

THE GATHERING

The Meeting as the Heart of a Complex Apostolic Network

The Gathering and the Spirit

Issue 2: The Gatherings and the Spirit

Questions:

1. In what ways is the Spirit involved in the entire gathering?
2. How does the Spirit work through the gifts given to all believers during the entire gathering?
3. In what ways are psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs an important way the community of faith experiences the filling of the Spirit?
4. How does the Spirit use leaders during the meeting?

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

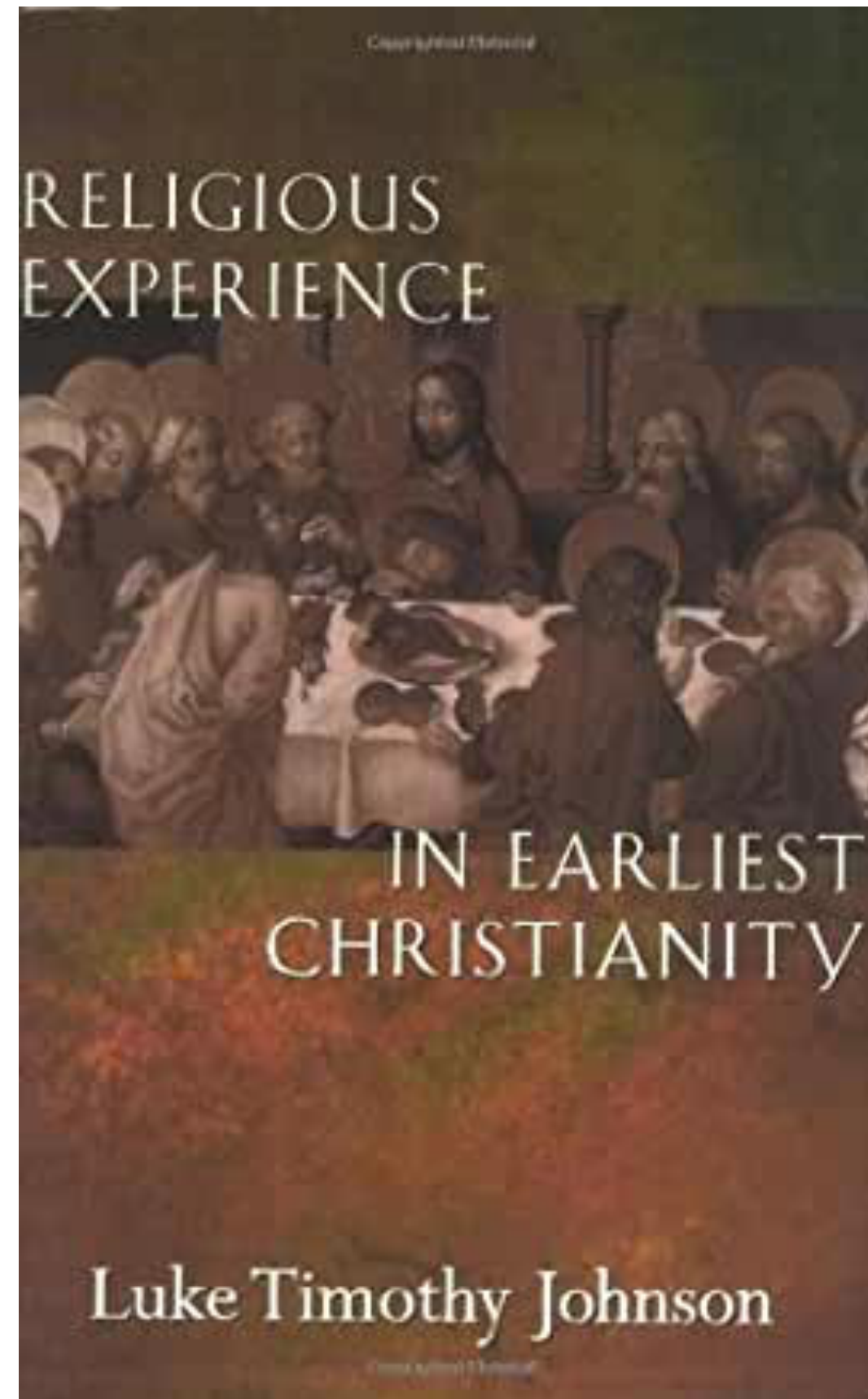
Gifts and the gathering—1 Corinthians 12

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

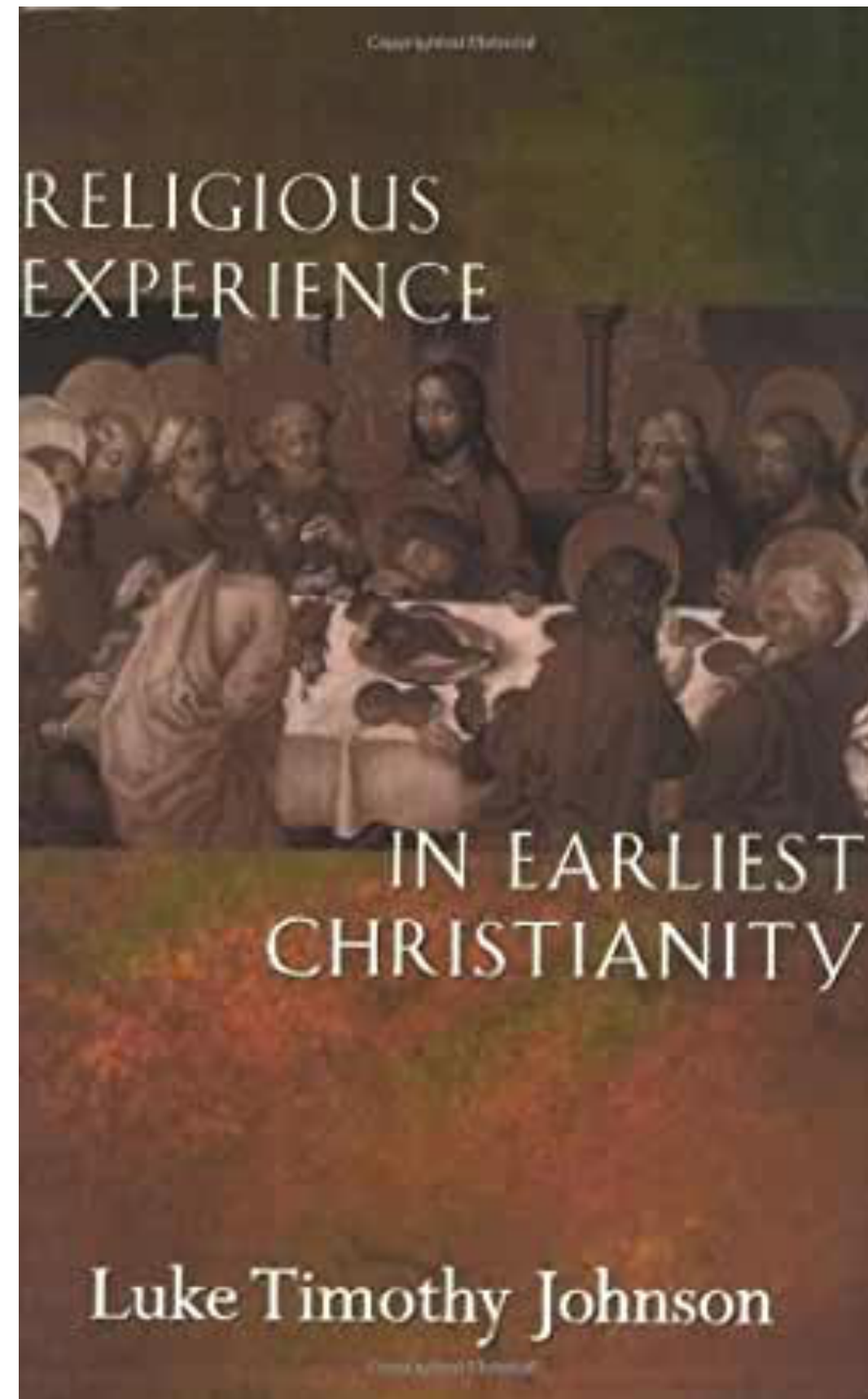


The Gathering and the Spirit (transcendent experiences embedded into the gathering)

I owe a great debt to the Catholic Theologian Luke Timothy Johnson and his amazing, insightful work *Religious Experience in Early Christianity*,

especially chapter 5, “Meals Are Where the Magic Is.”

The Gathering and the Spirit

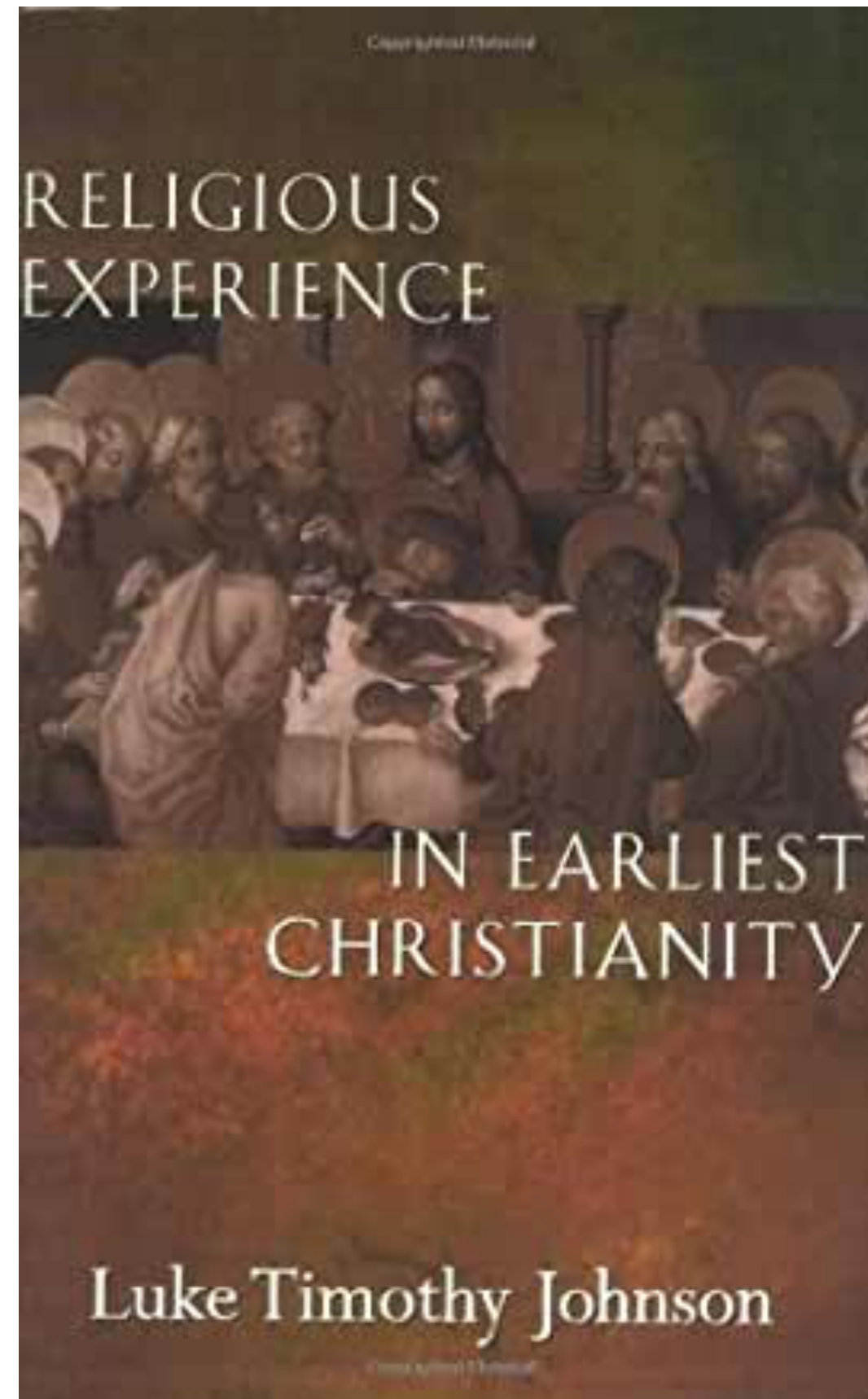


He basically sets forth this analogy:

The Catholic liturgy of the Eucharist says the magic is in the wafer and wine, as they actually, in your experience, become the body and blood of Christ.

He says that is not where the magic is. It is in the Meal. What does he mean?

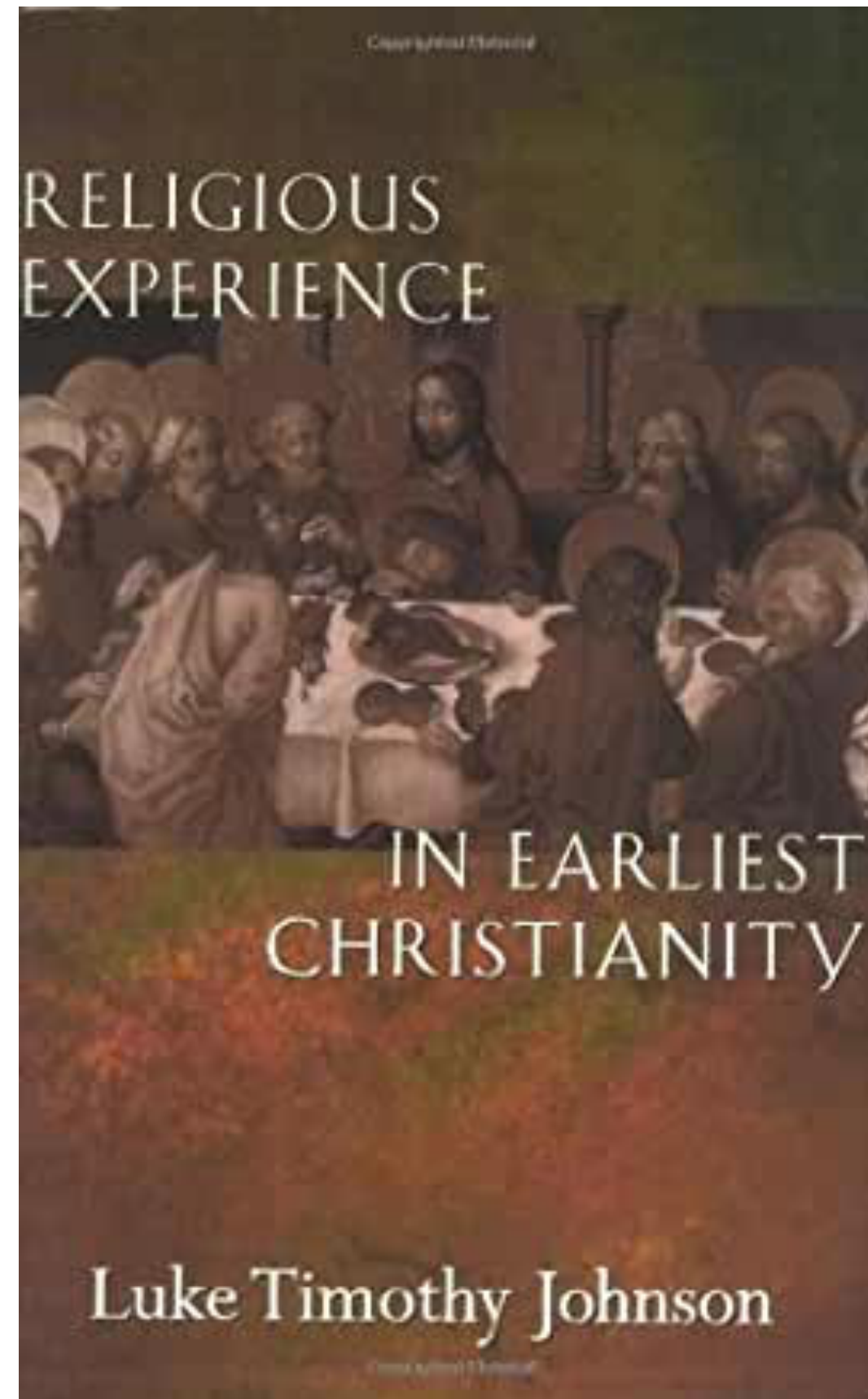
The Gathering and the Spirit



As we experience the meal, we are dining with Christ. He is in our midst, indwelling each one of us.

As we share together in the meal, in the whole gathering for that matter, Christ is amongst us through His Spirit and can be seen by others because of our love for each other: in song, in prophetic words, in teaching, and in prayer.

The Gathering and the Spirit

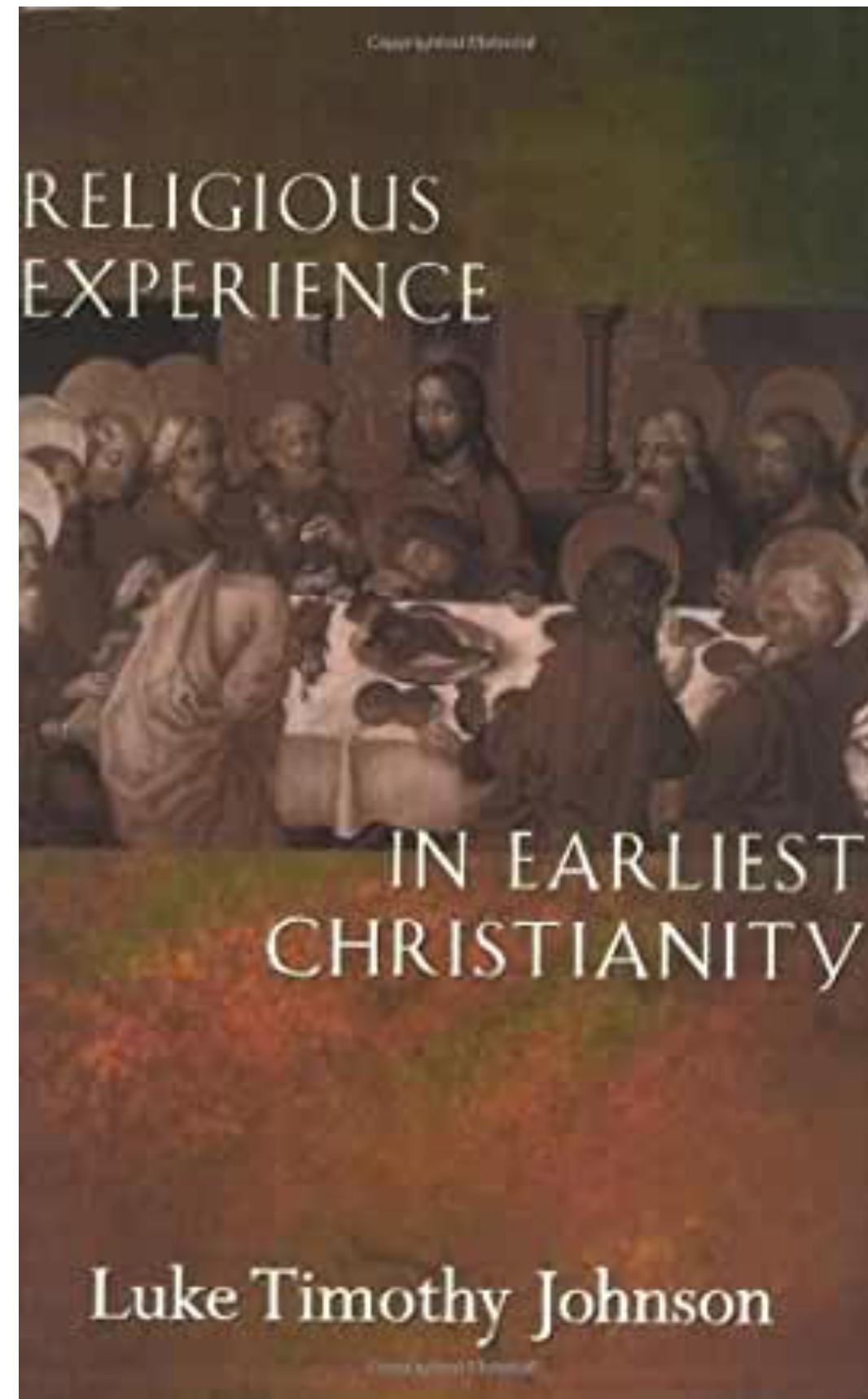


Here are a couple of quotes from “Meals Are Where the Magic Is,” ch. 5

“Such a reading would begin with a phenomenology of meals, especially those celebrated by intentional communities.... Phenomenological analysis shows meals in such intentional communities truly to have a magical quality.”

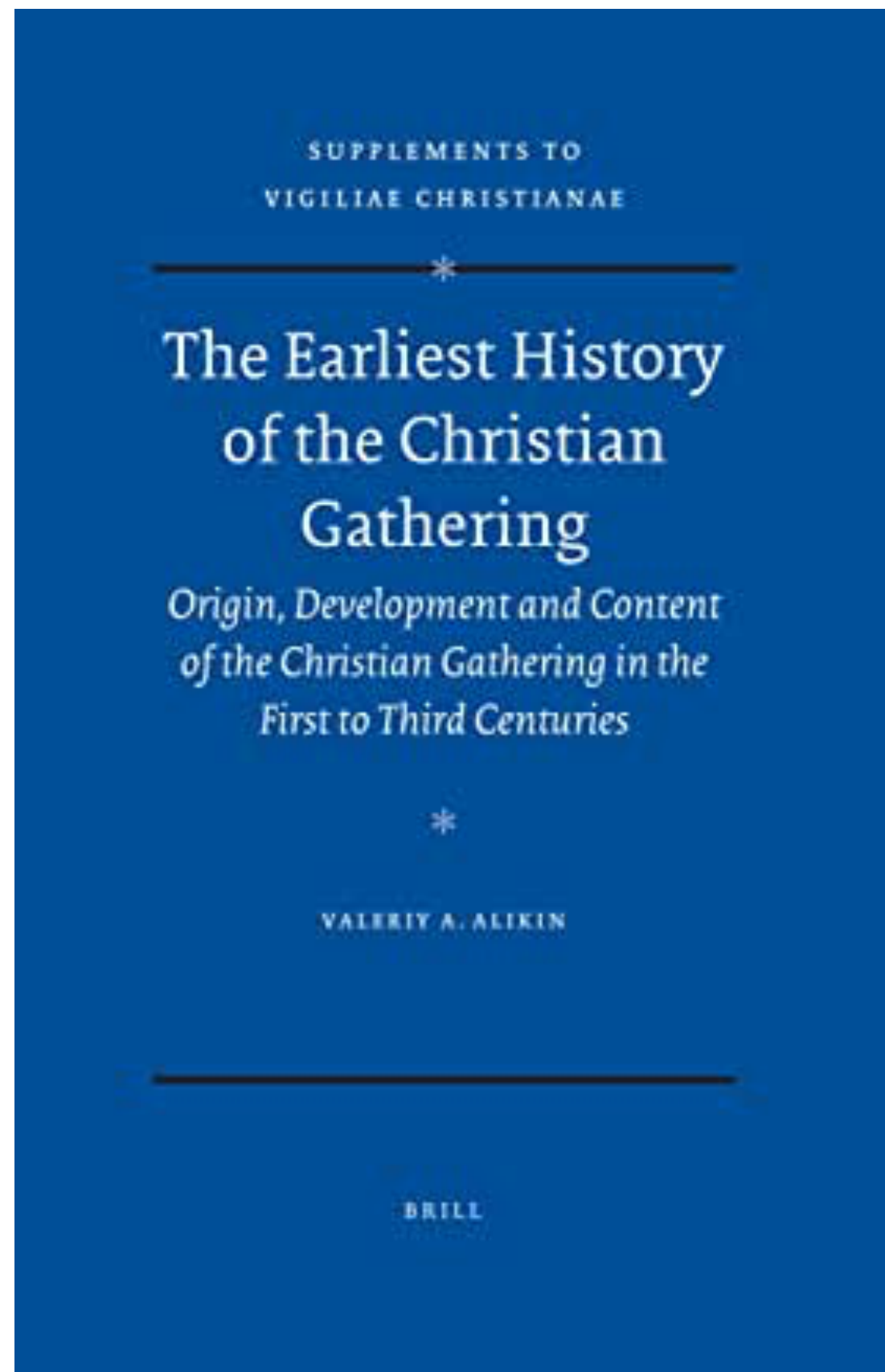
He is referring to the transcendent, the Spirit

The Gathering and the Spirit



“Paul and his readers also presumably shared the conviction that the meals celebrating the presence of the living one were at the same time an anamnesis of his gift of self-donation, so that Paul can refer to the words said by Jesus over the bread and cup "on the night he was betrayed" as a part of the tradition that he received from the Lord and in turn handed on to them (11:23).”

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

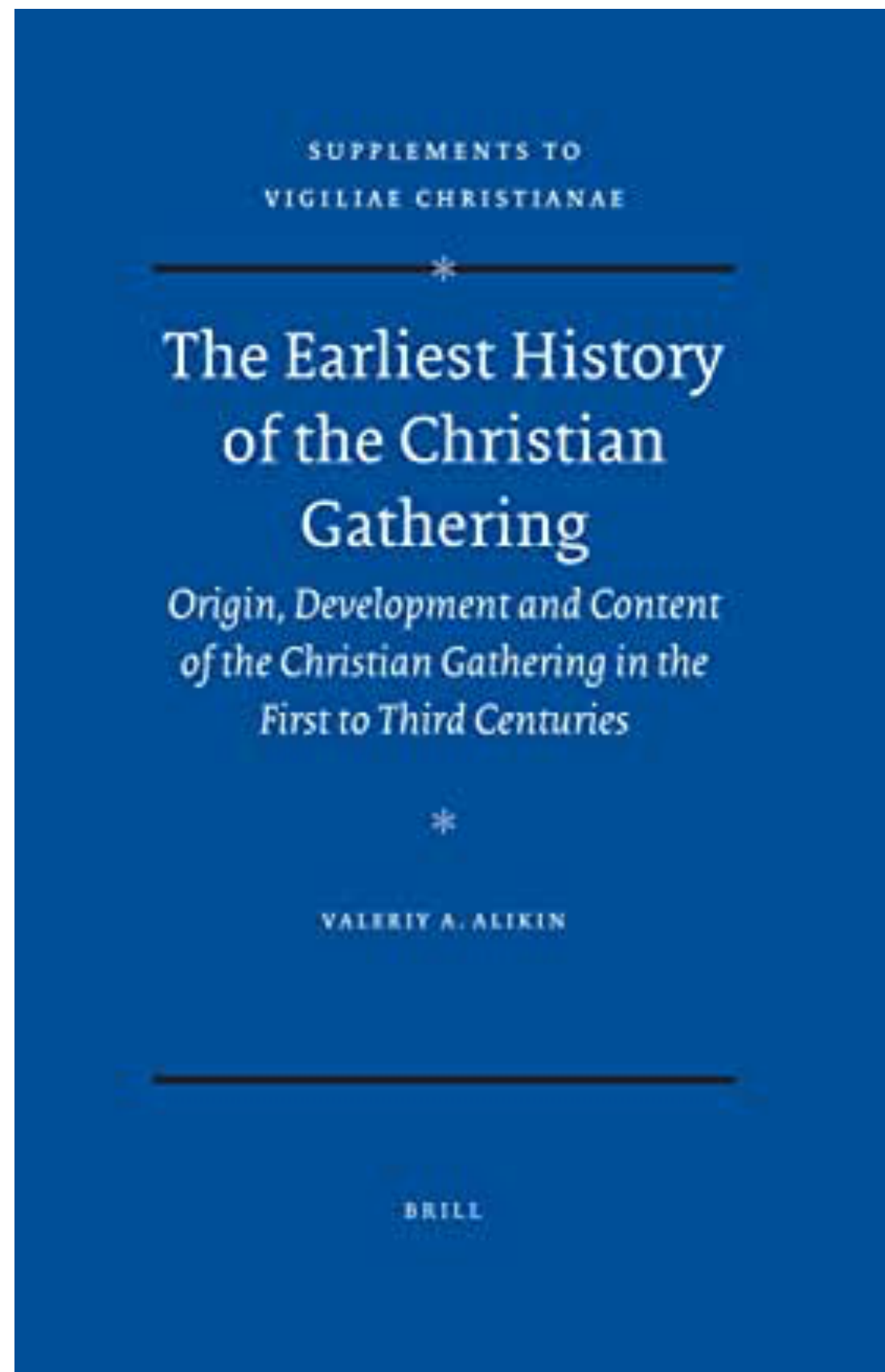
Chapter 3: The Lord's Supper in the Early Church

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

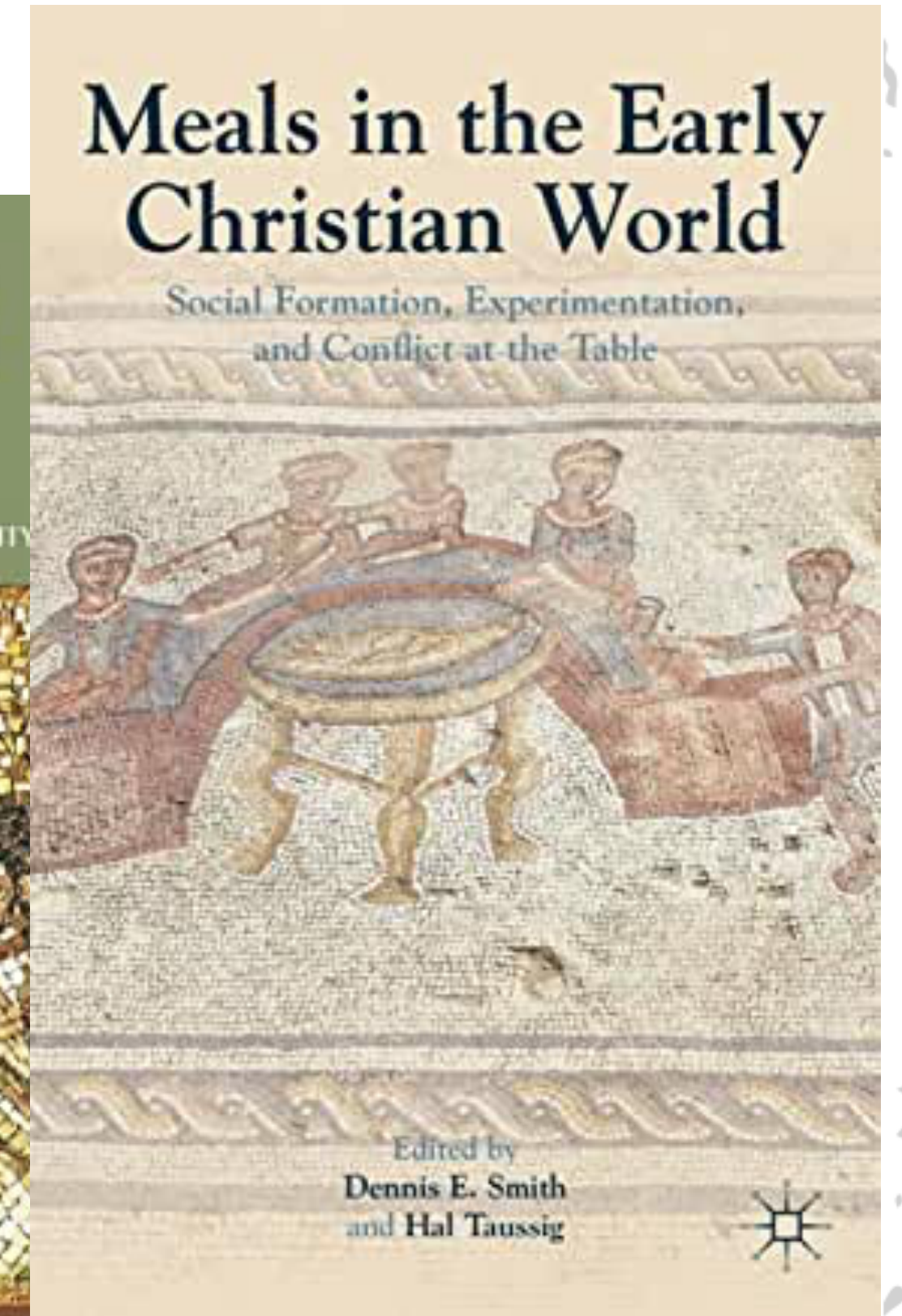
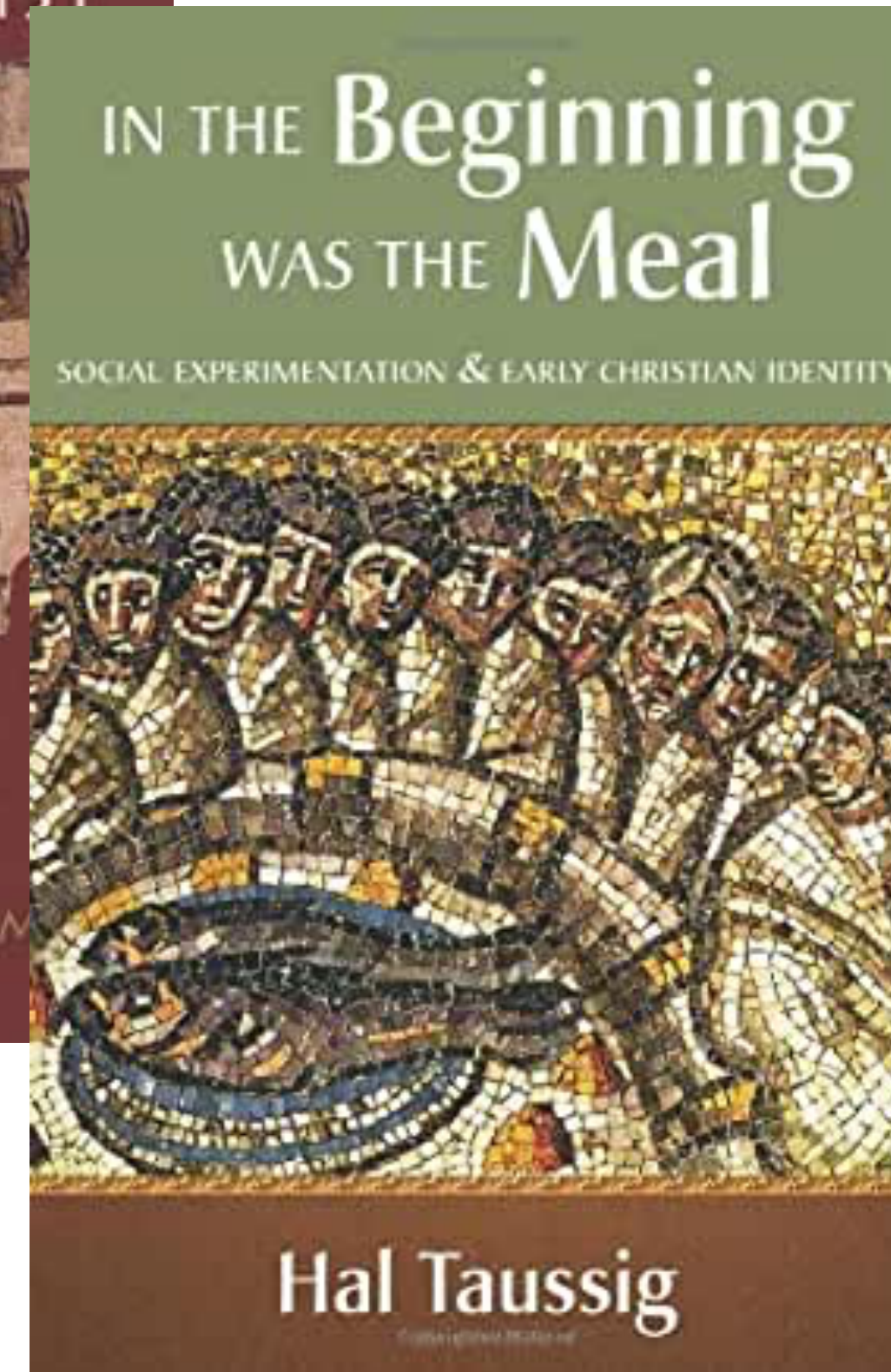
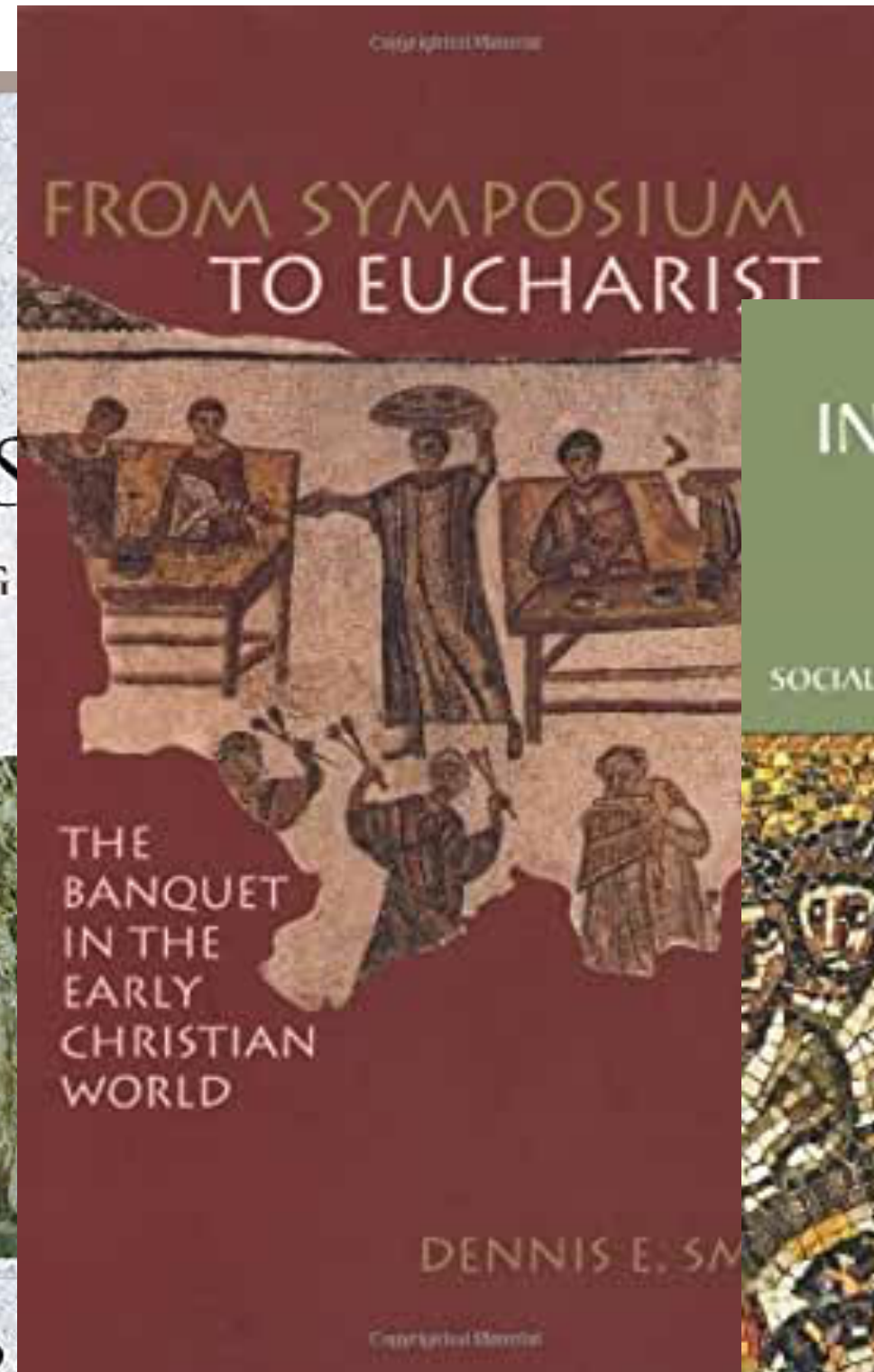
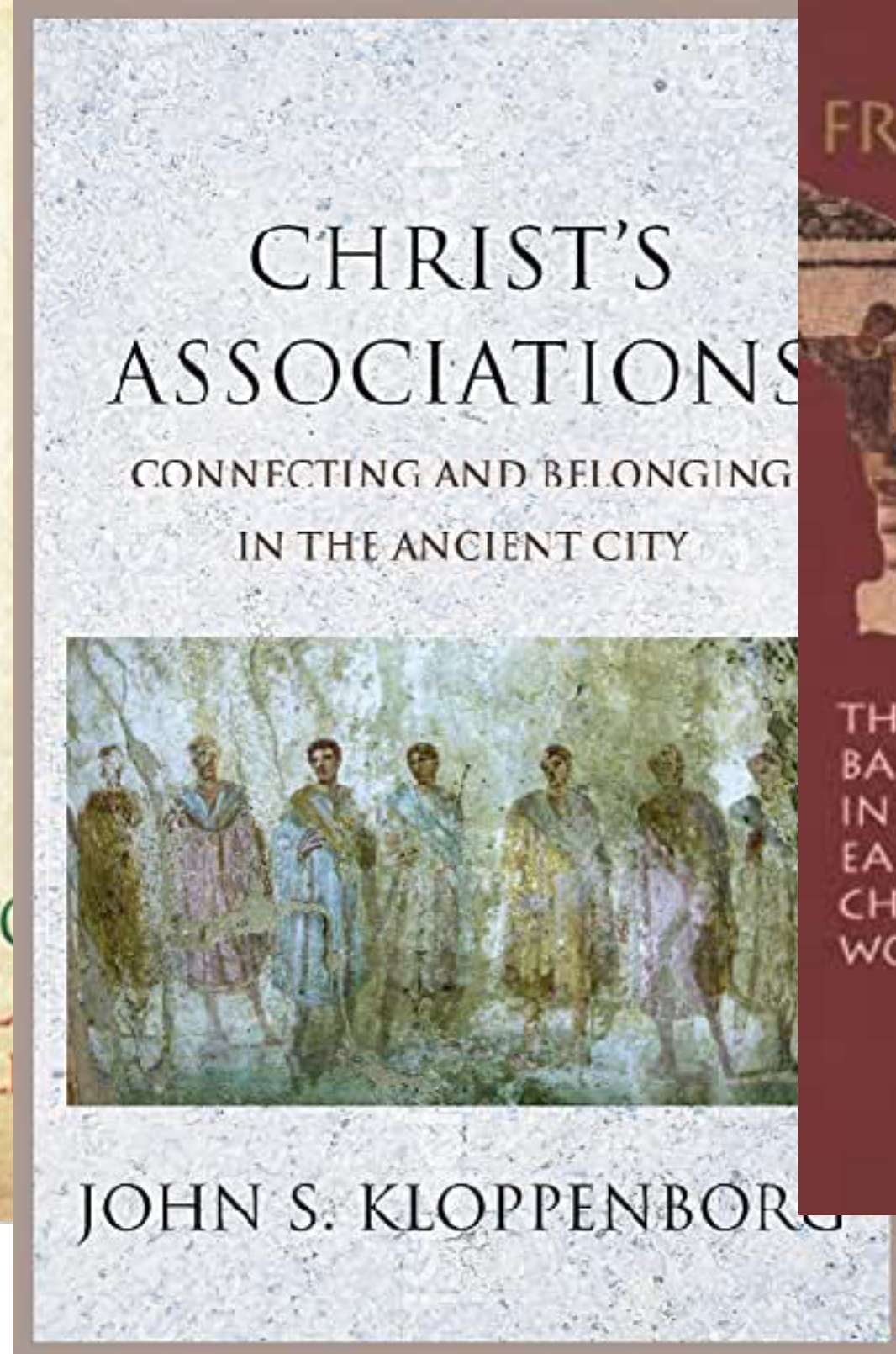
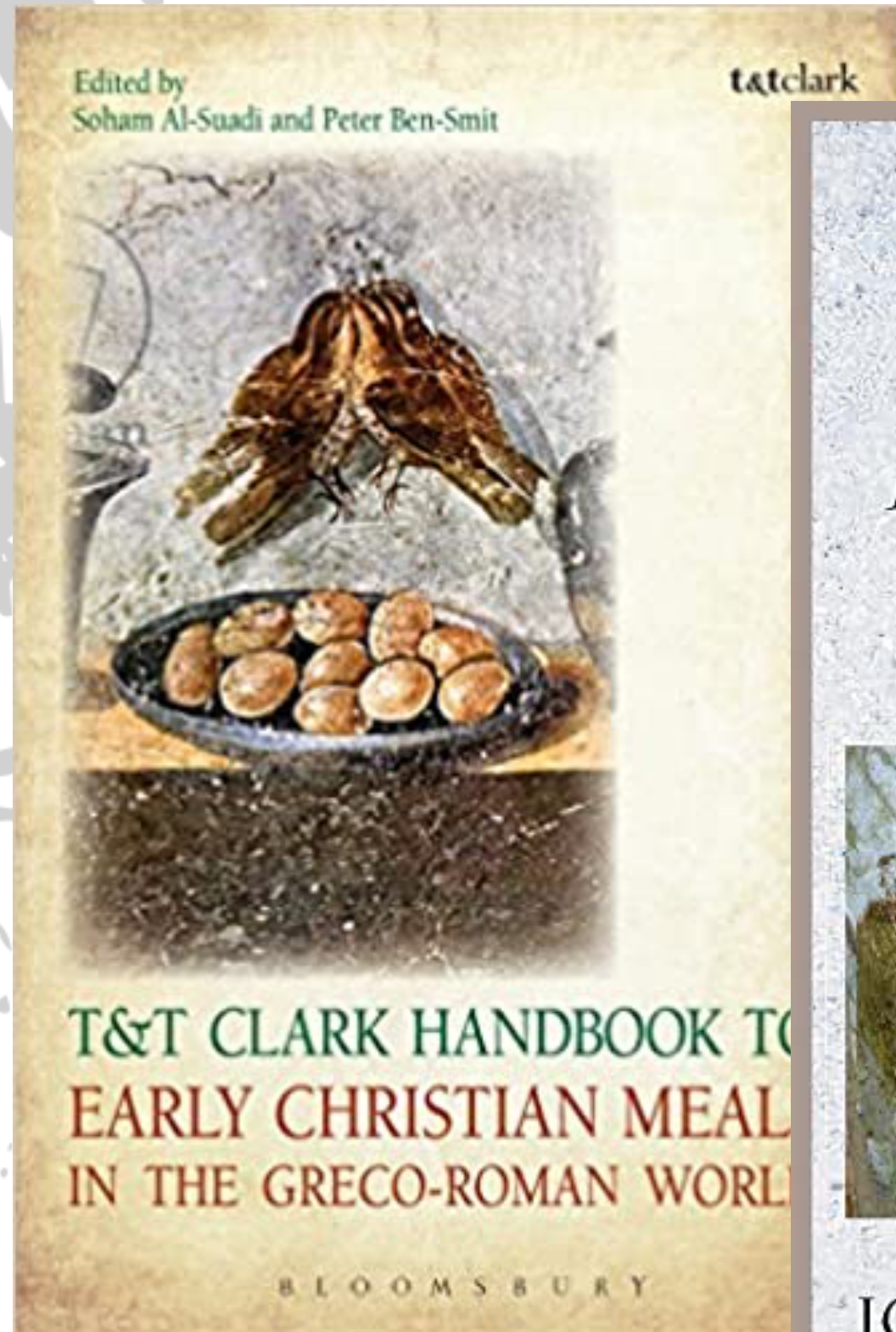
The Gathering and the Spirit



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 Meal Was Central



The Gathering in the Greco-Roman World

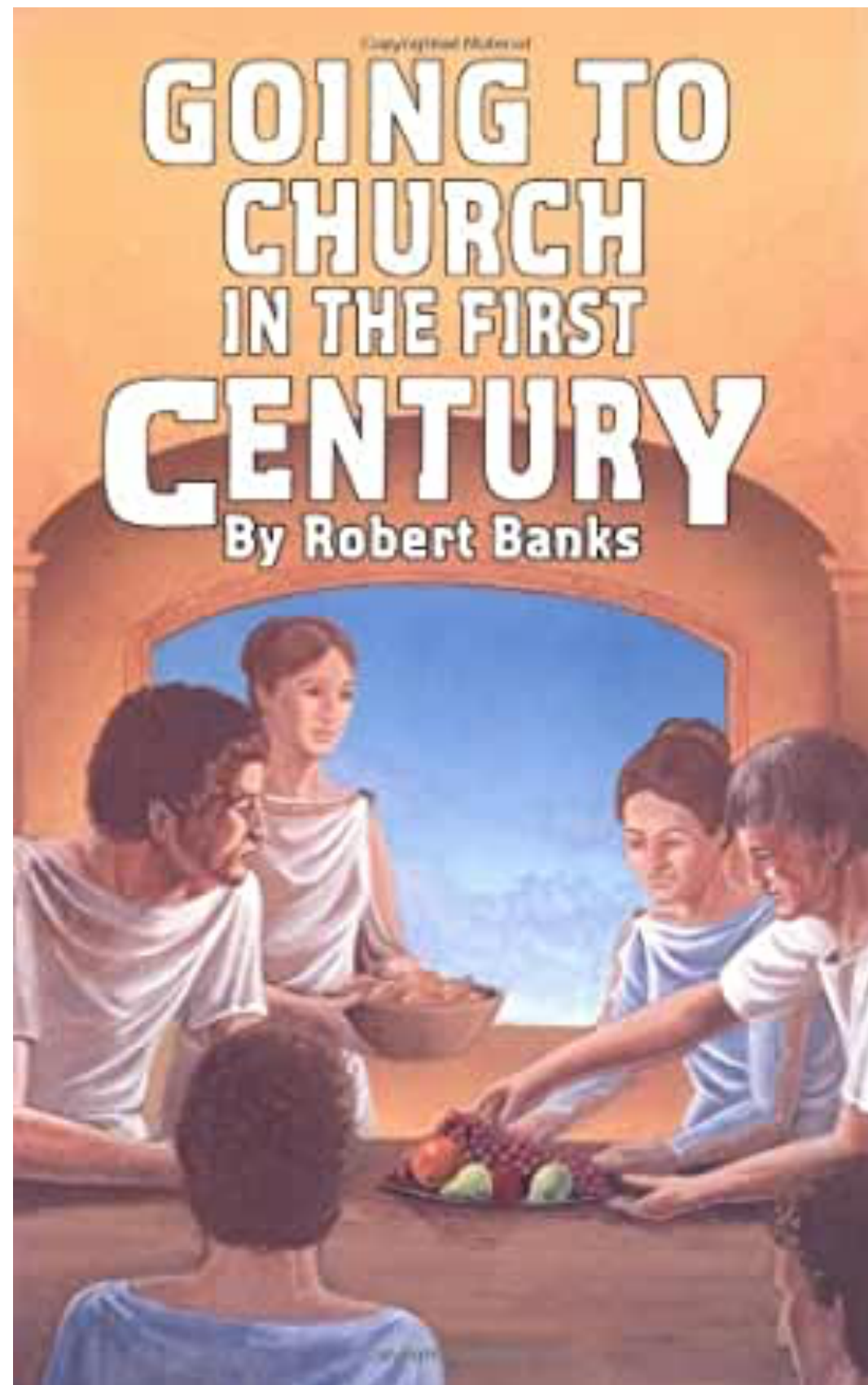
Smith-Klinghardt Meals Paradigm

“Although this chapter cannot dwell on all the specifics of these studies, it is important to note the basic dimensions of what Smith and Klinghardt’s studies propose as a clear typology of the Hellenistic meal. They include the following:

Hal Taussig, *In the Beginning Was the Meal*

1. the reclining of (more or less) all participants while eating and drinking together for several hours in the evening
2. the order of a supper (deipnon) of eating, followed by an extended time (symposion) of drinking, conversation, and performance
3. marking the transition from deipnon to symposion with a ceremonial libation, almost always wine
4. leadership by a “president” (symposiarch) of the meal—a person not always the same, and sometimes a role that was contingent or disputed
5. A variety of marginal personages, often including servants, uninvited guests, “entertainers,” and dogs.”

The Gathering and the Spirit



An excellent way to begin experiencing the gathering is to read Robert Bank's small book, *Going to Church in the First Century*.

“This brief narrative attempts to depict what it was like to attend an early church gathering in the middle of the first century.”

Dunn wrote an encyclopedic work on Greco-Roman research for the historic church; in his tour-de-force on the search for the historical church, Dunn speaks about this little work by Banks:

“R. J. Banks, *Going to Church in the First Century: An Eyewitness Account* (Beaumont: Christian, 1990), provides an imaginative reconstruction well founded historically.”

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.

- 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 evangelism and church planting are radically changed.
- The Meal is central to small, multiplying authentic communities.

The Gathering and the Spirit

1. Having Dinner with the Lord (bread and cup)

This is the heart of the transcendent experience of the gathering—The Lord’s Supper. As Johnson has said in his chapter “Meals Are Where the Magic Is,” the Lord’s Super is a spiritual event.

We are experiencing Christ at the meal. We frame the meal with the elements, the bread and the cup; this meal is because of Christ.

The Gathering and the Spirit

1. Having Dinner with the Lord (bread and cup)

Remember, Christ lives in us through the Spirit. His presence is in us.

So as we sit together, eat together, sing together, and pray together, we are seeing Christ's work in each one of us, and collectively, we see the face of Christ, both as Christians and as observing non-Christians.

The Gathering and the Spirit

2. Gifts of the Spirit and the Symposium

In his parenthesis, between the meal and the symposium, Paul talks a lot about the gifts of the Spirit.

...not just gifts that come from the Spirit,

...but also the ministries that those gifts produce, and the effects of those ministries; the actions from those ministries.

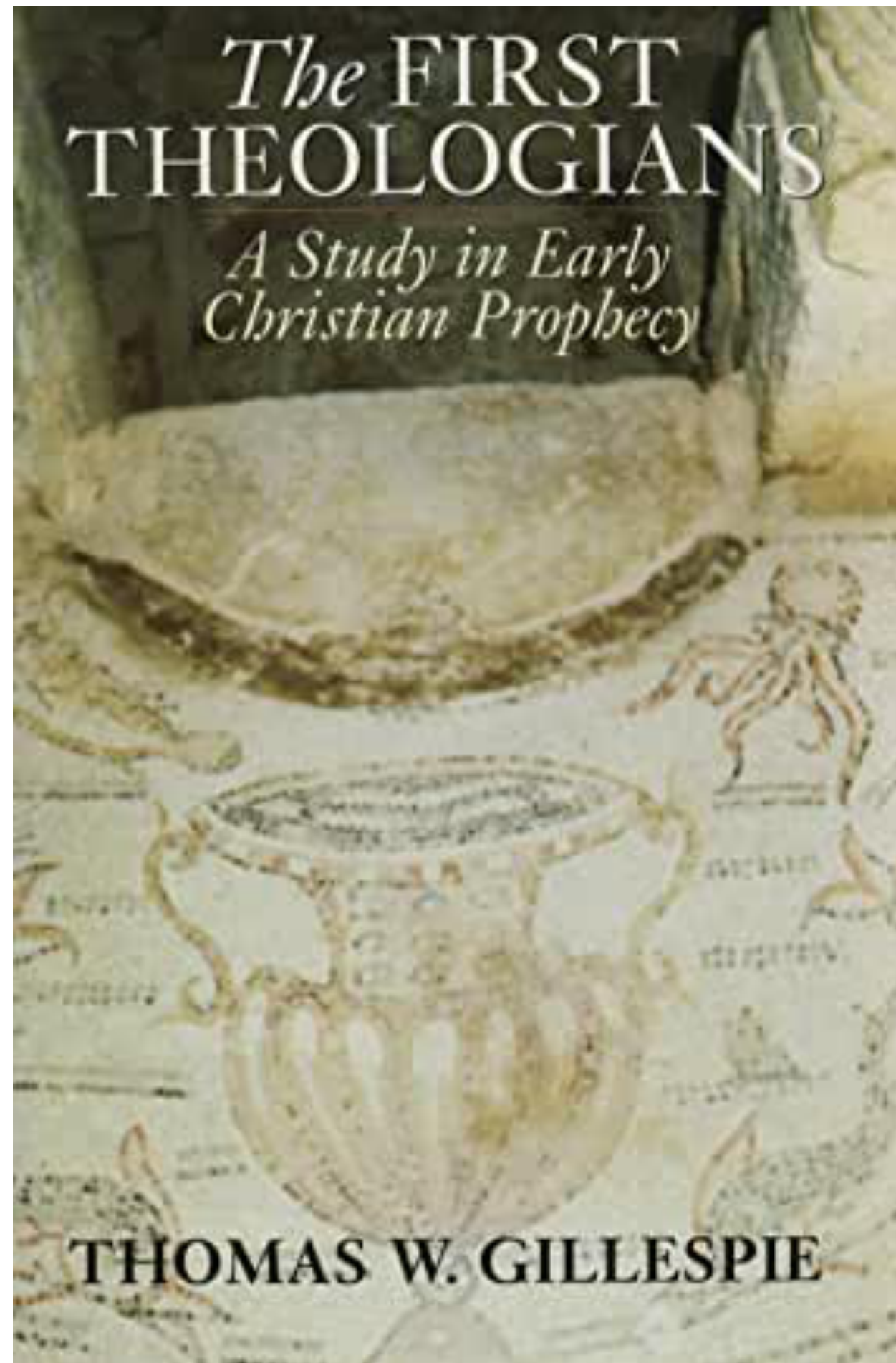
...manifestations and utterances from the Spirit

It is hard to grasp this wide range — gifts, ways the Spirit works

The Gathering and the Spirit

12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:1–3

The Gathering and the Spirit

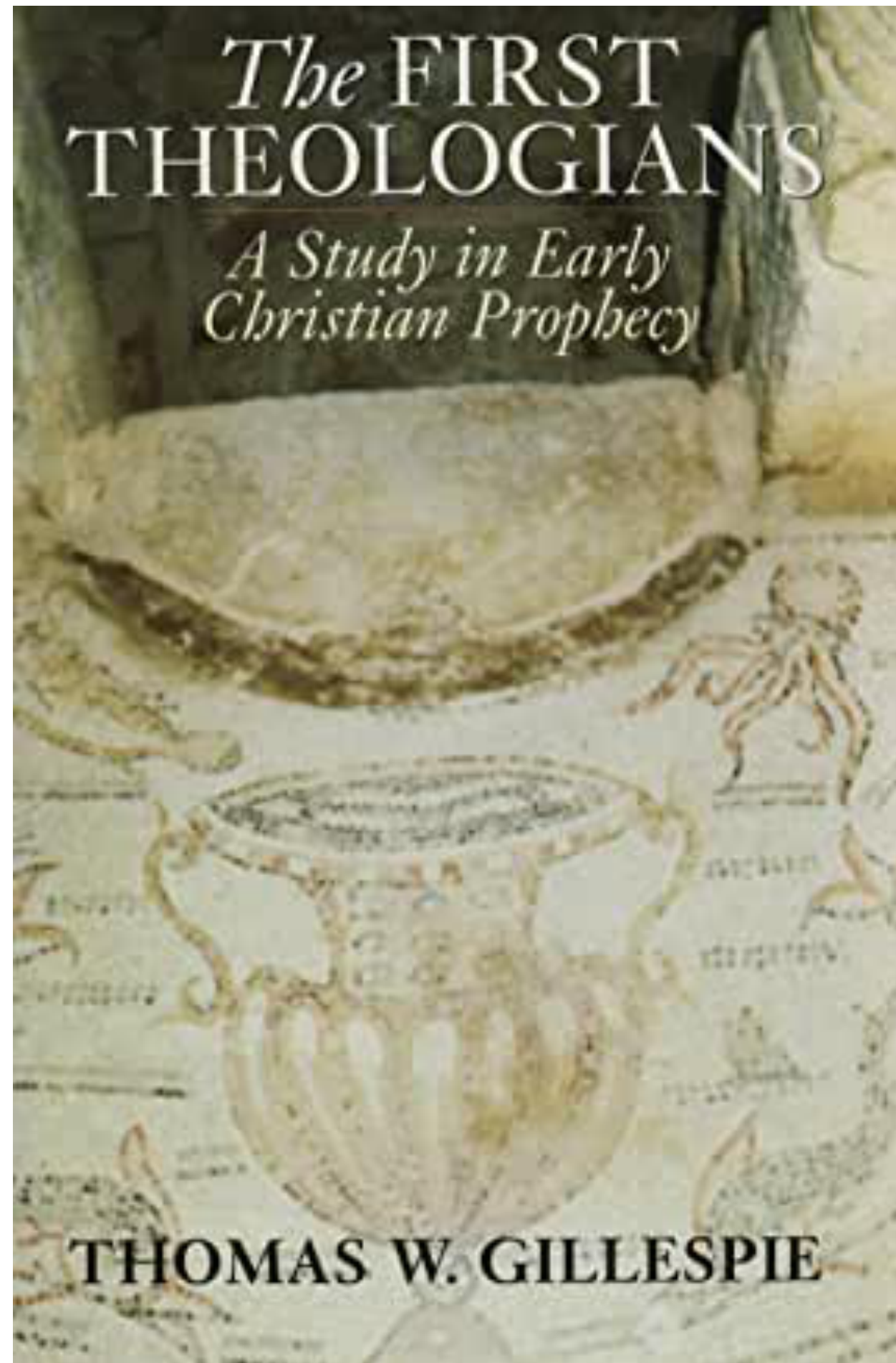


“Now concerning speech inspired by the Spirit” 12:1 best translation (pg. 75)

12:1 pneumatika — moved, move by wind (LSJ), from the Spirit; “from the Spirit’ (in reference to such matters as gifts, benefits, teachings, blessings, and religious songs” LN

12:4 charismata — a gift, a favor bestowed BGD

The Gathering and the Spirit



“Paul draws his discussion to a close”
37 Anyone who claims to be a prophet,
or a spiritual (to have spiritual powers
NRSV), must acknowledge that what I
am writing to you is a command of the
Lord.

14:37 *pneumatika*

Some were claiming to be prophets, or
having speech inspired by the Spirit,
but they were not.

The Gathering and the Spirit

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who **activates** all of them in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the **manifestation** of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the **utterance** of wisdom, and to another the **utterance** of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ... ¹¹ All these are **activated** by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

1 Corinthians 12:4–8,11 (NRSV)

The Gathering and the Spirit

Manifestation and *utterance* are the key words here.

Manifestation is an insight, a revelation, something that has been brought to light to you; an

Utterance is a message, a statement, a question, a speech.

When participants come to the gathering, they bring what the Spirit has been doing in their lives: a teaching, a prophetic word or revelation, a song that He has given you, a ministry.

When you reflect on what to bring, the Holy Spirit is working directly in your life.

The Gathering and the Spirit

Paul is not giving a complete list of gifts, ministries, or outcomes. In 1 Corinthians 14:26–40, he is not giving a complete list or the order of exactly the things to bring to the symposium. 1 Corinthians 14:29–31 is very interesting:

²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged.

14:29–31 (NRSV)

The Gathering and the Spirit

He is not giving **specific rules** for prophesying, but rather giving us insight into the purpose of the symposium.

It is not an **individual experience**, but a collective experience in the Spirit.

It's not about **private conversations** or simultaneous individual utterances, but a collective experience in the Spirit so we can all be built up and one-minded in the faith.

The Gathering and the Spirit

Rather, he is saying, **bring to the gathering**, especially to the symposium, **manifestations and utterances the Spirit** has given you so that the Spirit, the transcendent, and thus Christ is highly visible at every gathering.

The Gathering and the Spirit

3. Songs, hymns, spiritual songs, and prayer (filled with the Spirit)

In the gathering, outside of the formal prayer bookending the Lord's Supper, prayer seems to be tied closely to songs, hymns, and spiritual songs.

The Gathering and the Spirit

In 1 Corinthians 14:26, when Paul includes to bring a hymn, he is using *hymn* to represent a small taxonomy in his mind of singing: songs, hymns and spiritual songs. He gives us this **small taxonomy** in Ephesians and Colossians.

¹⁸ Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰ giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18–20 (NRSV)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Colossians 3:16 (NRSV)

The Gathering and the Spirit

Both passages are in the context of the gathering. In Ephesians, don't get drunk with wine at the symposium, but be filled with the Spirit.

Therefore, again, the symposium experience is designed to fill us collectively with the Spirit, a collective experience in the Spirit. In Colossians, he replaced “**be filled with the Spirit**” with “**let the word of Christ richly dwell.**” Again, it's the collective experience.

I deal with the small taxonomy of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in the fourth encyclical *Kerygmatic Communities*, pages 62–67, so I will not go into it here other than to comment on songs.

The Gathering and the Spirit

The term for spiritual songs means “to sing a new song” (LN). They appear to be songs that arise out of the gathering, or the preparation for it. Examples:

- Nancy and I experienced this back in the early 1970s in the Jesus Movement, in the context of “body life” churches, with songs like “Have You Seen Jesus My Lord?” a song that grew out of the churches and movement.
- in Tunisia with a network of North African church leaders at a BILD
- Gabe and our house church—2 songs
 - “The Body of Christ”
 - “The Gathering”

The Gathering and the Spirit

I envision this process of developing new songs out of our **global apostolic network (maybe, Michael, I should say family)** of church partners worldwide, as we all expect part of the work of the Spirit in our midst.

Again, all of this illustrates the fact that the gathering was to be **filled with transcendent experiences** through the Spirit in the midst of our lives and gathering.

The Gathering and the Spirit

4. The apostolic teaching and the prophetic word

In 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul also mentions bringing a revelation. A revelation is part of **Paul's "prophecy" collection**. Prophecy is a broad concept to Paul, with many elements to it. In 1 Corinthians 14:29–31, he uses prophet and revelation interchangeably.

²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged.

1 Corinthians 14:29–31 (NRSV)

The Gathering and the Spirit

These are the different types of words and phrases Paul uses when speaking of prophecy in the 1 Corinthians 11:17–14:26 topoi. Here are a few of them.

“revelation” — 14:26; 14:31

to make fully known (LN); that you might learn and be encouraged

“prophetic powers” — 13:2

inspired utterance to bring understanding (DBL)

The Gathering and the Spirit

“revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching”—14:6

a cluster: “revelation”—to make fully known; “knowledge”—deeper knowledge (LSJ), “prophecy”—gift of inspiring utterance (LSJ), “teaching,” didache—skill in teaching

“prophecy”... is for believers—14:22

“claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers”—14:37

“spiritual powers”—claims to possess the special powers, thus a prophet

“first apostles, second prophets, third teachers”—12:28

prophets were part of the Ephesians 4:11 cluster and refer to an itinerant apostolic team who were specially gifted in inspired utterance

The Gathering and the Spirit

So what is *prophecy*?

It is an inspired utterance, based on the Word, that inspired, or made fully known, which encourages, teaches, and builds up the faith of believers at the gathering.

In Paul's Gathering topoi, a **prophet** was part of an itinerant apostolic team that moved among churches, with special gifting in Spirit inspired utterance.

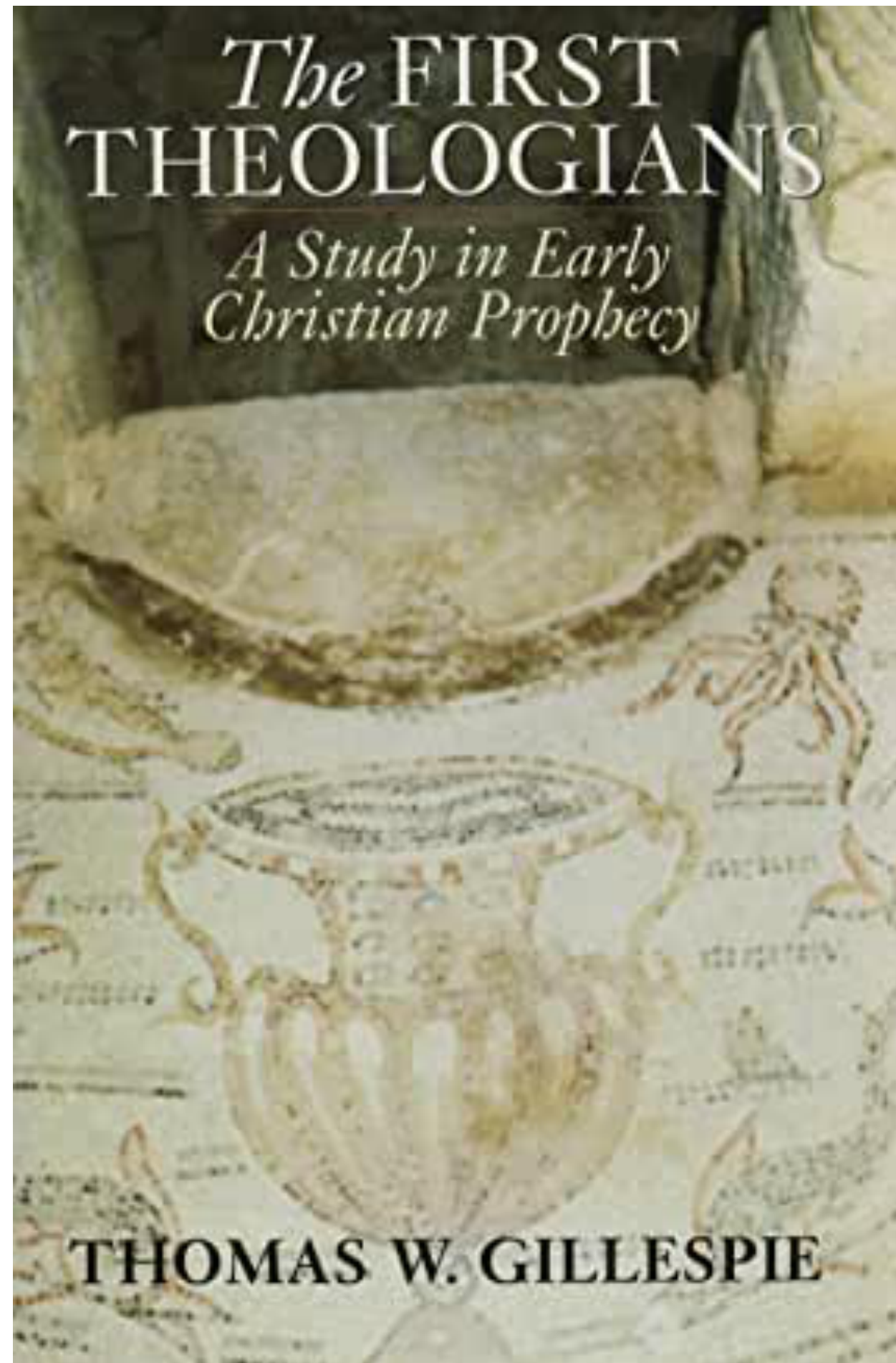
The Gathering and the Spirit

Some skilled in prophetic utterance tried to claim to be prophets, but few really were.

It is also noted that in the Gathering topoi, spiritual power, healing, tongues, etc., played a very little role in Paul's idea of gathering,

because they were mainly accompaniments to the proclaiming of the gospel as it was breaking through in cities, towns and villages for the first time, as well as breaking into other religions, and they gradually subsided.

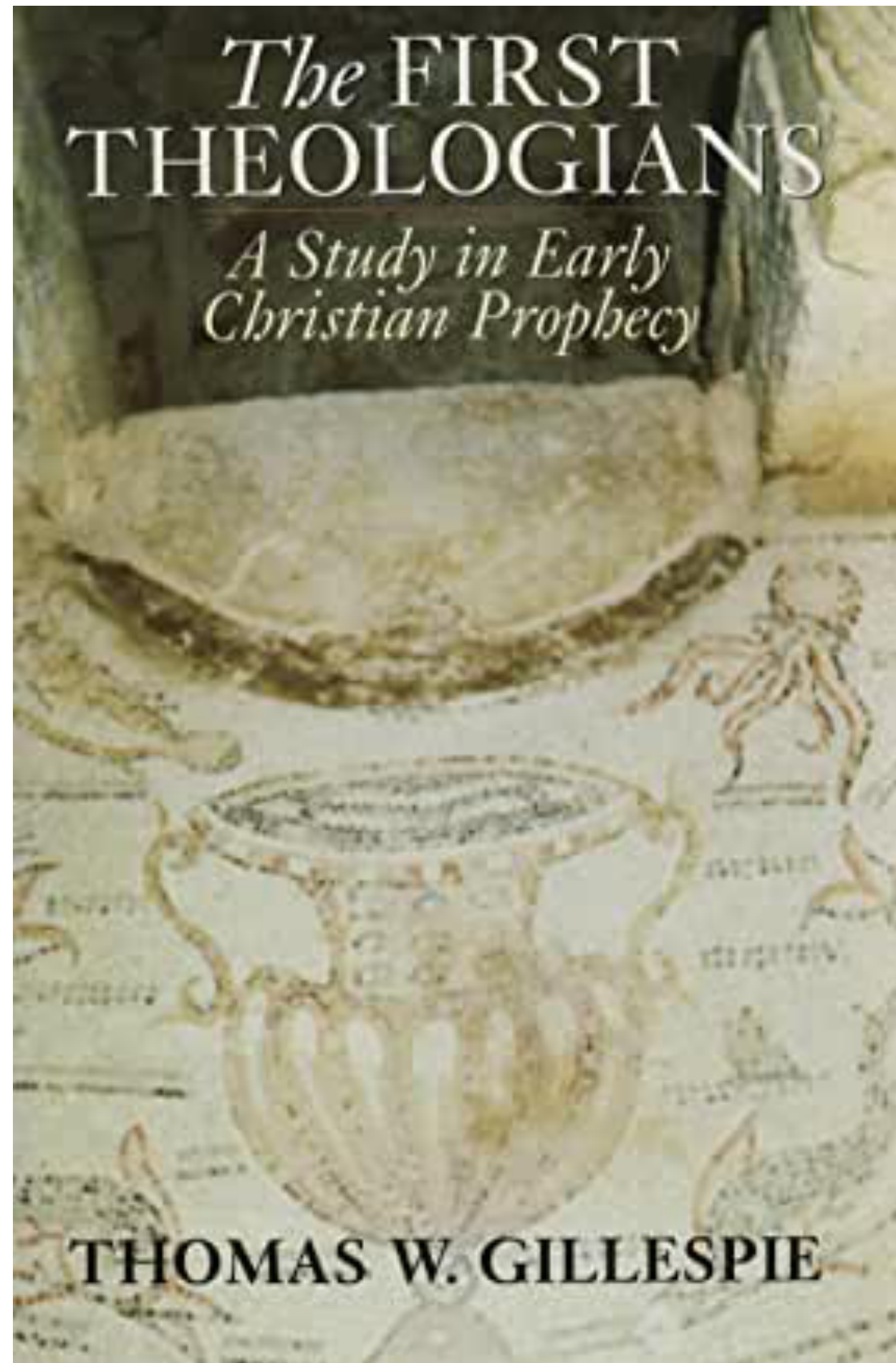
The Gathering and the Spirit



A prophet, small p

“The task of prophets, as Paul understands it, is to explicate through divine revelation the implications, theological and behavioral, of the apostolic kerygma (15:3b–8).”

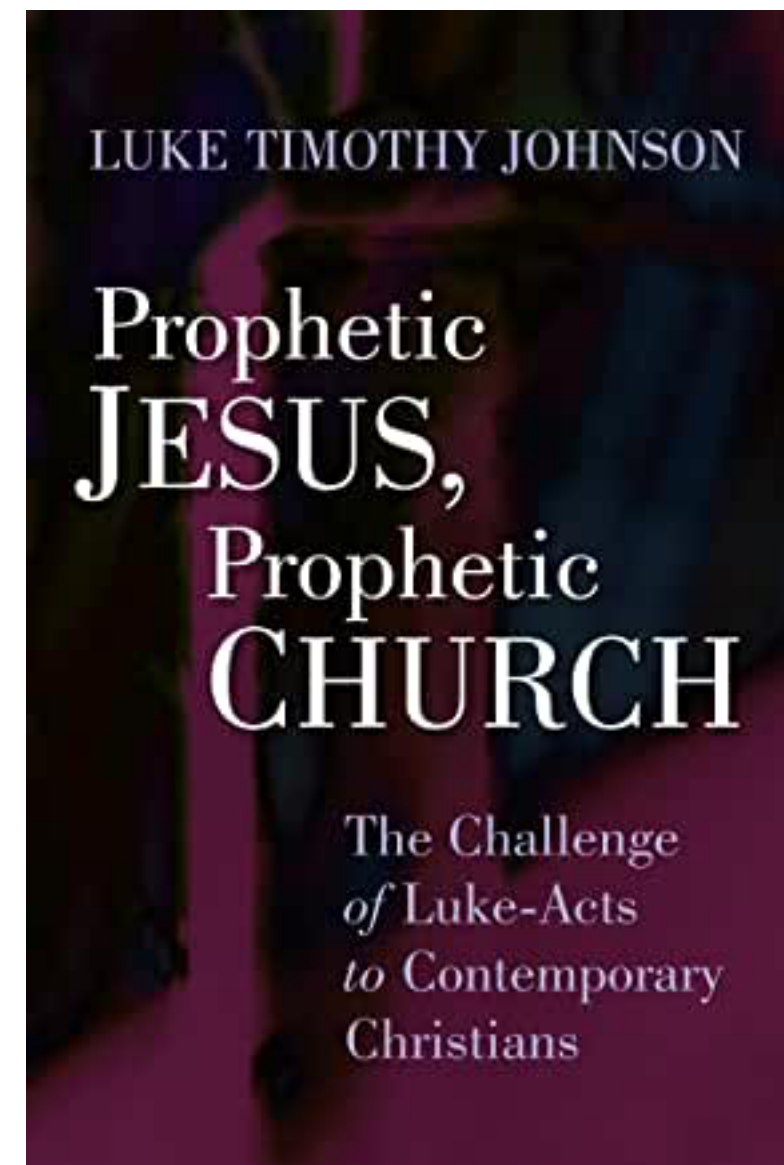
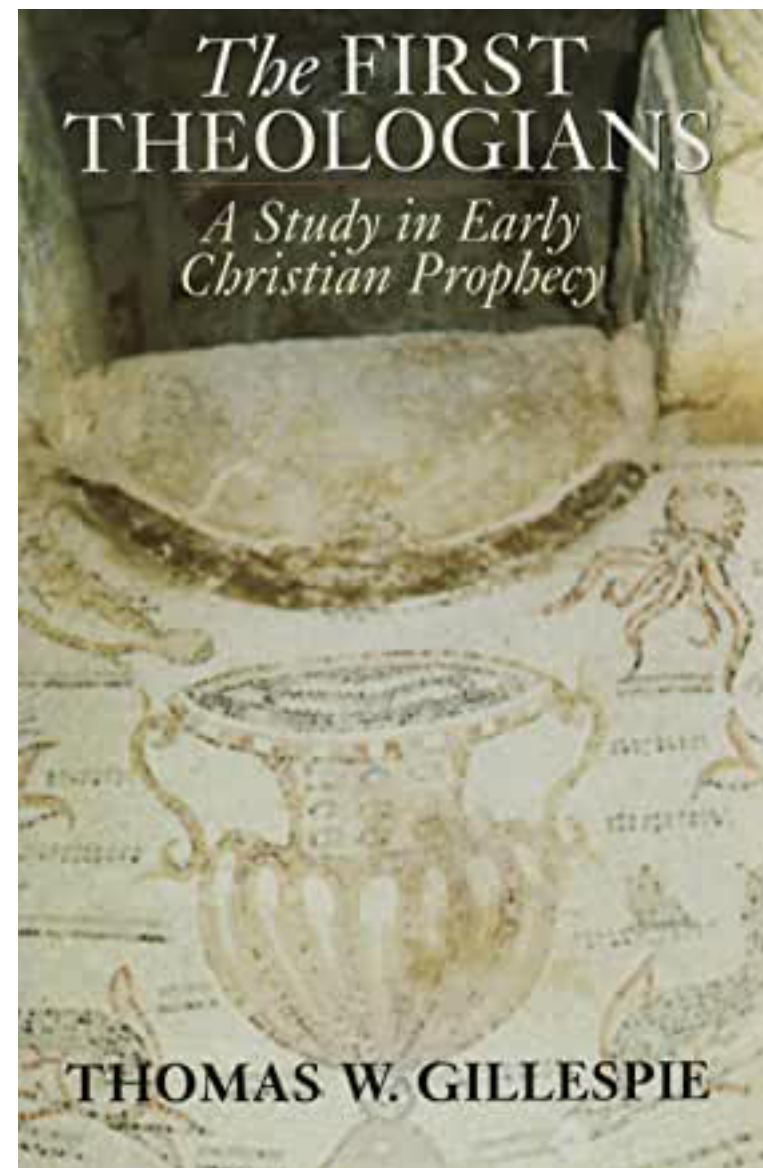
The Gathering and the Spirit



A prophet, small p

“Such agreement as the standard of Christian prophecy receives a measure of specificity and concreteness from the New Testament texts that, variously designated, represent ‘the traditional faith,’ ‘the faith as proclaimed by the apostles,’ ‘preaching schemes,’ or ‘the kerygmatic tradition.’” p. 61”

The Gathering and the Spirit



Two books are very helpful to consider for further study and reflection:

The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy by Thomas Gillespie

Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians by Luke Timothy Johnson

The Gathering and the Spirit

The purpose of this review and the priority of prophecy by Paul in the Gathering topoi is to show **the centrality of the Spirit** in the gathering, thus **experiencing the transcendent in a life transforming, weekly manner.**

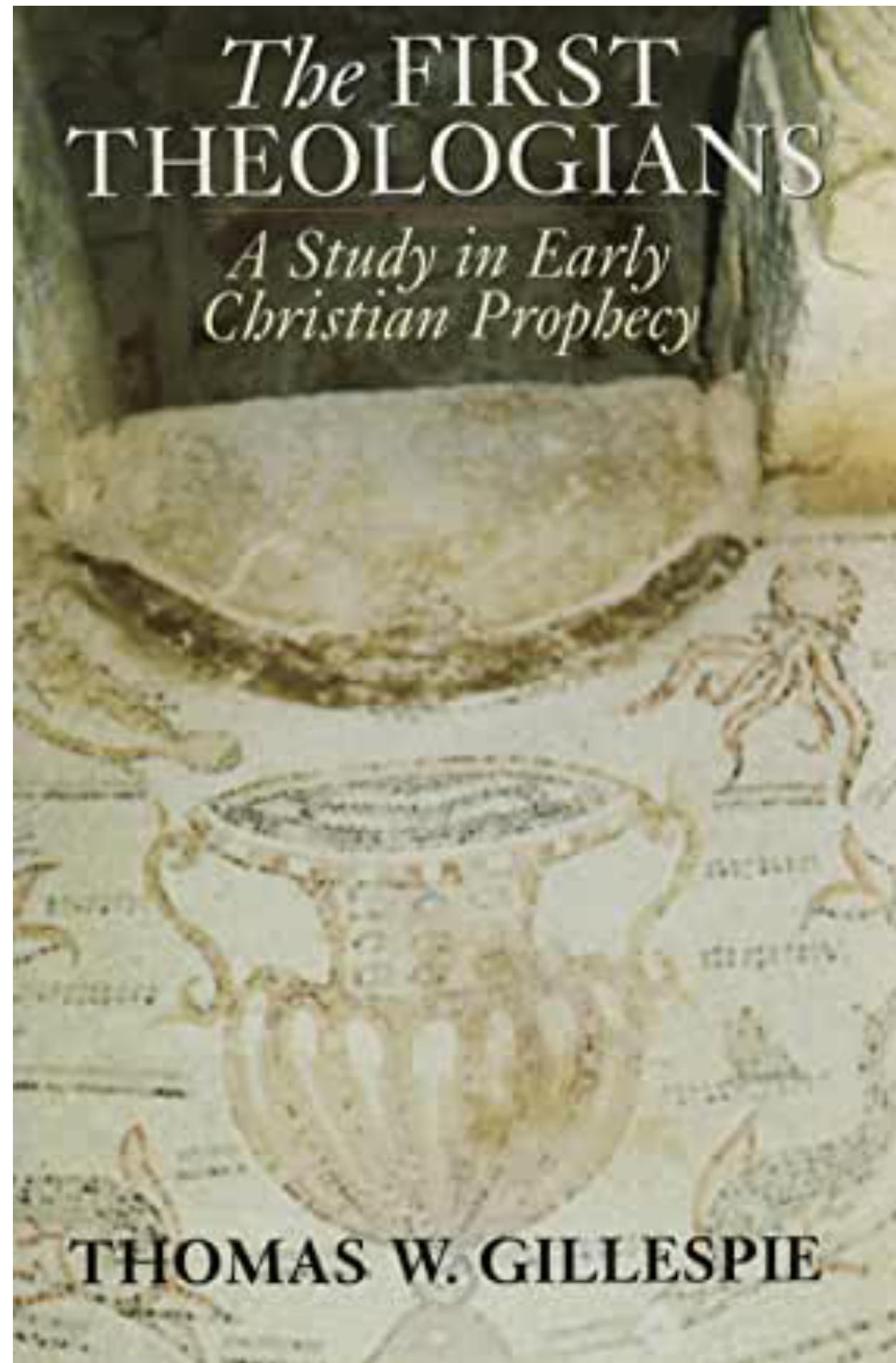
What we have here, under the **Gathering rubric**, is **Paul doing theology** in his correspondence with the Corinthians, under the moving of the Spirit, which is now part of our New Testament canon. This theology is shaped by the Greek rhetorical devices of topoi and parenesis.

The Gathering and the Spirit (2xs)

So 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 and the Spirit

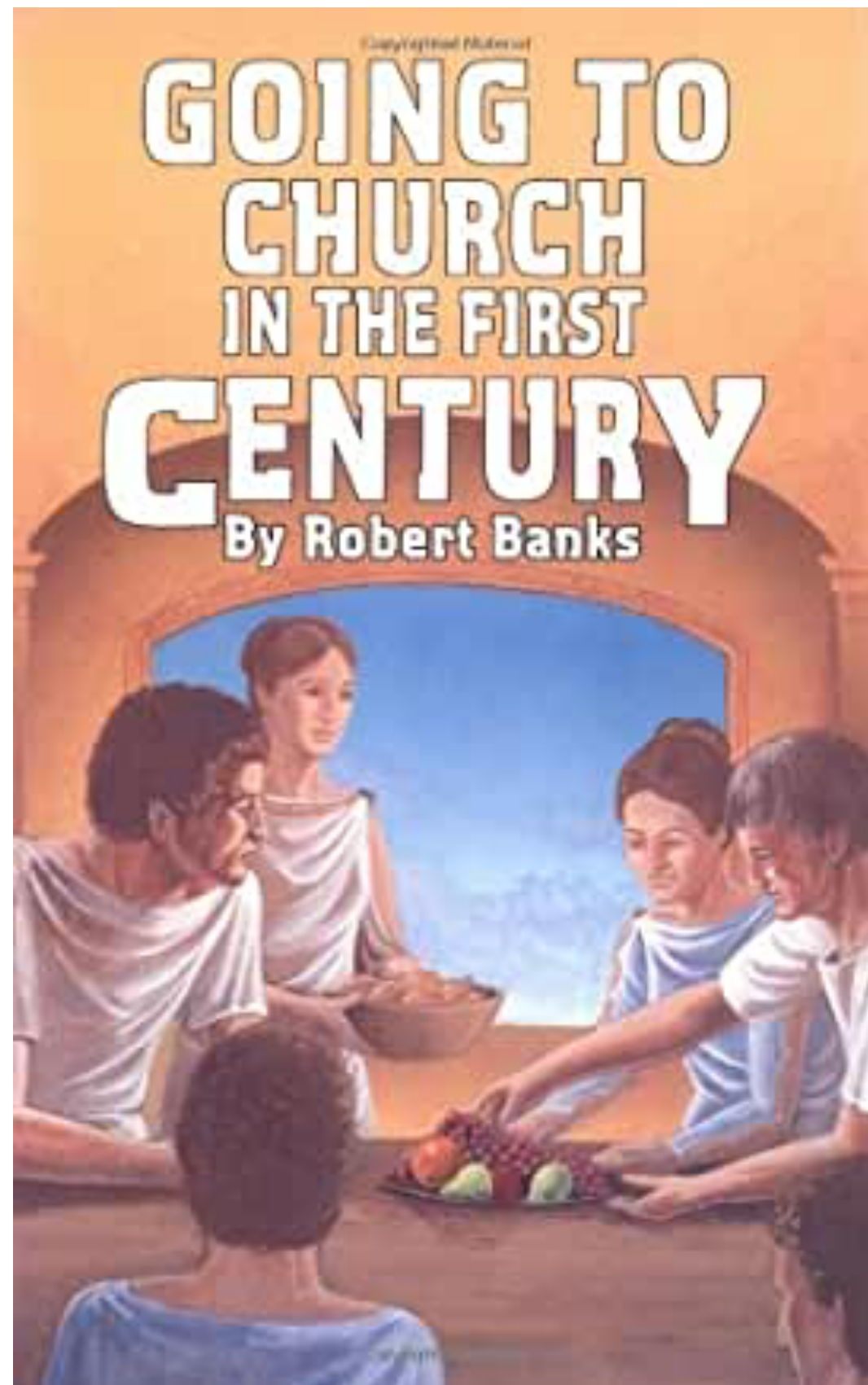


1 Corinthians 2:1–16

Addresses what really happens in us during the Gathering; the Spirit works in our understanding in ways that those without the Spirit cannot.

I believe **the heart** of this takes place in the weekly Gathering. The terms and ideas are exactly parallel

The Gathering and the Spirit



So what does it look like?

How do we strike a balance

between form, but no real evidences of the Spirit working—that a watching nonbeliever would call inauthentic

and the “charismatic chaos” of the Corinthians—that nonbelievers would call crazy

Read and reread Bank’s book.