neither had Kevin Higgins nor Dave Bogs.

References

Becker, Jürgen. “Paul from Jesus to Post-A.”
Becker, Jürgen. “Paul from Jesus to Post-A.”

13. Ibid., 178.

14. Editor’s Note: In this regard, the reader may be interested in Ant Greenham’s discussion of the tragic substitute which marked Paul’s relationship with the Jerusalem church, in his chapter “Communal Solidarity versus Brotherhood in the New Testament.”


16. For more background, read Chapters 2 and 3 of Stark’s Rise of Christianity.


18. For more details on the origins of the word Christian see the sources referenced in footnote 1.


22. For a photograph of me with Bishop Mashalian see https://tinyurl.com/z8a3eao, accessed July 10, 2017.


References


Throughout 2 are removing producing M sands signing fears about the statements in Wycliffe, and
Eventually recommend an outrage and continue to believe is to show the continuity
The first produce the delays present a historical translators to logical issues to discuss how (IMs), relating

Muslim I.

Bible trans only, or “I