

THE GATHERING

The Meeting as the Heart of a Complex Apostolic Network

The Gathering, Apostles, Elders

Issue 5: The Gathering in Global Perspective

Questions:

1. In what sense is the Lord's Supper—with His disciples, His supper with His gatherings weekly as they multiply around the world, and the great feast when His kingdom will be fully realized—the heart of a kingdom perspective for His churches?
2. How might the new songs from networks of different cultures around the world who are all experiencing similar gatherings, songs collected and shared, build a global unity of the churches as one family worldwide?
3. As churches around the world network together and share meals in their homes at their respective gatherings, how might that build the kind of oneness Jesus called for in John 17?
4. Why is it important that Jesus' gatherings around the world share the same basic framework laid out in 1 Corinthians 11:17–14:40?

The Gathering, The Assembly

Now back to where we started and the final question: After all this 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 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.

Rethinking the Worship Paradigm

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.

Rethinking the Worship Paradigm

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!

Rethinking the Worship Paradigm

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.

Rethinking the Worship Paradigm

Notice I have 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 is all 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.**

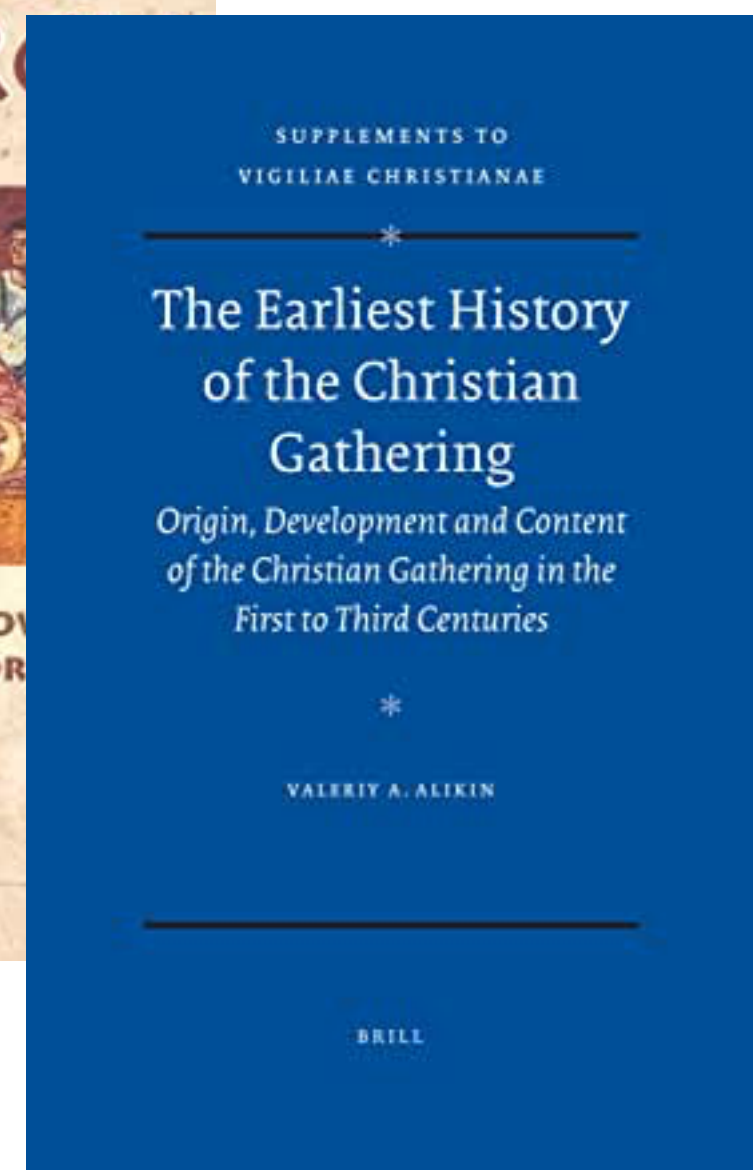
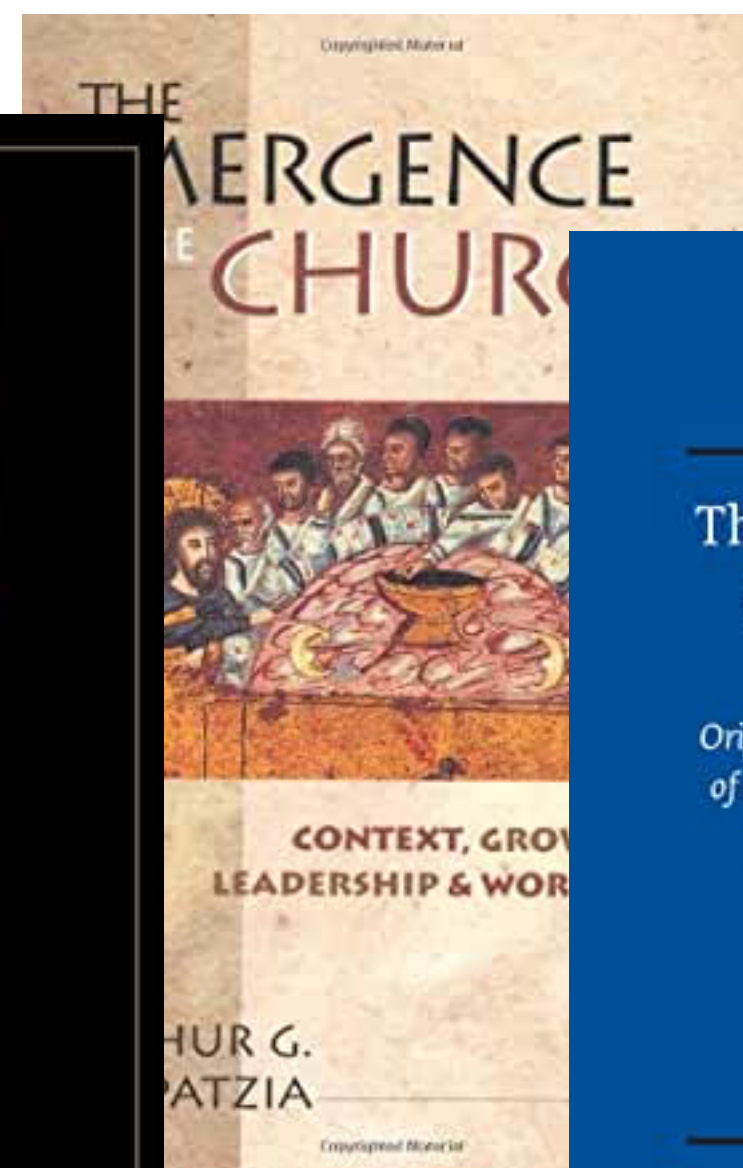
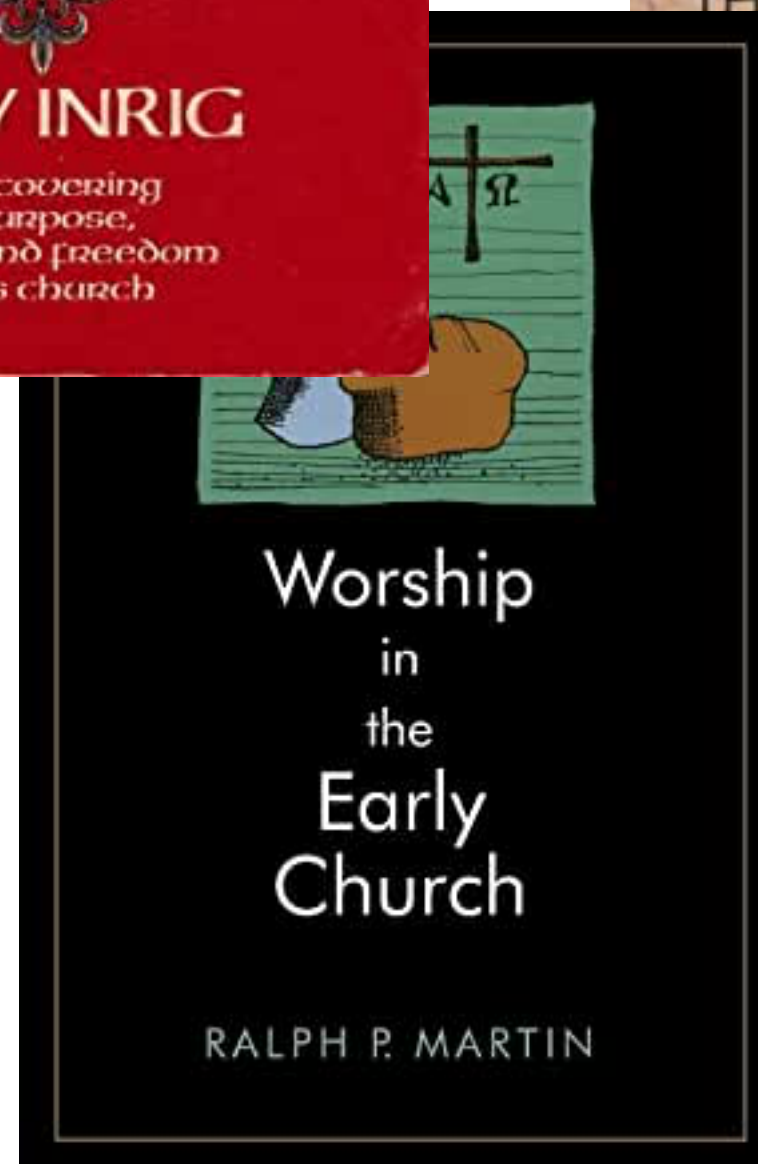
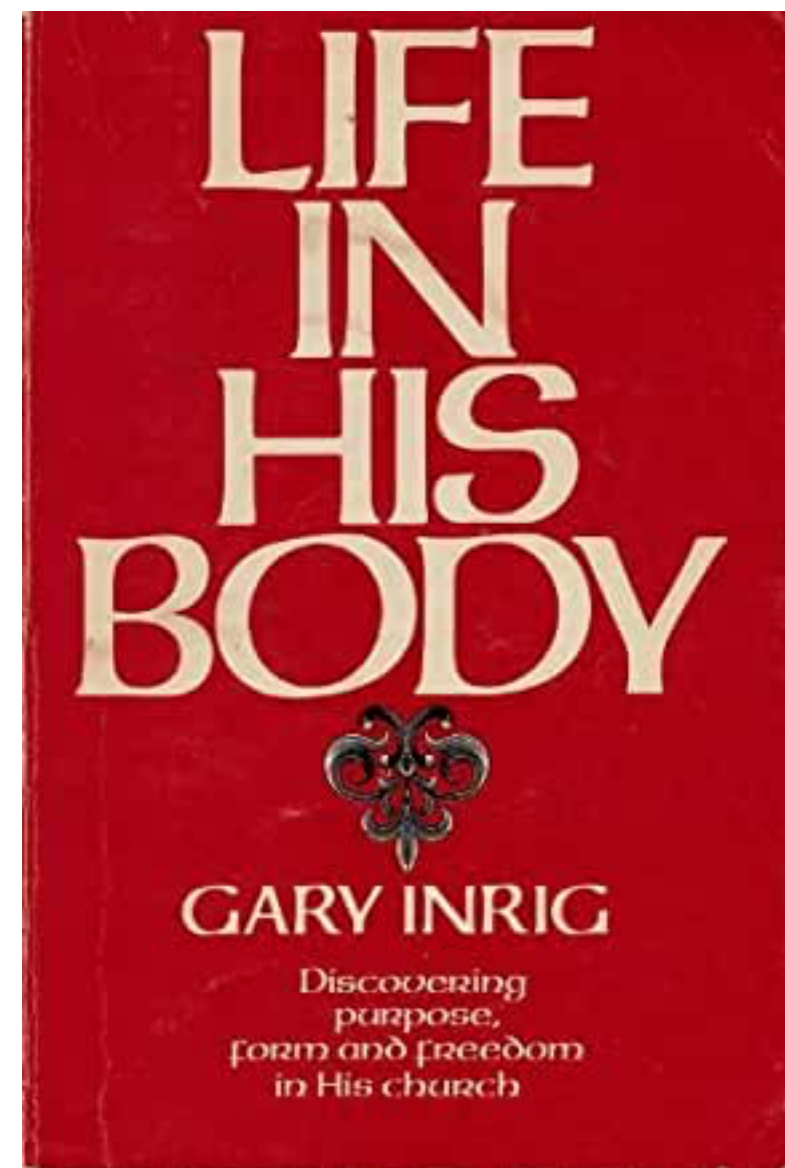
Rethinking the Worship Paradigm



49-year journey

- 1970s, early 80s: 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

Rethinking the Worship Paradigm



- Inrig presented the Lord's Supper idea (1975).
- Martin built around Paul's churches and their meeting.
- Patzia was similar, but he started drawing on Greco-Roman research.
- Alikin developed a definitive argument (written after Encyclical 2, 2009, 2010).

The Gathering in Global Perspective

The Gathering in Global Perspective with Global Transcendent Experience

1. At the heart of building a global network of networks is a common experience of the Gathering worldwide: different expressions, same framework.
2. New songs from every culture will go a long way toward building a global network of Gatherings: different songs, same process.
3. A common practice of the Meal shared with each other among networks of churches also builds a common core within networks: different food, variety in symposium, but same experience globally.
4. Common foundations: core teaching (kerygma–didache)—same first principles globally.

The Gathering in Global Perspective

The Gathering in Global Perspective with Global Transcendent Experience

5. The Last Supper: same roots globally (John 17).
6. The Big Feast: Inaugurating the Kingdom—all together at last; finest of meats and fine aged wine.
7. Plenty of room for global culture down through the centuries—many models in the same Acts paradigm.
8. Perfect next step for Global Pentecostalism: Shape churches around the Acts paradigm—renewal or new.

The Gathering in Global Perspective

Emerging Global Response

- 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 the 5 families, are just finishing all encyclicals and 9 of the 12 have written papers (explain results).

The Gathering in Global Perspective

2021 International Conference

- Encyclical
- Published: The Encyclicals will be published as a Book of 9, 9 little books, and 3 encyclicals as a book for *Church-Planting Movements*.
- 120 EE leaders in cohorts will have read the encyclical and begun the EE discussions.
- I will give an executive summary of “The Gathering” encyclical at the conference and hold a roundtable discussion with key international leaders, rather than present it.
- Besides “The Gathering” Encyclical, leaders will have this 6-session package on the issues, Michael and my discussion, and our response time afterwards to serve as a model to follow in their networks and churches.

The Gathering in Global Perspective

Emerging Vision of Next Three Decades:

- Common gatherings across the Global Network Family and, hopefully, the entire BILD larger network
- Global compilation of “songs, hymns, and spiritual songs” from various cultural milieu
- Growing network-wide global fellowship and financial collections as needed network to network (China gift to India)
- Apostolic teams moving within and across cultures

The Gathering in Global Perspective

Accompanying Implications for ADMCC

- Family ministry vacations, joining and contributing to international partner gatherings, besides more effective hosting at international conferences and other times
- Marketplace leaders as individuals and couples visiting partner gatherings and contributing to their fellowship and growth
- Teams sent out to start new church networks in key cities throughout the USA—replicating the concept of *the gathering* within the Acts “Complex Apostolic Network” framework (100+ ADMCC leaders)

The Gathering in the 21st Century

As churches in the 21st century, we need to **return to this tradition** in laying the **foundation for the next Christendom**. We need to radically restructure Western Christendom and return to “the way of Christ and His Apostles” in a way that fits our cultural situations in the 21st Century.

The Gathering in the 21st Century

May the Spirit lead us in “the way of Christ and His Apostles” in our networks of Gatherings and in **giving shape to the Emerging Next Christendom**, especially based in the Global South (the Spirit’s work outside the Western Christendom paradigm). Without understanding the Gathering and placing it at the heart of the Emerging Next Christendom, **there will be no next Christendom**, but only a continued Western institutionalized Christendom, which will continue to decline.

The Gathering in Global Perspective

Apprenticeship Academy

- The Apprenticeship Academy is part of this Global perspective.
- It will play a big part in developing the 3rd generation of many of our partners.
- It is built, and we will launch in September.
- There are huge opportunities to serve: mentors, teachers, and host apprenticeships.
- It will not disturb High School schedules; it will fit with any home schooling or private schooling.

The Gathering in Global Perspective

Apprenticeship Academy (AA)

- Apprenticeship Academy (AA) Team—August 16, 3–6 p.m.
- Parents and potential students—August 24, 7–9 p.m.
- Enrollment of students in AS the next two weeks and BILDCloud training.
- Begin AA “Dialogues”—Tuesday, September 7, 6–9:15 p.m. (6 weekly meetings, then once a month thereafter).
- Begin apprenticeship strategizing after the 6-week dialogues.
- BILD Leadership and Education courses will be scheduled in September.