

# THE GATHERING

The Meeting as the Heart of a Complex Apostolic Network

# The Gathering, Apostles, Elders

## Issue 4: Rethinking the Worship Paradigm

### Questions:

1. How does our contemporary Western worship paradigm—with a worship experience followed by preaching—fragment Christ's design for the Gathering?
2. In what sense is the entire meeting from the Lord's Supper to the symposium intended to be a transcendent, worship experience?
3. How can a home be considered the context for this week-by-week experience with Christ?
4. In what sense is the Lord's Supper at the heart of the gathering experience?

# The Gathering, The Assembly

Now back to where we started and the final question: After all this had unfolded, what did it mean to the Christians who received Matthew's completed Gospel text?

When Jesus said, "I will build my assembly," we can see ...

- ... He meant He will build His Gathering through the process of multiplying gatherings.
- ... He meant multiplying assemblies. (Acts 2:42; 9:31; 16:5)
- ... He meant duly authorized assemblies following His design. (Ephesian 3:10; 1 Timothy 2:14–15)
- ... He meant an assembly of assemblies with an overall grand strategy, a specific household order, and principles for all His assemblies.

# The Gathering as a Topoi

The Gathering Topoi (1 Corinthians 11:17–14:40)

The Gathering: In Brief

The Meal—1 Corinthians 11:17–34

Moral Exhortation (Parenesis)—1 Corinthians 12:1–14:25

Gifts and the gathering—1 Corinthians 12

Love and the gathering—1 Corinthians 13

Gifts in the gathering—1 Corinthians 14:1–25

The Symposium—1 Corinthians 14:26–40

# The Gathering and the Spirit

The Spirit is moving through the entire gathering:

- The Spirit is working during the meal; the heart of the meeting.
- The Spirit is working in the symposium
  - through manifestations to and utterances of believers.
  - through psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and prayers of believers.
  - through apostles, prophets, and teachers.

# The Gathering, Apostles, Elders

## Key Principles

1. We need to maintain the balance of apostolic leaders and elders and not institutionalize either.
2. If we do institutionalize leadership and increase the balance of leadership into formal authority of bishops, we will begin to breakdown Christ's design for His churches.
3. We must respect the spontaneous expansion of the gatherings and networks of the gatherings and not institutionalize our emerging networks.
4. In our meetings, we must take care to uphold the Apostles' teaching, through a balance of apostolic and local elder authority.

# Introduction

The **multi-decade paradigm debate** preceding this encyclical was around “worship and the Early Church.”

**This is similar** to our decade-long failure (actually 30 years) to publish much on **the Gospels** because of their misinterpretation in Western Protestantism and its theological constructs and their flagrant misuse by Western parachurch discipleship organizations.

Many accused us of **loving Paul more than Jesus**, to this day by the way.

A simple way to solve that problem is to simply state **(Acts 1:1)** that Paul was simply carrying out Jesus’ strategy revealed through the Spirit to Paul.

# Introduction

I have gone through **three previous attempts** of trying to write this encyclical, thinking through the “worship and the Early Church” paradigm debate.

- But I could not answer all the core paradigm issues.
- I shut them down after much research because I became lost, as I often do, between the Early Church and Western paradigm.
- I truly could not solve several issues and was often depressed.



# Introduction

As these ideas are understood, many **Western paradigms will fall.**

- Contemporary worship will be radically rethought, as will the Eucharist.
- Contemporary Christian rhetoric (modern preaching) will also undergo radical restructuring, as will the entire structure of our contemporary **Sunday morning church service**, which some call *the worship service*.
- A lot is at stake in understanding this New Testament church paradigm of “The Meal, The Meeting, The Gathering.”
- The heart of this paradigm is 1 Corinthians 11:17–14:40. This passage frames the entire encyclical.

# The Gathering and the Spirit

The implications of all we have studied so far are that the gathering *topoi* completely disintegrates our Western church paradigm of worship.

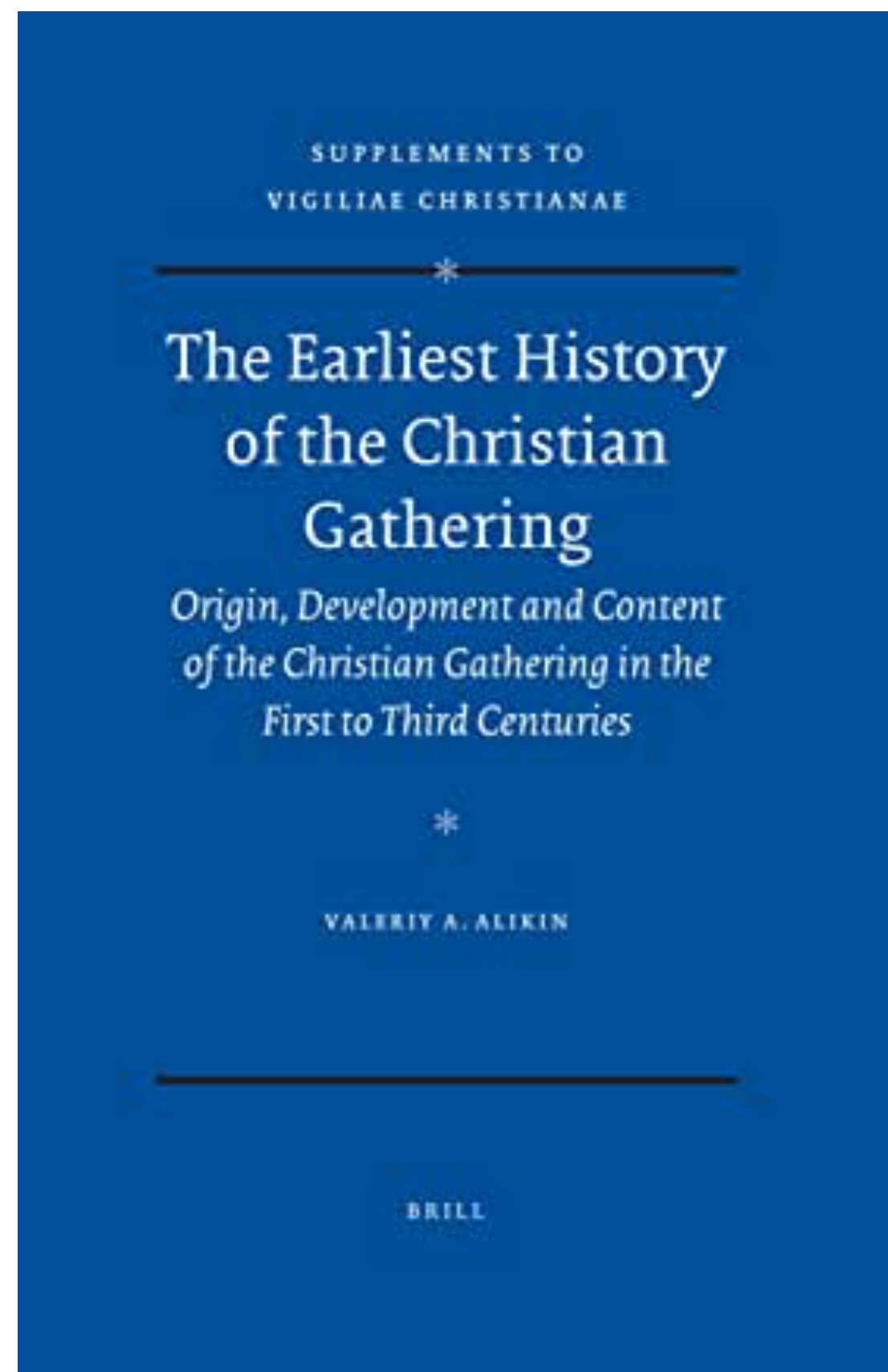
*Worship* is not what happens as a singing experience before a sermon. Every part of the gathering is worship. Every part!

# The Gathering and the Spirit

Every part!

- Sermons are not the oratory of one leader, **the pastor**; teaching is dialogue in community.
- **Eastern and Western eucharist** and Protestant communion are shattered, even missions and evangelism are radically changed.
- *Worship* is the whole thing, although **Paul actually never uses** the term worship in his letters on the gathering topoi. (That is why I did not change these headings to “worship and the early church.”)

# The Gathering and the Spirit

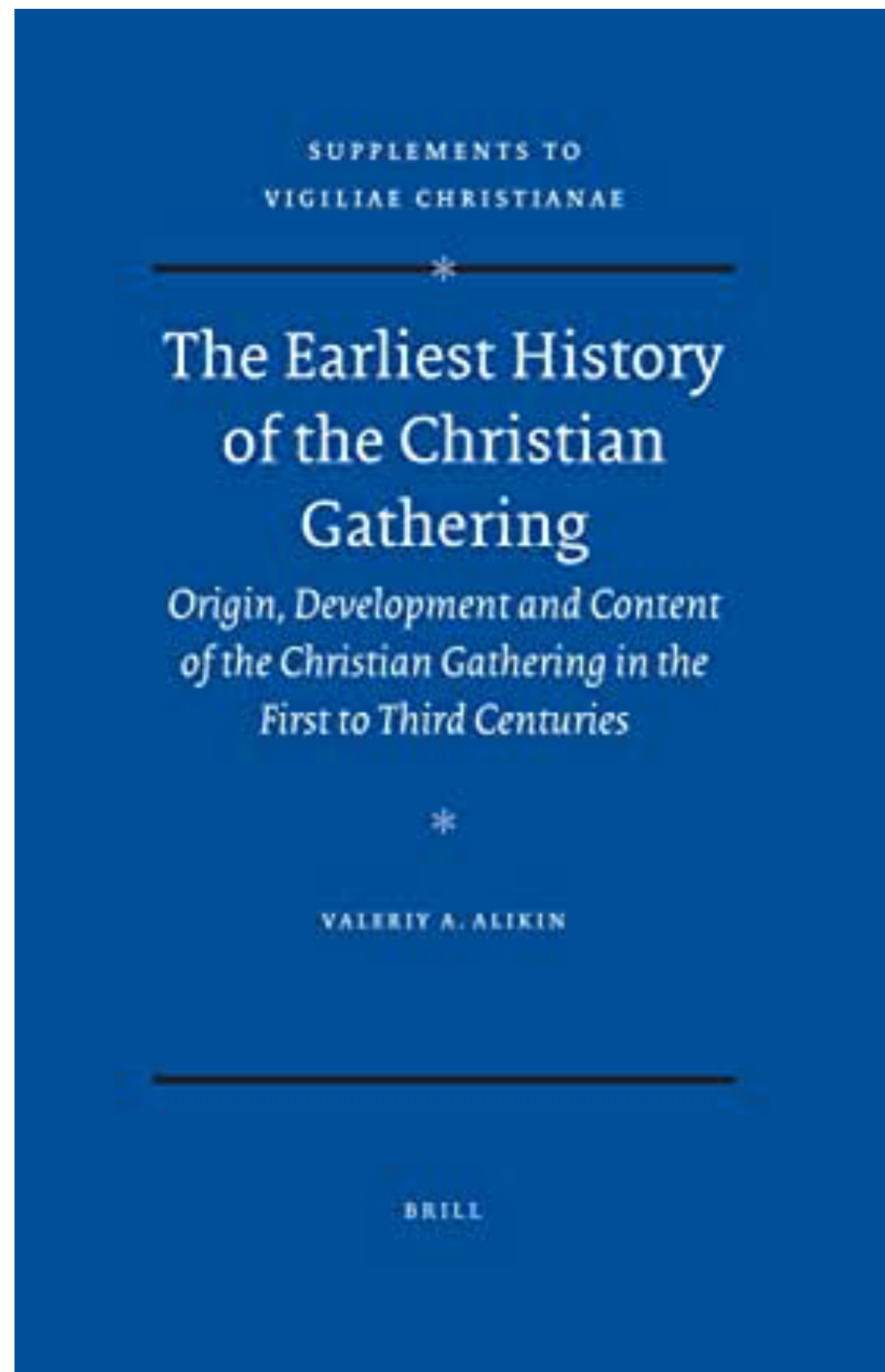


What I consider to be the key book, actually shows **a snapshot of the whole gathering** (worship idea), though *worship* as a term is reductionistic and clouds the initial grasp of the gathering meeting paradigm.

I will not use it other than to try to deconstruct our Western idea of *worship*.

Here is the core of Aikin's outline in his table of contents, which is actually three pages in his book.

# The Gathering and the Spirit



Chapter 1: The Origin of the Weekly Gathering in the Early Church

Chapter 2: The Gatherings of Christians in the Morning

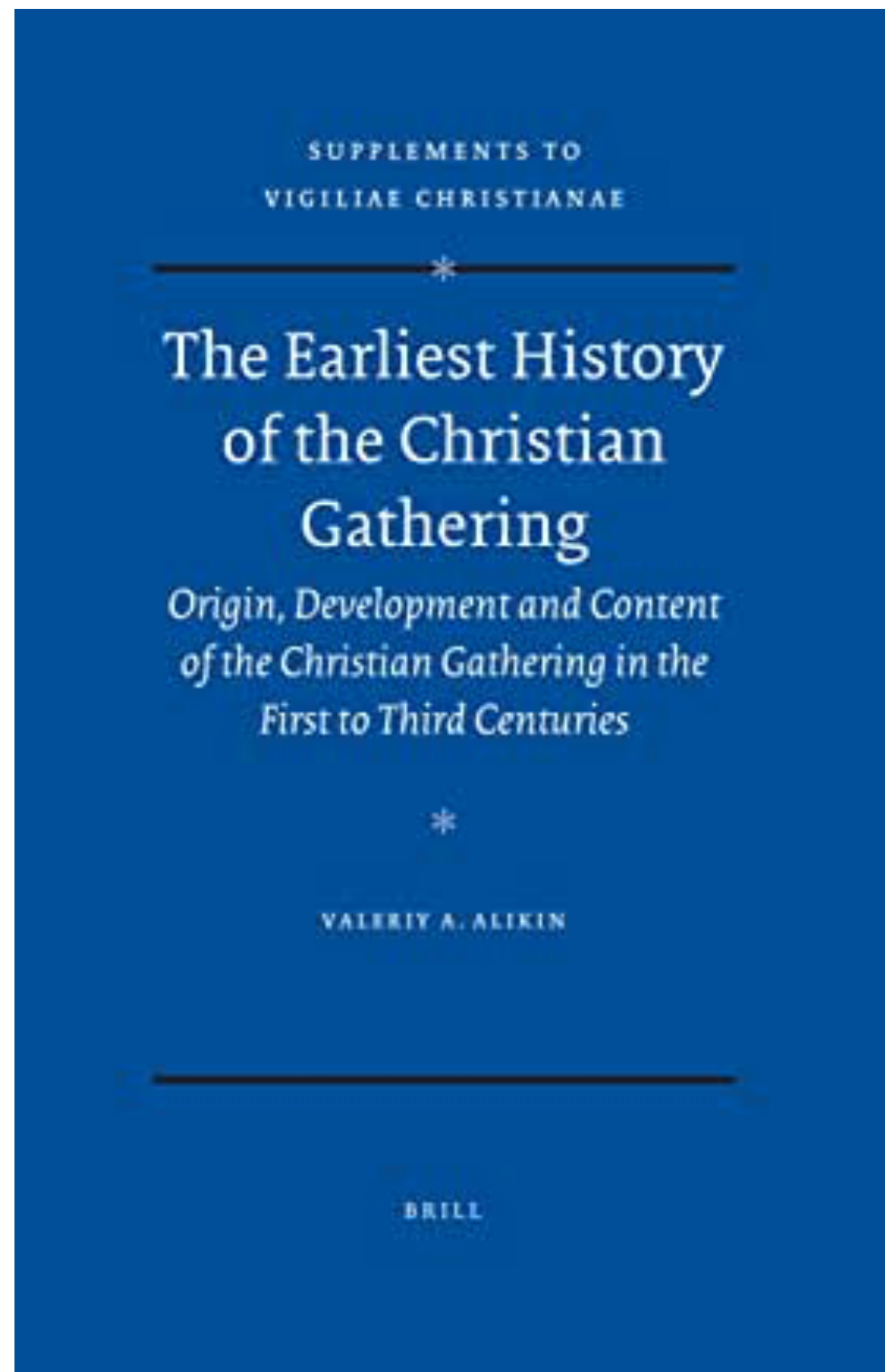
Chapter 3: The Lord's Supper in the Early Church

Chapter 4: The Reading of Scripture in the Gathering of the Early Church

Chapter 5: Preaching in the Gathering of the Early Church

Chapter 6: Singing and Prayer in the Gathering of the Early Church

# The Gathering and the Spirit



## Chapter 7: Other Ritual Actions in the Gatherings of the Early Church

1. The holy kiss
2. The laying on of hands and ordination
3. Ritual footwashing and oil anointing
4. Collections, almsgiving and offerings
5. Healing and exorcism
6. Liturgical acclamations and doxologies

# The Gathering and the Spirit

Notice I am keeping all **the headings** from the article rather than titling these slides “worship and the Early Church.”

Why? I **did not create a *worship section* in the entire article** because it all is worship, if we were going to call the meeting worship.

**Paul did not use the word *worship* as a name for the Gathering.**

In addition, if we use words that embody the Western, institutional paradigm, **the idea will always be mixed.**

# The Gathering and the Spirit

I predict this encyclical will be the most resisted by the institutional churches, at least at first.

This will be true even with churches who have accepted the framework of the paradigm, which is the complex apostolic network of Acts.

Why? **Because this busts up the Sunday morning church** service paradigm, and its entire system: church auditoriums, professions of pastors and worship leaders, etc.

Even many of our **partners initially questioned** the Gathering, with a meal, being normative. It is possible to miss the heart of building a complex apostolic network. (Steve Kemp, CPM churches Sunday service)



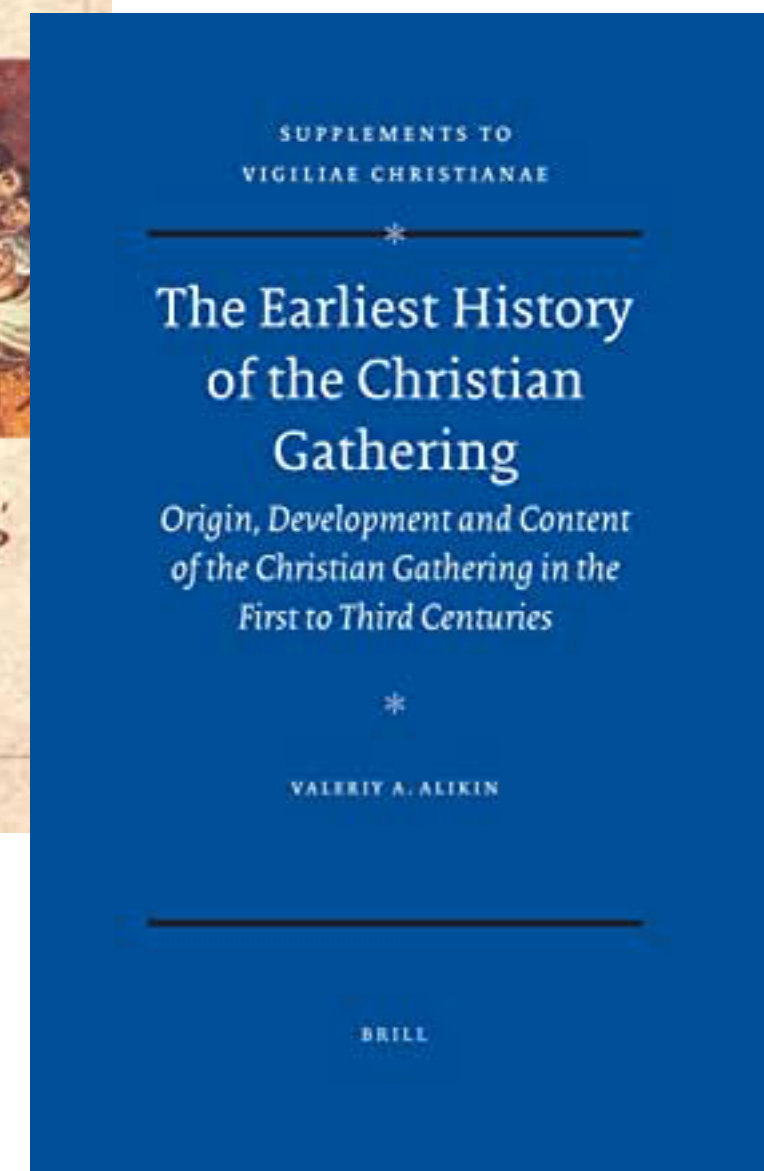
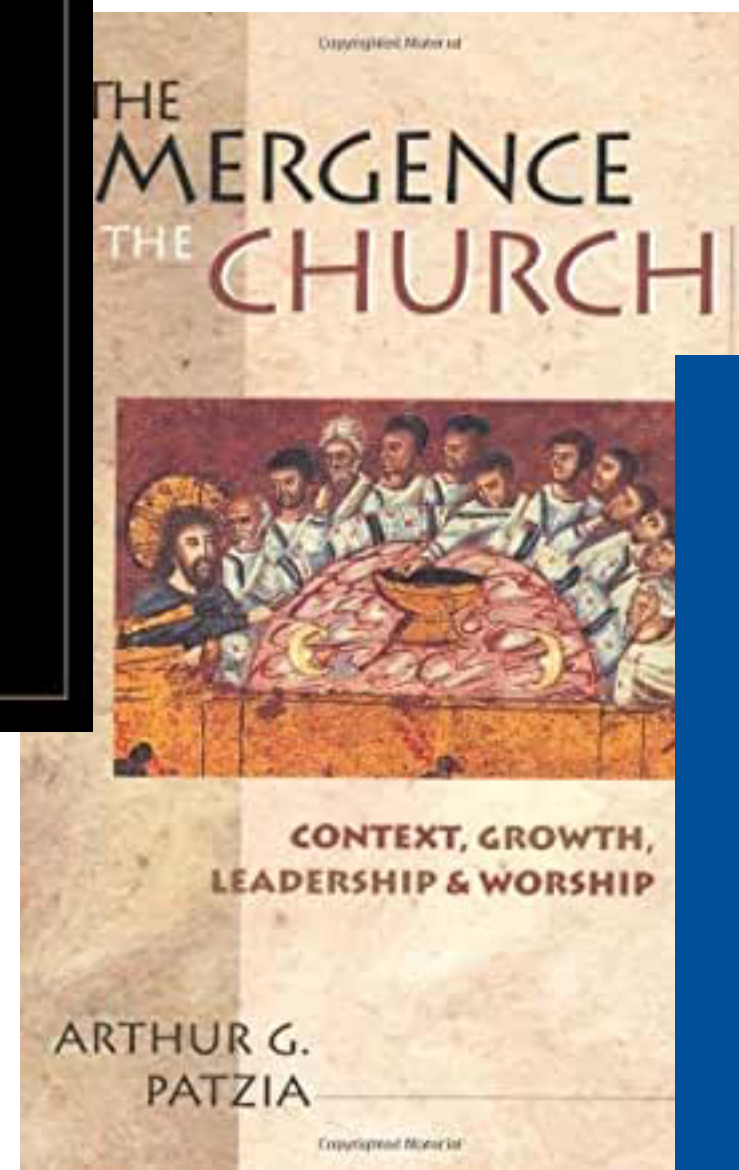
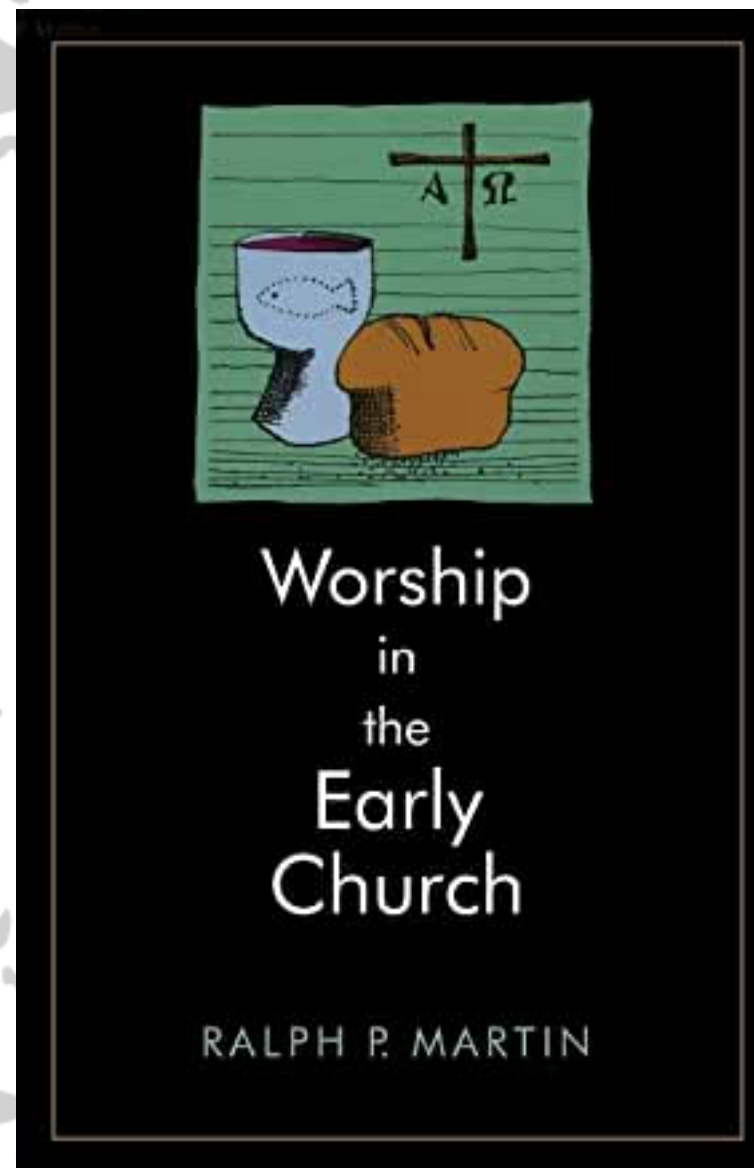
# The Gathering and the Spirit



49-year journey

- 1970s: Acts 20:7 (See picture)
- Quarterly Lord's Suppers
- Encyclical 2: "The Churches of the First Century: From Simple Churches to Complex Networks," 2009
- Radical change: a church of churches, 2011

# The Gathering and the Spirit



- Martin built around Paul's churches and their meeting.
- Patria was similar, but he started drawing on Greco-Roman research.
- Alikin developed a definitive argument (written after Encyclical 2, 2009, 2010)

# The Gathering and the Spirit

- After 10 years . . .
  - Still not 100% embraced.
  - Some of you think of our Sunday morning time as church.
  - Worship is probably the key reason.
  - Constant tension over the decade: singing, worship Sunday morning (Gabe illustration)
  - Our Sunday morning is unique: a teaching time—apostolic, prophetic, because of our unique “Antioch church” role globally.

# The Gathering and the Spirit

This week—amazing week

- International Senior Leader Executive Education (120 leaders, 30 countries)
- All were questioning: We introduced the gathering paradigm in Encyclical 2, but most wondered, is it normative?
- Abraham, Richard Thinagaran examples
- Translation of The Gathering into Chinese started last week.
- Key family of 5 families, are just finishing all encyclicals and have written 9 of 12 papers (explain results)

# The Gathering and the Spirit

## Tremendous Need

- Last few months—foundation loss and major need to support our apostolic team
- Senior elders and Michael and I
- Very important need at this strategic time: \$400,000
- Benefactor team: \$200,000
- ADMCC match: \$200,000; only about \$25,000 at this point; August 15 is goal
- Please pray and consider a generous gift.