

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SACRA DOMUS:

THE ANGLICAN HOUSE CHURCH IN THEOLOGY AND CONTEXT

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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May, 2014

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

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The author is an evangelical Anglican priest with a recently formed sacramental house church. Though the house church movement is gaining popularity, no formal guidelines or methodologies exist which address this trend from a liturgical and sacerdotal perspective—even within his diocese. Because of this void, he will examine the following critical issues:

- What are the scriptural foundations for mandating the use of liturgy?
- What are the biblical, theological, and historical precedents for house churches?
- Can there be a complementary union between priestly liturgy and the house church model?

Without guidance from other ‘reference parishes,’ the need for such a methodology will be demonstrated. Survey data demonstrating how other Anglican communions have wrestled with this church model will also be investigated. Recommendations will then be made for future research to aid the Anglican house church and its chief act of worship: the celebration of the Eucharist.

Abstract length: 142 words.

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PREFACE

If Paul declared that marriage is a miniature replica of the Church through the mystery of Jesus and His Bride (Ephesians 5:31-32), and if Paul also declared that godly obedience, service, promise, and reward are fully realized within the home (Ephesians 6:1-9), why have we divorced *church* from *home* the same way many have attempted to separate *Church* and *State*? Why do church growth advocates tout that bigger (e.g., the mega-church) is better when findings in sociology and psychology suggest that we're only capable of sustaining a dozen or so meaningful relationships?¹ Or as Larry Crabb suggests, "Maybe the center of Christian community is connecting with a few."² Why do we believe that church can only 'happen' with a Plexiglas pulpit or Disklavier grand piano, with recording studio-quality praise bands or 'jumbovision' PowerPoint, with throbbing sound systems or theater-style seating, or with parking lot attendants and live-streaming podcasts?³

There is certainly a level of excitement and energy in those things when God is exalted. But God also meets His people in humble living rooms where friends and neighbors gather in the Name of Christ for prayer; for the reading of Scripture, singing, and receiving the sacraments; for sharing of burdens and ministering to one another. In fact, this latter description is what Peter

¹ Rosemary Blieszner and Rebecca G. Adams, *Adult Friendships*, vol. 3 of *Sage Series on Close Relationships* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan's Sage Publications, 1992), 48.

² Larry Crabb, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), xiii. See also, J.D. Payne, *Missional House Churches: Reaching Our Communities with the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2007), 52; and Robert and Julia Banks, *The Church Comes Home: Building Community and Mission through Home Churches* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 116.

³ D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 15.

would more readily recognize as an authentic church than many ‘full life worship centers’ dotting the landscape of North American Christianity today.⁴

It was precisely this kind of humble house church that turned the whole Roman Empire upside-down. This was the Church Tertullian wrote about to his detractors barely a century after the death of the Apostle John, saying, “We [Christians] are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market places, camps, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods.”⁵ Not shy for words, he systematically outlines the Church’s unchecked growth across the Empire, family by family, home by home:

In whom have all the nations believed but in Christ who is already come? In whom have they believed—the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and those who inhabit Mesopotamia, Armenia, Phrygia, Cappadocia; those who live in Pontus, Asia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, in Africa beyond Cyrene; those born here and those who come here from Rome; also the Jews in Jerusalem and other national groups, as now the various tribes of the Gaetulians and of the wide regions of the Moors, and the Spaniards to their remotest boundaries; the different nations of Gaul; the haunts of the Britons, inaccessible to the Romans; the lands of the Samaritans, Dacians, Germans, Scythians; and many remote nations, provinces, and islands, which are unknown to us and which we cannot enumerate?⁶

It’s incredible to think that this expansion took place during a time when Christians had to restrict the locations of their worship to private homes (and sewers!).⁷

⁴ Ed Stetzer, “Small Is the Kingdom Big,” *Outreach*, July/August 2011, 18.

⁵ David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs: A Reference Guide to More than 700 Topics Discussed by the Early Church Fathers*, s.v. “Christianity, Growth of.” (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), 138.

⁶ Eberhard Arnold, ed., *The Early Christians in Their Own Words*, trans. Society of Brothers (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1977), 243.

⁷ For an interesting discussion of the archeological evidence of early Christian worship locations, including cisterns and caves, the reader is directed to Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, *Archeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity: The Social and Historical Setting of Palestinian Judaism and Christianity*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1981), 125-139.

How much missional impact has the Church relinquished in modern times by unwittingly ignoring the ‘small’ or, at least in attitude and perception, relegating house churches to second-class status? Thankfully, and often contrary to our insatiable penchant for ‘bigger and better,’ house churches are once again staking a claim in the spiritual tapestry of corporate worship. And while some larger churches may feign indifference at house churches in the same way one might wave a hand at a pesky gnat, the number of house churches in North America is on the rise. Even more, they are thriving.

In order to capture the spirit of today’s flourishing house church movement, the title of this thesis begins with the Latin phrase *Sacra Domus* (literally, ‘Sacred House’). For just as God used house churches to Christianize the known world long before Emperor Constantine gave the first ‘mega church’ to the Bishop of Rome (the 4th century Basilica of St. John Lateran on Mars Hill),⁸ He is pouring His favor on that same move in our day and age.

More specifically, this thesis will attempt to examine the house church movement from the unique perspective of Anglican use and worship. For just as most evangelical denominations (along with numerous non-affiliated, independent congregations) are beginning to capture a sense of the untapped potential of establishing new church plants in the form of house churches, sacramental and magisterial communions are also being ‘nudged’ by the Holy Spirit to experience “heaven at the hearthstone.” May every bishop, priest, and deacon in our great Anglican Patrimony come to discover how worship in a living room can be as authentic and numinous as it is in a cathedral.

⁸ The Basilica of St. John Lateran, or San Giovanni in Laterano, was made an imperial gift to Pope Miltiades in 312 AD. A translation of the Latin inscription on its façade reads “The Most Holy Lateran Church, Mother and Head of all churches of the city and the World.” The dimensions of the original basilica were 295’ long by 184’ wide (that means, by modern comparison, the nave was just 5 feet shy of the length of a football field but over 20 feet wider—a huge church even by today’s standards!).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Problem identification, claims and warrants, evidence citation, proper formatting—when correctly managed and executed, these elements will produce a thesis of rigorous quality. But they will also produce a thesis that is mechanical, sterile, and without heart. In order to push beyond the technical craft of research, one needs a spark that can only come through the prayer and encouragement of devoted loved ones, patient academic mentors, supportive ecclesial leadership, and fire from the altar of the Heavenly Jerusalem. And how much more so when the topic examines Christian faith, worship, and the Church!

To my cherished wife and ministry partner, Sue, who not only prompted me in directions of research which made this thesis better but also sees a day beyond my formal academics when she can finally have me back—more of Jesus shines through her than anyone else I know; my thesis mentor, Dr. Vernon M. Whaley, Dean of the School of Music at Liberty University, who worked on this thesis just as hard as I did and never missed a step when I was the only student wearing a clerical collar in his classes; to Dr. Charlie N. Davidson who graciously accepted the task of thesis reader, making sure that all of my *i*'s are dotted and *t*'s crossed (à la *Turabian*); to Bishop Richard Lipka, the Missionary Diocese of All Saints, and the Anglican Church in North America, who will prayerfully raise the call for a proactive response to this study; and to the Holy Spirit who placed a “fire in my bones” and reminded me to “not despise the day of small things” (or small churches), I humbly dedicate these pages.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

To many outside of the movement, the house church phenomenon has been quietly, steadily, almost imperceptibly gaining ground on the landscape of contemporary North American Christianity. By 2006, however, The Barna Group was already documenting upwards of 20 million adults in regular weekly attendance at house churches,¹ four times the number of people who attend mega-churches,² making the house church movement our nation's largest 'denomination.' At that same time, missiology and church planting expert Ed Stetzer claimed that 24.5 percent of all Americans were opting for small groups "as their *primary* [emphasis his] form of spiritual gathering!"³

Much of this growth is reactionary due in no large part to an increasing number of worshipers who perceive a sense of personal detachment and isolation in larger churches.⁴ Yet while such corporate worship is characterized by things big and innovative, it also solidifies the desire in some believers for smaller worship gatherings, meaningful relationships, and the encouragement toward godly discipleship within familial surroundings. From their perspective, they're not looking for church *hype* or church *lite* but church *right*.⁵

¹ The Barna Group. "House Church Involvement Is Growing," The Barna Group, Ltd., <http://www.barna.org/organic-church-articles/151-house-church-involvement-is-growing> [accessed April 25, 2013].

² Scott Thumma and Warren Bird. "Not Who You Think They Are: A Profile of the People Who Attend America's Megachurches," Hartford Institute for Religion Research, http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megachurch_attender_report.htm [accessed April 25, 2013].

³ Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, et al., *11 Innovations in the Local Church: How Today's Leaders Can Learn, Discern and Move into the Future*. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 28.

⁴ Towns and Stetzer, *11 Innovations*, 46.

⁵ Dan Kimball, "Life in 'The Small,'" *Outreach*, July/August 2011, 20.

While the house church is similar in size to body-life gatherings or cell groups, it doesn't gather during the week for Bible study and fellowship only to be subsumed into a larger parent congregation for worship on Sundays. Instead, the group that has covenanted to regularly gather in one of the member's homes is a duly constituted, whole, and autonomous congregation; a complete church in its own right.¹

The bulk of this growing trend is found among non-denominational, evangelical Protestants. At the same time it is also making initial inroads among those Christians who desire liturgical patterns of worship. This is not a problem in itself; patterns for liturgical worship abound for non-traditional settings.² Even more, a liturgical house church does not require an ordained pastor. Such a worship gathering can easily be led by a layman who is trained and cognizant of those rubrics for structured worship.³ There is, however, a subset of liturgical house churches that are also sacramental, and this distinction creates several challenging issues for those involved.

Why this "splitting of the hairs" between liturgical and sacramental worship? Aren't they the same? Aren't these worship descriptors essentially synonymous? Absolutely not! While liturgical worship does not have to be sacramental (many evangelical churches are finding beauty and authenticity in the structure of ordered worship), sacramental worship is categorically

¹ Rad Zdero, ed. *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 8-9.

² Many small groups make liberal use of such laymen-led proper liturgies as Morning Prayer in place of full Eucharistic liturgies. Examples of these liturgies are found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, (New York, NY: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1979), 36-60, 74-102; *Lutheran Book of Worship*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1997), 131-141; and *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship*, (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1994), 876-878.

³ As an example, see Neil Jackson, "Ohio Trip 3: Vineyard Central, a Liturgical House Church," Christinyall Blog, entry posted July 18, 2009, <http://christinyall.blogspot.com/2009/07/fruit-hunting-part-three.html> [accessed April 2, 2013]. See also the Vineyard Central website, <http://www.vineyardcentral.com> [accessed April 2, 2013].

liturgical. And in catholic tradition the sacraments are only ‘correct’ when offered through the use of authorized liturgy at the hands of a bishop in Apostolic Succession (or by a priest under obedience to that bishop). In other words, for legitimate and efficacious sacramental worship, there must be:

- Right Order: Proper liturgical components placed within a proper sequence (e.g., the Gospel Reading and Homily comes *before* the Offertory, and the Eucharist can only be received *after* the General Confession).⁴
- Right Formula: Proper words spoken within the sequential components (e.g., the consecration of the Communion elements does not include, “Brother Bob, how ‘bout you pray for the grape juice this mornin’?”).
- Right Actions: Proper use of movements and actions during the liturgy (e.g., the Gospel is not read by the priest or deacon while seated on a bar stool).
- Right Agency/Instrumentality: Properly ordained priest to celebrate and administer the Eucharist (or other sacraments, e.g., Confession, Baptism, etc.).
- Right authority: Proper submission of the priest to a bishop in Apostolic Succession.⁵

Another distinctive issue of sacramental worship stems from this ecclesiastical relationship between a priest and his bishop. In the Apostolic Tradition, the priest is ordained to serve as an extension of the bishop’s see. Thus, when the Eucharist is celebrated by a parish priest it essentially becomes a tangible echo of the altar at the bishop’s cathedral. By virtue of this magisterial ecclesiology, the Anglican house church can take its equal place—without diminution—alongside other larger parish churches within a diocese, all of which are under the ‘cover’ of episcopal authority. This stands in stark contrast to the mantras of autonomy and

⁴ The components for properly ‘making Eucharist’ (from the start of the anaphora or *Great Entrance* to the distribution of the consecrated elements) traditionally include the *Sursum Corda*, *Preface*, *Sanctus*, *Memorial of the Incarnation*, *Words of Institution*, *Anamnesis*, *Epiclesis*, *Doxology*, *Great Amen*, *Lord’s Prayer*, *Fracture*, *Agnus Dei*, the *Prayer of Humble Access* (in some traditions), and the *Non Sum Dignus* or some other invitation. Among the oldest of these liturgies—reflecting “the Tradition we have received from the Apostles”—are the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (2nd cent.), the eastern or Syriac *Liturgy of Addai and Mari* (3rd cent.), and the Egyptian form of the *Liturgy of St. Basil* (4th cent.).

⁵ The authority of the bishop for ensuring a legitimate Eucharist is covered in such seminal works as Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1945), 268-271.

independence generally found throughout the house church movement.⁶ But for Anglicans, it is unthinkable for a priest *not* to serve his house church under submissive obedience to a bishop; otherwise that priest is rogue and the sacraments (as well as his small parish) are invalid!⁷

A final distinctive of the Anglican house church is that, while sacramental/liturgical worship enjoys those rubrics which allow for flexible variety, there are also non-negotiable elements surrounding the celebration of the Eucharist—the weekly, formal, and chief act of worship in a parish’s life no matter how large or small. These elements require great sensitivity and logistical coordination when offered in someone’s home. These elements include how to provide for a consecrated altar, what to use for dedicated vessels (chalice, paten, ciborium, or thurible), liturgical vestments, safe storage of oil stocks or unconsumed communion hosts, whether or not to consecrate a living room prior to worship and deconsecrate it afterwards, etc.⁸

Statement of Limitations

So much can be said about the house church movement in general (and the Anglican house church in particular) that certain limitations need to be set in place. Not that these issues aren’t important in their own right—each one is a matter of passionate debate—but they are

⁶ Steve Atkerson, ed. *House Church: Simple, Strategic, Scriptural* (Atlanta, GA: New Testament Reformation Fellowship, 2008), 132. See also Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 156-157.

⁷ The nature of this necessary episcopal authority and submission is based on the early structural character of the Church with documentation beginning as early as Peter’s own disciple and successor, Clement (c. 96; cf., Philippians 4:3) in his letter *First Clement*; by Ignatius (c. 115) in his *Letter to the Philadelphians*, his *Letter to the Ephesians*, his *Letter to the Trallians*, and his *Letter to the Magnesians*; the 2nd century *Didache*; the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus who was “known by the Apostles;” by Cyprian (c. 258) in his *Treatise On the Unity of the Catholic Church*; and on down through sacramental and magisterial church history.

⁸ These concerns are of particular importance inasmuch as they involve “edifices set aside only temporarily for divine worship because of special conditions...”—a unique category of worship space and liturgical accoutrements per the International Commission on English in the Liturgy’s, *Ceremonial of Bishops* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 260.

secondary issues outside the scope of this thesis and would only serve to obfuscate the principal focus: establishing the need for a formulary for sacramental worship in a house church setting according to Anglican polity.

For example, this study will not examine the qualifications for clergy who serve as rectors or vicars over Anglican house churches. Every Anglican jurisdiction establishes its own prerequisites for those candidates preparing for ordination into holy orders or for those clergy who are received through incardination from other Anglican bodies. Thus while many non-denominational house churches practice a shared lay leadership so as not to even hint at a lay-clergy division,⁹ sacramental worship requires that the ‘celebrant’—priest or bishop—be ordained in the Apostolic Line.¹⁰

There will likewise be no discussion or debate on issues relating to male-only ordination or the ordination of females to the diaconate or priesthood. However, for the sake of conformity with the theology and canons of the author’s diocese, all references to Anglican clergy will be in the masculine.

This thesis will not judge the merits of any particular prayer book nor will it espouse a specific liturgy (e.g., the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1979, 1928, or 1662; *The Anglican Service Book*;¹¹ the *Anglican Missal*;¹² or other liturgical formularies which many bishops approve for use in the churches of their diocese).

⁹ As an example, see Zdero, *Nexus*, 448-449.

¹⁰ Howard E. Galley, *The Ceremonies of the Eucharist: A Guide to Celebration* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1989), 20-21. See also, *Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York, NY: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1979), 13.

¹¹ Richard Alford, Samuel L. Edwards, et al., eds., *The Anglican Service Book* (Rosemont, PA: Church of the Good Shepherd, 1991).

¹² The Anglican Catholic Church, *The People’s Anglican Missal* (Athens, GA: The Anglican Parishes Association, 1995).

Finally, while this thesis will make a Scriptural case for the role of liturgy (and how that role is necessary even in a house church setting), it will not engage in a study of the biblical, historical, and traditional underpinnings of sacramental theology. Since this thesis is being offered primarily as a resource for use within the Anglican Communion, it is not necessary to produce an apologia of what other Anglicans already hold to be the full, sufficient, and self-evident expression of their Apostolic Tradition and the central place of the sacraments (as opposed to ordinances) in the life of the Church.

The Theoretical Basis for the Project

Because of the unique dynamics of sacramental house churches (as noted earlier in the Introduction), there exists a great vacuum of sacerdotal “how to” strategies for these micro-parishes which operate within larger episcopal structures. In fact, as this author will demonstrate in Chapter 2, readers will be hard pressed to find any information at all.

This lack of information is due in part to the fact that an Anglican house church cannot operate independently from a bishop or apart from the canons of the parent diocese or communion. What the Anglican house church is, what it believes, the content of its worship, and its governing principles are already spelled out—it does not need to ‘invent’ itself. On the other hand, the worship logistics of an Anglican house church are so unique that they can vex even the most seasoned of ‘altar guilds’ responsible for the chancels of more traditional churches. Consequently, house church priests (and the episcopal authority over them) would greatly benefit from a practical, best practices “field guide” which addresses these critical concerns—a guide which, at the present time, does not exist. Anywhere.

The basis for this thesis also rests on the solid scriptural evidence that, quite simply, God loves house churches. The New Testament documents the unique correlation between *worship* and the *home* among the early believers (e.g., Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1-2). Nor was this concept of ‘church in a house’ a unique invention of the earliest believers; there was a precedent. The earliest Christian worshipping communities were constituted from among Jewish believers, and with them came a carryover of their Jewish religious traditions including a conviction that the home stood as a ‘small sanctuary’ or ‘miniature temple’.¹³ Because of their dual affinity for the sacredness of the home and the validity of the small group gathering, it was a natural progression for those early house churches to organize themselves on the same principles that governed the establishment of Jewish synagogues (*Talmud, Berechot 6a*)—with a core of 10 men.¹⁴

Statement of Methodology

In order to establish the need for an Anglican house church methodology, the main body of this thesis will unfold in the following organization of material:

Chapter Two is a review and comparative analysis of the literature consulted for this study. Because this thesis examines both liturgy and the house church movement, the reviews are grouped into those two categories. The first category of resources examines the literature which establishes a sound theology for liturgical and sacramental worship. The writers include those from Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox backgrounds as well as writers from evangelical

¹³ Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 214-217.

¹⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life Updated* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 229, 232.

backgrounds who have discovered the authenticity and richness of the ancient patterns of worship. The second category of resources examines the literature currently representative of the house church movement throughout North America. These works not only provide a historical context for the house church but the philosophy and theology which drives their understanding of house church ministry. These two categories are followed by a smaller and final collection of academic papers which complemented and supplemented each of the main sections of this thesis; i.e., house church history, Eucharistic theology, house church as community, and biblical history of worship.

Chapter Three will biblically examine the origins of liturgy in authentic worship. Because God intended for earthly worship to be a temporal mirror of eternal worship, attention will be given to His exacting requirements for the construction of the Tabernacle and how those patterns continued through the Temple, the synagogue, and the original gatherings of the early believers. This chapter will also demonstrate how those original patterns, made complete in Christ, are still germane for the shape of our worship today.

The implications of this biblical precedent are crucial because they document a rationale as to why house churches should participate in the same liturgical patterns of worship as any larger church; the size or venue of the worship space does not negate the need for maintaining conformity to the divinely established patterns of worship. New or innovative worship—or what Peter Kreeft refers to as the “cult of novelty”¹⁵—is not necessary but only imitation and fidelity to what already happens in God’s presence.

Chapter Four will include a detailed examination of Scripture. This time, however, the focus will be on the origins, basis, and examples of the biblical house church. Beginning with the

¹⁵ Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1986), 14.

Old Testament, an examination of the Bible will demonstrate the antecedents of the house church found as far back as the creation account of Genesis and how it found its uniquely Jewish expression in the synagogue. The successor of the synagogue—the New Testament house church—will then be studied with careful attention to the biblical basis for this methodology. From the wise men worshipping in the house of the Christ child (Matthew 2:11) to Jesus breaking [Eucharistic] bread with the two Emmaus disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:30-31), the Gospels play a critical role in laying the foundation for house churches. This context for worship continues to unfold in the Book of Acts and throughout the Pauline corpus as the nascent Church is moved by the Holy Spirit to move out from Jerusalem to the uttermost (Acts 1:8) in the witness of Jesus Christ.

Once a biblical theology for the house church has been established, Chapter Five will provide a post-biblical review of the continuing development of the house church down through Church history. The chapter will be divided into two major divisions. The first division will trace the expansion of the house church from the end of Acts to the reign of Constantine, noting in particular the role it played in times of religious persecution. The second division will document the ongoing role of house churches from the milieu of post-Constantine Christianity up to the 20th century, again acknowledging its critical role in times of religious and civil unrest (e.g., Bonhoeffer's Germany). It is anticipated that this biblical-historical overview will clearly establish the need of, and place for, liturgical/sacramental house churches.

Critical to this study will also be an examination of the current literature dealing with how to establish and maintain house churches. Chapter Six will deal with those issues focusing on how a house church operates as a fully functioning and independent church 'in miniature' rather than as a 'cell' or 'body-life' group of a larger congregation. The author will also review

the literature which upholds the house church as a legitimate and viable ministry ‘size’ without being pressured into expansion beyond what can be reasonably accommodated in the private home. This is important because so much of evangelical Christianity gauges the success of a ministry based on numerical growth—that if you’re not aspiring toward the mega-church model or the satellite campus model then your church is a ‘non-player’ on the landscape of ministry success. The encouragement for Anglican leadership will be to resist the compulsion to transition a growing house church into a larger church building (unless it is truly of the Lord) and, instead, encourage that parish to split under the care of a new priest and establish a new house church.

Along with concerns regarding house church leadership, order, worship liturgy, the function of the laity, and episcopal oversight—all of which are antithetical to house church methods outside of Anglo-Catholic use—an assessment will be made of the current state of Anglican house churches. This will be accomplished through a 28-question survey sent to the presiding bishops of 40 of the 119 Anglican communions and diocese currently operating within North America (see Appendix A). The questionnaire investigates three key areas: house church leadership, house church logistics, and house church worship. An analysis of the survey returns will indicate if other Anglican bishops have formal (or even informal) guidelines in place for the proper operation of those house churches under their jurisdiction. The results will also be compared alongside those issues and procedures shared in common with non-sacramental house churches. And where information and statistical data fails, the need will be firmly established for a general methodology so necessary for the proper functioning of an Anglican house church.

Summary

With all four steps of the thesis in place, this author will end with recommendations for future additional work in those areas most urgently needing attention. Suggestions for a formal methodology will not only include the principle issues noted throughout the paper, but will also briefly touch on additional elements that fell outside the scope of the current work. For example: the active recruitment of potential clergy from seminaries who are led by the Holy Spirit to pastor the ‘living room’ parish; how to adequately articulate this kind of labor as a call to bi-vocational ‘tent maker’ ministry; the need for each diocese to equip their new house church vicars with everything they need—a “church in a box” (e.g., vessels, portable altar, vestments, electronic hymn player, service books, etc.); and a call for each diocese or communion to include provisions in their Canons that recognize a modified congregational government for house church parishes (e.g., each member is part of a ‘pro-tem vestry’ whenever the house church needs to make a congregational decision).

Chapter 2.

Comparative Analysis of Related Resources

As the problems and questions of this thesis came into focus, it was surprising to find that no scholarly or general information exists regarding Anglican house churches. By stating that no information exists, this writer means that there are no books; peer-reviewed journal articles; professional journals or magazines; internet resources; reference book entries; or dissertations, theses, or projects written about Anglican (or even liturgical) house churches.

This lack of data was determined by searches performed through the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database (PQDTD); the Liberty University Digital Commons (LUDC) and the Liberty University Library Catalog (LUCAS); the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD); the EBSCOhost Religion and Philosophy Collection; the American Theological Library Association Religion Database (ATLA); Religious and Theological Abstracts (RTA); Research in Ministry Online (RIM); the Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN); and the World Catalog (WorldCat)—41 different digital databases, to be exact. Every search parameter returned a “0 Results” finding.¹

That is not to say there are no books or articles dealing with house churches. Indeed, there are many! But these resources deal with the more general aspects of non-denominational house church planting, function, and leadership. These are important elements held in common by most house churches, and the ones that have direct bearing or commonality for Anglican house churches will be drawn upon for this work. Nothing exists, however, which specifically

¹ Data searches were conducted through the online Research Portal of the Liberty University Library, <http://libguides.liberty.edu/content.php?pid=229367&sid=1956460> as well as the EZProxy Remote Access Server and its entire A-Z Database at <http://libguides.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048/content.php?pid=229146>. These resources were constantly referenced throughout the entire 2013-2014 research phase of this thesis.

defines, supports, or facilitates the unique aspects of a liturgical, sacramental house church. As a result, the reader and writer will be navigating through uncharted waters. It will be, at some level, an “*original contribution to the field of ministry*.”²

LITERATURE

This thesis is laid out in four distinct categories: the theology of worship and liturgy, the theology of the house church, the history of the house church, and how Anglicanism can find a home within the house church movement. A number of excellent books in both worship theology and the house church movement have been utilized in this study and a sampling of them are presented herein. While none of these texts deal specifically with the Anglican house church, their contribution to this paper is evident; particularly those works which demonstrate the theological and practical chasm that exists between the contemporary house church movement and the unique nature of the Anglican house church. First, those texts that helped to formulate a theology of worship and liturgy.

Theology of Worship and Liturgy

Sketches of Jewish Social Life by Alfred Edersheim. This book is a rare jewel; not just because Edersheim is the product of classicism but because he was a convert from Judaism to Christianity. Such a background allows him to write about biblical Jewish life with an authority and cultural perspective often lacking in many other Anglo-western scholars.

Several chapters had a direct application to this thesis, particularly regarding the synagogue and synagogue worship. Edersheim suggests that the synagogue was not the

² “Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Handbook, 2012 Revision” (Liberty Online intensive class DMSN-876, Introduction to the Thesis Writing Process and 21st Century Computer Tools and Techniques, Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 12-16, 2012), 13.

culmination of Jewish worship, but a stepping stone to Christ. While the very presence of the synagogue served to demonstrate that the time of the Temple was coming to a close, its genius was found in the exhaustive rabbinic teaching of Moses and the Prophets that shined a constant light on the true Priest, the true Sacrifice, the true Prophet, and the true King. His insights are a welcome addition to the historical concerns of this thesis.

A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship by Michael Horton.

Dr. Horton examines the current worship debates gripping the church: Should we have contemporary or traditional services? Should we sing praise songs or hymns? Should we try to include drama or dance or other art forms? While the debates continue to rage, they tend to serve as symptoms of a deeper struggle: the true nature of our worship of the Almighty. The Church is caught up in addressing superficial issues—often based on personal taste, preferences, or cultural adaptations—without first grasping what biblical worship is all about.

With this in mind, Horton lays out a surgical analysis of *theologically driven* worship with a clarion call to reinvigorate perhaps the two most critical pieces of the equation: biblical preaching (not for crowd manipulation or entertainment but for spiritual transformation) and the sacraments (tapping into tangible, God-sanctioned sources of grace and faith rather than relying on things that are new, clever, or vaudevillian).

Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament by Thomas

Howard. This book is the record of Howard's journey from evangelicalism to the fullness of catholicity. In it he demonstrates how doctrinally similar evangelicalism and liturgical faith are to each other. After a quick overview of such basic tenants of faith as biblical inerrancy, atonement, the second coming of Christ, the judgment, and witnessing and missions, it's not surprising that evangelicalism's greatest advocates, item for item, are bishops in Apostolic

Succession whose chief labors are to ‘teach and defend the faith’ passed down to them in absolute fidelity since the Apostles of Christ.

This excellent work shows how someone can remain absolutely evangelical and charismatic while at the same time holding fast to the traditions that flesh out the content of faith to its fullest expression. Webber calls the Church to blend the liturgical, the sacramental, the Charismatic, and the evangelical back into one powerful river of authentic faith and practice.

True Worship: Reclaiming the Wonder and Majesty by Donald P. Hustad. Hustad enters the fray worship debate from a moderately Calvinist posture and, at the same time, values the liberty of true scholarship which allows him to look beyond the milieu of his own theological background. From this perspective he clearly recognizes that (1) there are biblical themes and patterns which cannot be avoided if we’re to be faithful, (2) that there must be integrity in our worship, and (3) that there’s a stark difference between entertainment and worship.

Hustad presents a convincing and cogent case for the necessity of *full* worship based on liturgical truth and biblical patterns. While many contemporary evangelical churches and independent congregations profess a New Testament pattern of worship, the bulk of the essentials are missing and, for them, it’s the world that has set the pattern, volume, vocabulary, dress, decor, and the metronome.

Worship in the Early Church by Ralph P. Martin. Martin begins his book with a rather detailed introduction which serves, for all practical purposes, as an annotated bibliography of his key source material. These books are grouped into headings that reflect, for Martin, the germane aspects of worship: the nature of worship, early worship, Old Testament worship, prayers of the early believers, New Testament Christ hymns, creeds and confessions, early Christian baptism, origins of the Eucharist, Sabbath and the Lord’s Day, and applications of ancient worship

practices for today. He accomplishes this by examining New Testament and Early Church worship from which he offers a biblical foundation for authentic worship. This was an excellent text for uncovering how Christian worship was first practiced and how this worship infected and impacted an entire empire—salient conclusions for this thesis.

The Tabernacle of Israel: Its Structure and Symbolism by James Strong. Strong's book was written in the vein of that rich scholarship so prevalent in theological writing over a century ago that was both intensely scrupulous in detail and warmly devotional in its fervor. In this book Strong describes the patterns and practices necessary for the Jews to come into the presence of God; the precautions, safeguards, instructions, even the kind of clothing to wear. No caprice here; no insistence on self-innovation in worship styles! This was God's house and the parameters were His alone.

Most significant for Strong is when he begins his study of the symbolism of the Tabernacle as a physical 'type' of the divine 'archetype' upon which God sanctioned His worship; the visible hearthstone of the invisible Church. Indeed, for Strong the Tabernacle can even be seen as the prefigurement of the occupancy of a human body (or 'tent') by the Messiah during his stay on earth. Strong's book played directly into this thesis through his defense of order, design, ritual, and liturgy based on the divine patterns of heaven; making our churches habitations for God because only in these patterns does God feel at home.

Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World by Robert E. Webber. Webber, the *don* of blended worship, believes that modernity is finally dying—along with its impact on the current paradigms of worship and faith. The solution for what comes next is to appeal to the past which alone possesses the historical *constants* that can steer the Church clear from the shoals of subjectivism. This can only be done as evangelicals seek a deeper

kinship with the faith of the Early Church; with those who birthed Christianity into a world that was politically, sociologically, religiously, and philosophically very much like our world today. For Webber, ancient Christian tradition alone has the power to speak to a postmodern world. His contentions for the early patterns of worship as God's chosen and normative expressions of faith factored greatly in this thesis.

Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction by Robert E. Webber. Dividing his book into eminently thoughtful units of study, Webber touches on worship foundations, theology, history, and modern practice and implementation. He does this by tracking biblical themes of worship throughout Scripture beginning with Mount Sinai and the most basic elements for how God meets His people. This gathering was characterized by five key elements: (1) worship is convened by and for the purpose of God, (2) people are arranged in a full structure of responsibility and participation, (3) the gathering was characterized by a proclamation of the Word, (4) the people accepted and committed (re-committed) themselves to the terms of the covenant, and (5) the meeting was sealed and climaxed by a ratification through a blood sacrifice. These elements were then traced throughout the remainder of the Old and New Testaments. An excellent primer on the theology of worship, Webber's extensive endnotes, in-text examples, bibliography, etc., throws open wide the doors for further research and study. His articulation of the "shape" of authentic liturgy was of extreme value in the writing of this thesis.

One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic: The Early Church Was the Catholic Church by Kenneth D. White. Throughout the history of Christianity, 'reformers' have aspired to return to the Early Church. Whitehead's task, accordingly, was to identify the kind of church that descends in an unbroken line from the Apostles of Christ? Any entity claiming to be the Church of Christ must be able to demonstrate its organic link with the original Apostles upon whom

Christ breathed the Holy Spirit and established his Church. Nothing less can qualify as the authentic, apostolic Church that Jesus inaugurated.

While this was an excellent book for the Apostolic and Patristic source content, his methodology was so one-sided in favoritism toward Roman Catholicism that it sometimes seemed the material was manipulated to fit the conclusions. Nevertheless, his historical documentation helped to fill in many missing gaps this thesis' biblical theology of liturgy.

Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church by Benjamin D. Williams and Harold B. Anstall. This book was a strong affirmation for the selection of my thesis. Not a single page went undigested, marked, lined, annotated, or highlighted. These two men are convincing apologists for Orthodoxy and worship tradition. Particularly noteworthy is that Williams was raised in an evangelical home and served as an ordained evangelical pastor for ten years before finding his true home in the richness of Orthodox worship.

The authors contend that North American contemporary worship is not the standard by which we judge worship as good or bad, right or wrong. Rather, ancient 'eastern' Christian worship is the arbiter of the norm. 'Order' permeated the primitive church gatherings whose roots were deeply anchored in their Jewish liturgical interactions with God. How surprising, then, when well-intentioned groups seek to abolish the Apostolic norm and the liturgy that was embraced by the Lord as His own pattern of worship! The liturgy, when offered to God correctly, is literally the gift of living Scripture given back to God; the embodiment of the eternal Word; not caprice or fashion to meet the needs of the people, but of sacrificing and surrendering back to God that which is His own.

Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious

Protestants by Daniel H. Williams. The main contention of this book is that an evangelical Christian with an ahistoric faith is a superficial one. Thus Williams begins to not only set forth the validity and necessity Tradition, but also demonstrates the impossibility of an evangelical faith without Tradition. His premise is that evangelicalism is afflicted with an acute lack of continuity with the traditions of the Early Church, particularly its Apostolic Tradition and has turned, instead, to fill the void with a hankering for the new or novel.

Williams demonstrates how the Tradition has stood firm throughout the centuries and how a return to the Tradition is seen as the Church's only cure in the face of modernity, fragmentation, shallowness, and ineffectiveness. The Church's strength lies in its roots, and its roots are buried deep in the first four centuries of its existence. To live apart from these roots is akin to building the House of God on sand. Williams' emphasis on Tradition, combined with Scripture and Church authority, provided the "three-legged stool" of authentic faith as it appears in this thesis.

The House Church Movement

House Church: Simple, Strategic, Scriptural, edited by Steve Atkerson. This book is a compilation of chapters written and contributed by nine different authors, all of whom are members of the New Testament Reformation Fellowship. The chapters are grouped into three main sections: the nature and logistics of house church meetings; the outworking of various ministries within the house church; and those matters of church leadership that require scriptural leadership (e.g., exercising church discipline within the house church, helping a house church that has grown too large to split into two congregations, etc.).

It must be noted here that this book (and its contributors) are anti-institutional, anti-denominational, anti-clerical, and anti-Traditional. Otherwise, the contributors did an excellent job of mapping out the current state of the house church movement, its reliance on the traditions found in Scripture rather than those espoused by the “doctors of the church,” the role of the membership in the full life and government of the local meeting, and the nature of the Lord’s Supper as a full meal rather than as a symbol enacted only with bread and wine. As a resource for this thesis, the majority of the useful information was anecdotal and statistical; very little had any direct bearing on the facilitation of a sacramental/liturgical house church under the leadership of an ordained priest in obedience to episcopal authority.

The Church Comes Home: Building Community and Mission through Home Churches by Robert and Julia Banks. This husband and wife team wrote an excellent and balanced book on the many aspects of the house church movement. Without casting judgment on other church models or denominations, they begin simply enough by examining the “quiet revolution” of smaller, face-to-face gatherings of Christians for worship, fellowship, and intimacy. Each chapter focuses on one aspect or element of the house church movement—small group intimacy, the Lord’s Supper, matters of leadership, key elements of house church worship, etc.

The chapters most beneficial to this thesis dealt with the nature and composition of the Church among the first generation of believers as well as an excellent survey of house churches throughout the centuries of church history. The authors also discussed how to plan, plant, and bring house churches into maturity and how the house church can be a vital agent of God for community missions and evangelism. Much of their historical, statistical, and anecdotal material proved helpful for this study.

Getting Started: A Practical Guide to Simple Church Planting by Felicity Dale. Dale makes it clear that a house church is not simply duplicating in one's living room those things that happen in a traditional church (although this is precisely what happens in an Anglican house church). Rather, her manual is about how to *be* the church—a relational and intimate community of believers on a mission to reach its local world. This leads to a discussion of the nature (or the DNA) of the church and how it plays out in our contemporary society.

Dale offers sample formats of how house church meetings should operate along with guidance on splitting large house churches into two when the original house church expands beyond its physical capacity for attendees. Dale's emphasis throughout is that the house church model isn't simply for Christians who are frustrated with their 'church of origin' but for those Christians who are ignited by the Holy Spirit in the fervor of church planting and evangelism without the 'overhead' of denominational involvement. Her statistical data, suggestions for house church worship, and church planting emphases were all made a part of this thesis.

Starting a House Church: A New Model for Living Out Your Faith by Larry Kreider and Floyd McClung. Kreider and McClung begin with an examination of the current house church movement. Whether it's called a house church, micro-church, house fellowship, life group, simple church, or organic church, church growth experts believe that the house church represents the next wave of evangelical worship and will soon eclipse the mega-church boom of the 1980s and 1990s. This, of course, is contingent on an accurate understanding of the true nature of the church; not buildings, not programs, not personalities, but people gathered in love and service to one another as part of the outworking of their love and faith in Christ.

After reviewing the Early Church model as the template for today's house church movement, the authors begin to unpack what a house church actually looks like, including the

fact that the house church is a real, stand-alone church that happens to be small enough to meet in a private home (a key element in this thesis!). The authors also discuss how house churches and house church networks can partner with community and mega churches for a greater reach into their surrounding communities. This call to partnership emphasizes the fact that many kinds of churches are all knit together in the one universal Church and that the house church can take its place alongside of them for the glory of Christ.

Welcome Home: A Practical Guide to House Churches, Small Groups, Home Fellowships, or Whatever Else We Call Them by Steve Lorch. *Welcome Home* was perhaps the most unique book consulted for this thesis because the entire book was presented in outline form as a tool for conducting training seminars in how to run a house church. The book is completely didactic in nature; from defining the roles of leaders within the church (what is an elder, what is a deacon) to a model outline of how to run a house church gathering (with each element of the service timed down to the minute).

While Lorch's 'lesson plans' contained some material eventually cited in this thesis (i.e., the mechanics of Lord's Supper and his resistance to singing as a part of house church worship), the bulk of the book was geared for training the leaders, from ground zero, on the history and transmission of the Bible, the basics of Bible translation, how to systematically study the Bible, how to conduct a home Bible study, how to teach children who are part of the house church gathering, the essentials of prayer, etc., and will probably serve well those who view worship as primarily a teaching ministry rather than a liturgical and sacramental encounter with God.

The House Church Book: Rediscovering the Dynamic, Organic, Relational, Viral Community Jesus Started by Wolfgang Simson. This is the one book cited by the majority of recent authors in the house church movement. Simson doesn't so much present a methodology

for planting and facilitating a house church as much as he presents the theology, philosophy, and rationale behind the house church. As such, it stands as the foundational bedrock to which many other house church leaders appeal in the course of their own writing. He has become, for lack of a better word, the movement's current polestar in all things 'house church.'

Simson begins with a history of the house church, tracing its progress from the New Testament up to the present, each step of the way demonstrating how it alone stood as the 'corrective' against the religious deviations of the state or institutional church. The historical material helped to provide an outline for Chapter Five of this thesis. This was followed by how the house church is best served with a true operation of the five-fold ministry of Ephesians. Unfortunately, Simson's anti-traditional, anti-clerical bias undermined any thoughtful use of this book except as noted above.

Finding Organic Church: A Comprehensive Guide to Starting and Sustaining Authentic Christian Communities by Frank Viola. As the title suggests, Viola's book is theological, theoretical, practical, and inspirational. But from the outset he places himself against traditional, liturgical, and sacramental expressions of Christian faith and practice. The book is divided into four sections dealing with (1) the biblical principles for church planting, (2) the questions that surround the house church movement, (3) a practical section covering all the aspects of planting and facilitating a house church, and (4) how to maintain the health of house churches and how to diagnose the sicknesses that can inflict house churches. In those practical matters held in common with Anglican house churches, the book was quite insightful, but when it came to issues of worship liturgy and the role of priests, his book stood in stark contrast to the major portions of this thesis.

Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity by Frank Viola. This book was written by Viola a year before the previous book and deals with all the underlying principles that support and validate the existence of the organic church. The term ‘organic church’ is brought into focus as that move of God which raises up a church through the work of the people in small gatherings (a bottom-up approach) as a corrective to and reaction against the church that is established and run under the hierarchical leadership of a large and institutional denomination (a top-down approach). It’s the organic church, he contends, that most mirrors the intent and nature of the New Testament church and thus stands as a more authentic expression of Christianity today than traditional churches.

Because it is a theoretical book which attempts to establish the principles and theology behind organic churches, he was careful to provide excellent documentation and endnotes. These alone proved invaluable as sources for additional reference material. And while he still presented an air of antagonism toward traditional and liturgical worship, his understanding of the principles behind small church gatherings—particularly surrounding the need of unity and intimacy within the Body of Christ—found their way into this thesis.

Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader by Rad Zdero. *Nexus* is a compilation of 62 chapter-length articles edited by Canadian house church expert Rad Zdero. Marshalling the talents of 40 other leading experts in the house church movement, he produced a work of incredible scope with each writer contributing one or more chapters according to their particular specialty. Sadly, the entire book takes on a tone of combativeness regarding any flavor of Christianity not represented by the house church movement. Nevertheless, several chapters in the book proved invaluable toward this study. Among them were the chapters dealing with the ecclesiological and missional significance of the early house churches, a survey of the New

Testament house churches, the history of house churches and small groups down through the centuries, the different ways house churches observe the Lord's Supper, the issue of financial support for house church leaders, house churches as a tool for evangelism and missions, and the 'reeducation' a traditional pastor needs in order to be a house church leader. In fact, of all the citations made in this thesis, more came from Zdero's book than from any other source. And since this book sports a Who's Who list of authors in the global house church movement, any student of the movement would do well to begin here.

THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

The following theses and dissertations that have also been consulted in the writing of this study and are representative of the academic papers available to the researcher:

"Christian Home Groups: An Ethnographic Study of 21st Century Christians and Their Built Environments." 2011 Master's thesis (MFA) by Noelani T. Mumm, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL. This study is an exploration of how Christian worship and fellowship are accommodated in the private home and how the home itself is an extension of koinonia. She traces the evolution of the church meeting place from the private home, to the catacombs, the *domus ecclesiae* (homes architecturally adapted to serve as churches, the *aula ecclesiae* (homes built with the primary function of serving as churches), the basilica (Byzantine and Romanesque), the Gothic cathedral, and finally the architectural counter-revolution which resulted in the Puritan meeting house, the church camp tabernacle, and even the revival tent. In the midst of this history, however, stood the continuous testimony of the house church, century after century.

Mumm's emphasis throughout her thesis is the role of architecture and interior design and how these disciplines fostered the life of the church in domestic settings. She does an

excellent job of tracking her topic from start to finish. Yet, like the other sources reviewed, her thesis only revealed the continuing scarcity of information that directly applies to liturgical, priestly house churches.

“Organic Ministry: Early Church Practices of Mentoring and Mission.” 2008 Master’s thesis (MTS) by Donald J. K. Corry, McMaster Divinity College, Ontario, Canada. According to Corry, organic ministry describes the context of life-to-life mentoring that is found in the biblical tradition of family communities, house churches, and mission teams. Ministry, then, is reflected in the Church’s understanding of *familia Dei* (Family of God) and *missio Dei* (Mission of God); each one calling for a communion and fellowship of intimacy that duplicates God’s own longing for His children. The house church also serves as the incubator and launching pad for the spread of the spread of the Gospel and the reconciliation of its members to the love and compassion of God. Corry’s focus on the house church as a part of God’s mission and church planting strategy supports different aspects of this thesis. As such it corroborated this writer’s emphasis that Anglican house churches can serve as an evangelistic tool within their parent diocese.

“Transforming both the Gifts and the People: Eucharistic Presence.” 2007 Master’s thesis (MA) by William Griffiths, School of Theology at College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University, Collegeville, MN. According to Griffiths, Christians across a wide spectrum of tradition, belief, and liturgical practice acknowledge that the Eucharistic meal is a participation in the Body and Blood of Christ; the Real Presence fixed on the altar through the mystery of sacramental grace. In particular, a number of Protestant denominations are rediscovering this ancient, Patristic understanding of the Early Church. Griffith’s thesis tackles this profound mystery of the Church in three ‘loose’ areas of inquiry: (1) current official teaching on the Eucharistic Presence of Christ and its implications for contemporary theology, (2) a review of

Western Eucharistic history, and (3) and the impact of Reformation theologians on a redefining of the mystery of the sacrament. Griffith's high view of the Eucharist corroborated those parts of this thesis that examined the nature of the Eucharist with particular reference to the action of the Holy Spirit during the prayer of *epiclesis* and the sacramental mystery of *anamnesis*, both of which are addressed in Chapter Three.

“One Glad River: The History, Theology, and Practice of Convergence Worship.” 2011 Doctoral dissertation (ThD) by Alan L. Andraeas, Biblical Life College and Seminary, Marshfield, MO. “One Glad River” is a previous doctoral dissertation by this writer and traces the three broad streams of Christian worship (liturgical/sacramental, evangelical, charismatic) back to the Early Church and how the first believers worshipped in the fullness of all three. In other words, the first generation of believers were equally liturgical (via their Jewish ritual roots fulfilled in Christ), evangelical (via their commission to teach and make disciples), and charismatic (via the outpouring and infilling the Holy Spirit in gifts, signs, and wonders).

In this dissertation, Andraeas traces how the seeds of these three streams flowed as a single river through the worship history of Israel—the liturgical and sacrificial ministry of the Tabernacle, the teaching ministry of the priests and Levites (and eventually the rabbis), and the Spirit-empowered ministry of the prophets—and how this river continued through the Early Church as the normative expression of authentic worship. He then examines how these streams split from one another over the centuries and analyzes the convergence worship movement which seeks to reunite these streams back into a single expression of authentic worship. The historical portion of Andraeas' dissertation—particularly that which concerned Jewish Tabernacle and Temple worship—helped to provide a skeletal outline for Chapter Three of this thesis.

Chapter 3.

Biblical Liturgy: A Worship Theology

Doing liturgy and understanding the biblical foundations for liturgy are two very different things. It is primarily because of this reality that Chapter Three establishes the foundation for Biblical Liturgy. It's not because Anglicans need to be convinced of liturgical worship—Anglicans 'do' liturgy very well. Indeed, many Anglo-Catholics grow up in the Church knowing nothing but liturgical worship and they accept it as a given on the basis of tradition. And, young Anglicans called to seminary in pursuit of Holy Orders often sit in classes on the liturgics of structured worship and the rituals/rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer* without ever learning *why* the liturgy is biblically valid.

If Scripture demonstrates a sound theology for worship liturgy, then liturgical order would be the prescriptive norm for approaching God whether one attends an Anglican cathedral or an Anglican house church. This study, therefore, will attempt to demonstrate a clear biblical proof for the 'why' of liturgy in a domestic setting. Otherwise liturgical worship is merely an option rather than the bedrock of our corporate assent to the throne of God.

Hippolytus was a bishop in Rome at the turn of the third century. In one of his Eucharistic prayers, Bishop Hippolytus says,

Having in memory, therefore, His death and resurrection, we offer to Thee the bread and the cup, yielding Thee thanks, because Thou hast counted us worthy to stand before thee *and to minister to Thee* [emphasis added].¹

This prayer testifies to God that our worship is first and foremost a ministry to *Him* more than an avenue of blessing for us. More importantly, the belief that God loves to be worshipped—and

¹ Robert E. Webber, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals are Attracted to the Liturgical Church* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1985), 40.

that we were created for such a purpose²—clearly dominates the theology of the Ancient Church via the unshakable conviction that the design of worship had its origins in the eternal councils of God.³

This ‘precondition’ of worship, that it is God’s design, must first be understood by examining those texts which demonstrate the failure of humanly devised patterns of worship. This will be followed by a review of how God determined, favors, and enters into His patterns for worship, and how that worship draws us to the throne of heaven.

The Failure of Human Patterns

An *a priori* condition governs the nature and essence of true worship; specifically, that man cannot simply *devise* a method of worship apart from what God has eternally chosen worship to be. Otherwise, as Cardinal Ratzinger (later, Pope Benedict XVI) notes, “man is clutching empty space.”⁴ For this reason the humble starting point of all human worship on this side of heaven must be found in Moses’ confession to Pharaoh, “[W]e ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the Lord” (Exodus 10:26, NASB)—a profound declaration that will be addressed in greater detail below.

Without a revelation from God—without some form of divine instruction—man is consigned to erect strange altars to “the unknown god” (cf., Acts 17:23). Only God alone can determine how He wants to be approached. Conversely, those forms, patterns, sounds, and words that flow from human imagination or creativity, regardless of how much artistry adorns them or

² Per the first question and answer of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*: “What is the chief end of man?...to glorify God.”

³ Webber, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, 40.

⁴ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000), 21.

how much they satiate our needs, are merely a cry in the dark. What the Church needs, instead, is a respect for worship's "fundamental unspontaneity and pre-existing identity [which alone] can give us what we hope for: the feast in which the great reality comes to us that we ourselves do not manufacture but receive as a gift."⁵

Thomas Howard similarly says, "The worship of the Church is an act—a most ancient and noble mystery—and almost nothing is gained by endlessly updating it, streamlining it, personalizing it, and altering it."⁶ In other words, man's failure is found in contrived worship.

The world would have us believe that radical changes in society, driven by modern technology and philosophy, must, by necessity, be mirrored with comparable changes in worship even if it draws worship further away from spirit and truth. A.W. Tozer puts it this way:

Religion today is not transforming people; rather it is being transformed by people. It is not raising the moral level of society; it is descending to society's own level, and congratulating itself that it has scored a victory because society is smilingly accepting its surrender.⁷

This failure of humanly engineered worship is not a recent phenomenon. Its roots are as old as mankind itself, going back to Cain and Abel. The following survey of scriptural examples demonstrate that what man chooses to offer God is not always what God deserves or desires.

Cain and Abel

Before we can examine what worship is not, let us briefly consider what Old Testament worship was intended to be. C.F. Keil suggests:

⁵ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 168.

⁶ Thomas Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough: Worship of God in Liturgy and Sacrament* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1984), 53.

⁷ No primary source is given for this quote, but it is cited in many Tozer quote anthologies, including: www.worldofquotes.com/author/A.-W.-Tozer/1/; cqod.gospelcom.net/cqod9708.htm; and fbclawrence.org/tozer.html.

To form an accurate conception of the idea which lies at the foundation of all sacrificial worship, we must bear in mind that the first sacrifices were offered after the fall, and therefore presupposed the spiritual separation of man from God, and were designed to satisfy the need of the heart for fellowship with God.⁸

In the Bible's first recorded act of worship, then, Cain and Abel sought this fellowship by bringing offerings to the Lord from the increase of their labor. As there was yet no sacrificial code or ritual, these two brothers laid those things at God's feet which had prospered under their care. On the surface this seems to be an acceptable offering from the two brothers. And since grain offerings and animal sacrifices will both eventually be required under the Law of Moses, why does God display such disparity in His reception of these gifts?

There seems to be some type of knowledge already in place regarding divine worship and its significance—either an innate understanding within Cain and Abel, or taught to them by Adam as he was instructed by God.⁹ There also appears to be at least a rudimentary sacrificial schedule; i.e., “at the end of days” (Genesis 4:3) or as a conclusion to the seasonal harvest.¹⁰ The fact that they both brought gifts to the Lord demonstrates this knowledge and their desire to be accounted worthy of God's future care and blessing. And yet only one offering was found to be acceptable.

Ephrem the Syrian, whose writings flourished between 363 and 373 AD, believed it was a matter of discernment not only in the quality of what was offered but also the manner in which it was offered. In his commentary on Genesis, Ephrem writes:

⁸ C.F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, vol. 1 of *Keil and Delitzsch—Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (1866; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), 69.

⁹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, vol. 1 of *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. John King (1880; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 192-193.

¹⁰ Roland K. Harrison, “Cain” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 1:571.

Abel was very discerning in his choice of offerings, whereas Cain showed no such discernment. Abel selected and offered the choicest of his firstborn and of his fat ones, while Cain either offered young grains or certain fruits that are found at the same time as the young grains. Even if his offering had been smaller than that of his brother, it would have been as acceptable as the offering of his brother, had he not brought it with such carelessness. They made their offerings alternately; one offered a lamb of his flock, the other the fruits of the earth. But because Cain had taken such little regard for the first offering that he offered, God refused to accept it in order to teach Cain how he was to make an offering.¹¹

This thought accords with other scholars who view Hebrews 11:4—“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, . . .”—as a glimpse into Cain’s improper spiritual motivation, thus creating the grounds for the rejection of his offering. Well-doing in this case consisted not so much in the outward gift (Genesis 4:7) but in the right state of heart and mind.¹²

Yet another reason might be that Cain offered produce from his surplus rather than the firstfruits of his crop. Scripture is careful to note that Abel’s offering was drawn from the firstborn of his flocks with their choicest fat portions; a clear indication that he gave the choicest parts to God before taking anything for himself.¹³

In the end, the failure of Cain’s worship might be as simple as the fact that *he* decided what to give God rather than seeking what *God* desired. The Lord’s conversation with Cain in verses 6-7 and later in verses 9-15 reveals that a dynamic, verbal communication was still a

¹¹ Andrew Louth, ed., *Genesis 1-11*, vol. 1 (OT) of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 104.

¹² Roland K. Harrison, “Abel” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 1:4. The author also notes that, linguistically, the use of *diélēs* in the LXX of Genesis 4:7 points to Cain’s offense as being a ritual one, apparently not offering his gift in a proper manner.

¹³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, vol. 1 of *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R.K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 223.

regular reality between God and His antediluvian children. How different things might have been had Cain sought the Lord for specific direction prior to making his offering!

Even more, what if Cain heard from the Lord, as perhaps Abel did, but failed to obey God's direction because of recalcitrant evil in his heart (cf., 1 John 3:12)? While this is conjecture, it's not beyond reason. For with the exception of the Bible's testimony of Abel's faith in Hebrews 11:4, Scripture itself is silent on the matter of these two brothers.¹⁴ Otherwise, this account clearly establishes the fact that there are modes and manners of worship that God accepts and those He rejects. Perhaps God even set the precedent by shedding blood in order to obtain skins for Adam and Eve because, while the fig leaves performed the same task, He had no 'respect' for their aprons. Audience with God requires blood!

Aaron and the Golden Calf

The debacle of Aaron and the golden calf is one of the most poignant examples we have in Scripture of how our self-determined execution of worship falls woefully short of God's expectations. In fact, worship designed to satisfy human desire is so repugnant to God that such activity calls for His judgment. Scripture as a whole testifies that worship is far from "doing what you please."

What the children of Israel did at the base of Mount Sinai was not a wholesale, intentional turn away from God in order to serve the neighboring heathen gods. Far from it! The people only meant to demonstrate their fidelity to the God of their fathers who led them out of Egypt. It all went amiss, however, when they attempted to represent His glory and power by

¹⁴ The Apocryphal Old Testament may add a little more insight. In Wisdom [or Wisdom of Solomon] 10:3 where the Second Member of the Trinity is personified as Wisdom (cf., Proverbs 8), Cain is described as having chosen to abandon the guiding hand of Wisdom in favor of his own desires and motives, i.e., unrighteousness and anger.

tooling the image of a bull calf. Everything was the best they could make it. The idol was cast from the finest golden wealth of their former captors; an altar was built for the offerings and sacrifices; there was a gathering for liturgical action, prayers, music, and dance. There was even a sacred feast (Exodus 32:5-8). But the final result was a *devolution* of authentic worship into pagan idolatry, complicated even further through syncretism (using Egyptian religious symbols familiar to them from their captivity) and Aaron's own blame shifting, lies, and lack of religious leadership (Genesis 32:21-24).

The calf, while idolatrous in itself, symbolized an even greater violation: the people rejected God's own revelation that He was an invisible spirit. They chose, instead, to make Him visible in order to see Him and understand Him.¹⁵ It was a grievous result as they sought to draw God down to earth. They cast Him into the kind of god they wanted which, in turn, positioned them above the Lord as pseudo-god creators.¹⁶

Ratzinger views the golden calf narrative as a cogent warning that any kind of self-initiated, self-determined, or self-gratifying worship is nothing more than "apostasy in sacral disguise."¹⁷ Sadly, like the "bitter root" of Hebrews 12:15, this penchant for the worship of God plus XYZ comes back to plague Israel time and again, culminating in Ezekiel's vision of the "detestable practices" of the Jews taking place even within the inner chambers of the Temple itself (Ezekiel 8:1-18).

¹⁵ John Peter Lange, *Exodus*, vol. 1 of *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Charles M. Mead (1876; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 132.

¹⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Exodus*, vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 478.

¹⁷ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 23.

Aaron's Sons and Their Strange Fire

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron and first priests of the Lord (cf., Exodus 28:1), served God before the altar of the wilderness Tabernacle. They knew the sacrifices required by God. The instructions given to them by Moses were explicit down to the smallest detail. But when they tried to offer a sacrifice not sanctioned by the command of God, He struck them dead (Leviticus 10:1).

Perhaps they were trying to look for more transcendence or new liturgical innovation by putting their own personal touch on the prescribed rubrics. Or perhaps they were looking for more immanence by trying to bring God down to themselves. Or perhaps they believed they could produce an even *better* incense than the formula prescribed by God. Cyprian (248-258), martyred bishop of Carthage, reflects, “These examples, you will see, are being followed wherever the tradition which comes from God is despised by lovers of strange doctrine and replaced by teaching of merely human authority.”¹⁸

In any event, they produced or brought forth (Hebrew, *qarab*) strange, unauthorized, foreign, alien, and profane (Hebrew, *zuwr*) smoking incense before the face of the Lord—perhaps even into the Holiest of Holies itself which only Aaron was authorized to enter.¹⁹ No matter the reason, they convinced themselves that their offering would be fully accepted by the Lord. As Horton states, “They presumed to serve God in a way that they found ‘worshipful’, but they were unwilling to regard God’s commanded [patterns of] worship as sufficient.”²⁰ As the

¹⁸ Joseph T. Lienhard, ed., *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 3 (O.T.) of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 175.

¹⁹ Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, vol. 3 of *The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 59.

²⁰ Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 144.

new leaders of Israel's worship, they presumed their additions or modifications to God's patterns would be something pleasing to Him so long as their hearts were in the right place.²¹ How wrong they were—and how tragic the results! God struck them dead.

Their father, Aaron, carried that anguish as a heavy weight in his heart, perhaps even believing that he was partly to blame through his own accommodation of the peoples' earlier request to provide them with an object of worship; the golden calf. He set the tone for his sons, reinterpreting God's proscriptions against incorrect worship in order to suit human ends. Moses, quoting God, reminded Aaron once more of the solemn duty that falls upon all of God's children to worship Him according to His dictates: "By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy,..." (Leviticus 10:3, NASB).

Philistines Return the Captured Ark

One of the more humorous though tragically revealing accounts of human worship-gone-amok is the story of the Ark's captivity by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 5-6. The story actually begins in chapter 4 with the capture of the Ark, the decimation of the armies of Israel, the death of Eli and his sons, and the birth of Ichabod—a glaring portent that the glory of the Lord had departed His people.

With the Ark captured as a war prize, the Philistines carry it back to the temple of Dagon in Ashdod where it is deposited before their god. For two consecutive mornings the priests of Dagon would arrive in the temple to find the statue of their god cast down before the Ark, the second time with considerable damage. At the same time the inhabitants of Ashdod were afflicted with tumors, or what early Scripture translators called 'emerods.' The Ark was quickly

²¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, vol. 3 in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R.K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 153.

spirited off to the Philistine city of Gath where the same punishment fell upon its citizens. The ark was then shipped off to Ekron with the same tragic results.

Scholars are mixed in their interpretation of what these tumors really were. Throughout chapters 5 and 6 the Authorized Version renders the Hebrew *‘ōpel*²² (and the Hebrew *ℓ’hôr*²³ used twice more in chapter 6) are variously rendered as tumors, boils, eruptions, and hemorrhoids; a heavy curse from God settling on the anus or vulva.²⁴ Some scholars suggest that the Philistines were actually afflicted with an epidemic of the bubonic plague, and that the ‘emerods’ were the swollen lymph glands in the groin so characteristic of this disease and often transmitted by rodents infested with the fleas which carry this plague.²⁵

After seven months of torment under the heavy hand of the Lord, the priests and diviners finally decided that the Ark should be returned to Israel and that it should be accompanied with an act of worship—a guilt or trespass offering to appease the God of Israel (1Samuel 6:3-5). What would this act of worship consist of? They decided to make five golden replicas of the tumors along with five golden replicas of the mice that accompanied the plague in the last city. The number five was to represent the pentapolis of Philistia: Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron (1 Samuel 6:17).

Ancient protocol demanded that no god be approached without a gift of some kind; often a sacrifice but sometimes an object of value (cf., 2 Kings 12:16). Thus the need for these gifts to accompany the Ark on its journey back to Israel. In addition, the Philistines also believed that by

²² R. Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 1:348.

²³ Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, 2:686.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ W.T. Purkiser, *I and II Samuel*, vol. 2 in *Beacon Bible Commentary*, ed. A.F. Harper, W.M. Greathouse, Ralph Earle, and W.T. Purkiser (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), 227.

sending the golden offerings out of the land, the physical plague of tumors and mice would depart as well.²⁶ Allen sums this up as well, saying, “These representations of their plagues were thought by pagan peoples to bring healing from the thing represented. Thus by the pagan notion of sympathetic magic they hoped to rid themselves of the creator’s plagues.”²⁷

However, once the research into the probable types and causes of the disease is set aside, we’re still left with the fact that the Philistines tried to appease God with an act of worship that brought before Him five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice. It’s reasonable to ascertain, then, that without any regard for what God has established as right acts of worship, the efforts of man are always left lacking no matter how good the intention. As Orthodox scholar Patrick Reardon observes,

Without this revelation there is certainly a great deal of guessing in religion, a lot of going with hunches, a considerable amount of hit and miss, with no end of hedging one’s bets. Left to their own religious devices, men must ‘wing it.’ They are obliged to ‘give it their best shot,’ which is usually just a shot in the dark. Apart from the ‘true light’ human beings are forced to make it up as they go along....So what do they do, these Philistines who are making up their religion as they go along? That’s right. They make little golden hemorrhoids and put them in the Ark of the Covenant. You see, it finally comes down to something like this. If you’re really on your own in religion, if you have no choice but to make it up as you go along, you end up (so to speak) offering Almighty God little golden images of your hemorrhoids. What a commentary on man-made religion.²⁸

²⁶ Ronald F. Youngblood, *1 Samuel*, vol. 3 in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 604.

²⁷ Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, 2:686. See also Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Genesis—Esther*, vol. 1 (Part 2) in *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (1868, repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 148.

²⁸ Patrick Henry Reardon, “Religion from the Bottom Up,” *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*, 14, no 1 (2001): 6-7.

Lions in the Land

We find in 2 Kings 17 one of the saddest and most damning chapters of Scripture. Verses 1-23 contain a complete accounting of Israel's failure to remain holy and, as a result, their deportation into Assyrian captivity. God finally ended Israel's sin (brought to a head under King Hoshea's nine-year reign) through the agency of King Shalmaneser. The breaking point in God's decision over Israel's fate is best summed up in 2 Kings 17:15 where the historian—through careful documentation of the nation's constant reliance on worthless idols—finally recorded how even the people “themselves became worthless.” Of Israel's spiritual obduracy in spite of their numerous warnings, Patterson and Austel note,

Most basic of all, they had not only denied God's covenant with them, but had refused the God of the covenant, rejecting his rightful sovereignty over them. The inevitable result was that Israel aroused God's righteous wrath.²⁹

This scathing summary is followed by an equally disturbing record of the Assyrian settlers who came in to occupy the now vacant cities of the Northern Kingdom. As the reoccupation of the land took place, King Shalmaneser sent in settlers from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim (2 Kings 17:24). And with them came their pagan religions and practices (29-31).³⁰

God's jealousy (not only for His people but also for His land) was quickly enflamed by this renewed desecration. What was His remedy? Lions. He sent prides of lions among the occupation settlers, killing some and certainly frightening many others (2 Kings 17:25).

Patterson and Austel continue:

²⁹ Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, *1,2 Kings*, vol. 4 in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1988), 249.

³⁰ For a most scholarly and thorough discussion on the foreign gods listed in these verses, the reader is directed to Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

Although God had sent his people into exile because of their failure to live up to the stipulations of the covenant with God, he would not leave the land without any witness to himself. The lions were a reminder of the broken covenant and of God's claim on the land (Lev 18:24-30).³¹

News of this soon made its way back to King Shalmaneser: "The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off, because the people do not know what he requires (2 Kings 17:26)." *The people do not know what he requires.* This admission is made twice in their brief report making it pertinent for this discussion. What the occupation settlers failed to take into account was the *mishpat* of God; the correct and formal customs, ceremonies, forms, manners, and ordinances of God's worship.³² In other words, their worship was unsatisfactory to the Lord. King Shalmaneser's remedy was to immediately dispatch one of the captive Jewish priests (of the golden calf cult) back to Samaria in order to teach them how to rightly worship God (2 Kings 17:28).

The distressing part of the whole narrative is that while this unnamed priest instructed the settlers in the things of Yahweh, they also continued to practice their own imported, regional religions, thus compounding their awaiting judgment with the additional wickedness of syncretism (2 Kings 17:33,40-41). In the end they proved to be just as far from God as the Jews whom He deported for the same offense.³³ Additionally, inasmuch as the lions acted as a 'cleanser' of the land from improper worship, how much more so does this point to the future

³¹ Patterson and Austel, *1, 2 Kings*, 251.

³² Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 3:1392-1399. See also R. Laird Harris, *TWOT*, 2:2444.

³³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 3:302-303.

Lion of Judah who would one day cleanse the Temple courtyard from the improper worship practices found there (cf., Matthew 21:12-14; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47; John 2:13-16)?

The Blessing of Heavenly Patterns

God-sanctioned liturgy is not something that emerges from the creative minds of church musicians or worship planning committees. Rather, it is God's point of entry into the world (Numbers 28 as an example wherein God defines the liturgical worship which He demands and accepts; cf., 1 Chronicles 23:31 and 24:19). The more our clergy and congregations live in surrender to God's chosen method for His 'descent', the more fresh, new, true, and personal the liturgy will be. Why? Authentic liturgy is the biblical and customary place of God's habitation (Exodus 29:44-45 links God's dwelling to matters of liturgical context and agency; cf., Exodus 25:8). Worship cannot achieve this through trite experiments with words and forms contextualized for every perceived whim, "but through a courageous entry into the great reality [of heaven] that, through the rite, is always ahead of us and can never quite be overtaken."³⁴

Did the Church stumble onto this truth? By no means! God's divinely ordered forms are as ancient as Israel itself, and from them the Church must take its cue. Since Israel, like all of mankind, was sinful, God insisted that His people could only approach Him in the way He Himself prescribed and in the manner He alone appointed. According to Edersheim, "Direct choice and appointment by God were the conditions alike of the priesthood, of sacrifices, feasts, and of every detail of service."³⁵

³⁴ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 168-169.

³⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 57.

Liturgy Begins in Heaven

The Bible reveals many instances of the drama of heavenly adoration as it unfolds before the eternal throne of God. Likewise, our earthly worship must find itself conjoined with the perfect worship of heaven. And to know what God expects, we must begin with His revelation to the children of Israel concerning the Tabernacle, its construction, and the manner of worship that was to take place within it. After all, the Tabernacle, designed by God to reflect the true and eternal worship of heaven, ultimately forms the foundation for all temporal worship whether in a church or a living room. Strong reminds us just how remarkable the wilderness Tabernacle was. Without peer, it was the first and only “immediately devised and directly authorized [structure] by the Almighty Himself as His place of special worship for His chosen people.”³⁶

That is not all. Other examples of heavenly worship also lend valuable data to complement our understanding of what God desires. Isaiah 6 chronicles the prophet’s unexpected opportunity to stand in heaven and experience the overwhelming spectacle of celestial worship. He was an eyewitness of the seraphim who were praising God, singing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3). He documents how one of the seraphim flew to him with a live coal taken from the altar of heaven and touched it to his mouth, taking away his uncleanness and sin (by which many of the Early Church Fathers understood to mean a type or foreshadowing of the Eucharist).³⁷

³⁶ James Strong, *The Tabernacle of Israel: Its Structure and Symbolism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1987), 7.

³⁷ Benjamin D. Williams and Harold B. Anstall, *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1990), 89.

Hustad takes this account from Isaiah 6 and frames it in light of the spiritual experiences of worship that are equally found in the New Testament, thus extracting what he believes to be the essential patterns of full worship. These include:

- Verses 1-2: Entrance and encounter with God.
- Verse 3: Praise of God.
- Verses 4-5: Confession of sins.
- Verses 6-7: Forgiveness and cleansing.
- Verses 8-10: God's Word and our response.
- Verses 11-13: Our petition for help.³⁸

Daniel's vision of creation's throne room (7:9-14) shares a remarkably similar pattern with that of Isaiah's encounter.

The New Testament offers its own account of heavenly worship. In Revelation 4-5, John experienced the expanses of eternal worship similar to Isaiah's and Daniel's. He witnessed firsthand the drama and splendor of worship before the throne of God. In his description we read of the 24 elders bowing before the throne. We see angelic beings praising God and saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come" (Revelation 4:8). And we see thousands upon thousands of angels worshipping the Lamb who was slain (Revelation 5:11-12) along with "every created thing which is in the heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them," yielding perfect and eternal homage to Him (Revelation 5:13). And finally we see a multitude of incalculable size with white robes and palm branches joined by the angels, and the elders, and the four living creatures all together worshipping God and the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-12). This is the essence of heavenly liturgy!

³⁸ Donald P. Hustad, *True Worship: Reclaiming the Wonder & Majesty* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 1998), 228-229.

These passages are all built around the inescapable context of beautiful, rich, ordered, and majestic worship; the worship of God by all of His creation. This becomes our basic understanding for a truly orthodox approach to worship, namely that it is the privilege and the charge of every person to bless God, giving thanks to the Holy Trinity for both creation and mercy. The only thing mankind—more specifically, the Church—must do is decide to agree with the witness and patterns of scriptural worship whether we fully understand them—or not.³⁹

Antecedents of Authentic Worship Prior to the Tabernacle

Worship prior to God's pattern for the Tabernacle should not be viewed as a nascent prototype of that worship which finally matured into the full Temple ritual of Jesus' day. The worship of God is not open to evolutionary changes. Instead, as Ratzinger points out, "That is why the Church Fathers described the various stages of fulfillment, not just as a contrast between Old and New Testaments, but as the three steps of shadow, image, and reality."⁴⁰ Each step accurately portrayed, within its proper ability, God's non-negotiable patterns for the worship of Himself. A review of these instances will demonstrate just how consistent the patterns and elements of authentic worship have been since the very beginning.

Noah and the Mountainside Altar

In one sense, our temporal worship⁴¹ began as early as Adam and Eve's confession to God and His sacrifice of an animal to produce a covering for their sin and nakedness (Genesis

³⁹ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 90.

⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 54.

⁴¹ Cosmologically speaking, God was being worshiped by the host of heaven even prior to the creation of the earth (cf., Job 38:6-7; Nehemiah 9:6).

3:8-21). We also noted earlier how God reacted to the gifts brought to Him by Cain and Abel when they presented Him with the fruit of their labor (Genesis 4:1-5). And Scripture tells us that during the lifetime of Seth's son Enosh, mankind began to call upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26). But the first recorded construction of an altar to God and the subsequent offering of burnt sacrifices belongs to the story of Noah in Genesis 8, almost one thousand years after God breathed life into the lungs of Adam. As Keil and Delitzsch note:

The sons of Adam had built no altar for their offerings, because God was still present on the earth in paradise, so that they could turn their offerings and hearts towards that abode. But with the flood God had swept paradise away, withdrawn the place of His presence, and set up His throne in heaven, from which He would henceforth reveal Himself to men (cf. ch. 9:5,7)....therefore, the hearts of the pious had to be turned towards heaven, and their offerings and prayers needed to ascend on high if they were to reach the throne of God.⁴²

Up to this point Noah and God had been in regular communication with each other. But now, as a result of his deliverance from the flood, Noah moves from communication to adoration and obeisance. This speaks of the preeminent place of worship that should occupy the heart of mankind.

Before planting seed, before scouting around the new location where the ark came to rest, before building shelter, before any other activity, Noah stepped out onto the mud-covered mountainside of Ararat and built an altar to the Lord. According to Sarna:

His act of worship not only expresses gratitude for the safe deliverance of the ark with its living cargo, but also probably has an expiatory function. Now that the earth has been purged of its evil, *sacrifice symbolizes the restoration of harmony between God and humanity* [emphasis added].⁴³

And harmony was indeed restored. For with the aroma of this offering came God's atonement, forgiveness, blessing, and covenant promise—the rainbow which forever remains

⁴² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1:95.

⁴³ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, 1:59.

emblazoned over His throne (cf., Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3, 10:1). Thus not only are we reminded that God-pleasing worship has a fixed place in eternity, but that Noah's altar was also the "seed-corn as well as the sign of the future theocracy and the future church."⁴⁴

Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac

Abraham built several altars to God throughout his life. Some were in response to special promises. Others recognized those blessings he received from the Lord. Still others were erected as a means to petition God's favor (e.g., Genesis 12:7-8; 13:8). Scripture, however, gives no specifics about what he actually did with these altars except for the fact that he built them. Nowhere are they referenced in connection with sacrifices and burnt offerings, perhaps serving instead as places of prayer and memorial dedication much like the stones that Jacob would later set up and anoint with oil (e.g., Genesis 28:18; 35:14); ways to simply 'mark' significant events. But erecting an altar and entering into worship are two very different things. When Abraham was leading Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him, he was preparing to *worship* God.

Translated from the Hebrew *shâchâh*, this account marks the first English appearance of our word 'worship' in Scripture when Abraham tells his servants, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will *worship* and return to you [emphasis added]" (Genesis 22:5, NASB). As soon as Abraham finished giving these instructions, he and Isaac climbed the remaining distance to the place designated by God, carrying the wood, the fire, and the knife. Sacrifice (i.e., the spilling of blood) was clearly intended to be the chief component of this act of worship. God required it. The servants understood it. Isaac understood it. In fact, Isaac even asks his father about the strangely absent animal for the sacrifice.

⁴⁴ John Peter Lange, *Genesis*, vol. 1 of *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Tayler Lewis and A. Gosman (1868; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 329.

Examining this initial appearance of worship in Scripture through what is sometimes referred to as the “Law of First Usage” we find several critical elements that continue to shape and clarify for us what God requires of His children.

- Worship involves a God-attuned heart: “And he said, ‘Here I am’” (22:1).
- Worship involves a God-ordained gift: “Take now your son, your only son whom you love,...” (22:2a).
- Worship occurs within a God-appointed context: “...go to the land of Moriah...[to] one of the mountains of which I will tell you” (22:2b,d).
- Worship unfolds in God-directed activity: “...and offer him there as a burnt offering...” (22:2c).

While countless books have been written about the Christological foreshadowing wrapped up in the sacrifice of Isaac, more to the point is the fact that God bade Abraham to surrender his very best; his hope, his future, his tie to the covenant promise—his son. We could easily conclude, then, that worship which does not involve sacrifice (i.e., the Eucharist in the Christian tradition evidenced by the substitutionary ram in verse 13) is not full worship. Even more, worship that does not involve the very best that we possess is equally not worship.

There is much the Church has abrogated by reducing the importance of this first appearance of worship in the Bible. It lays the foundation for all future interpretation and understanding of worship throughout the remainder of Scripture, tradition, and practice. We must remember, however, that this is not the first time the Hebrew *shâchâh* is used in Scripture. It appears for the first time in Genesis 18 when the LORD and His companions visit Abraham. As they approached his tent, Abraham ran to meet them and “bowed himself to the earth” (Genesis 18:2). This is certainly descriptive of its primitive root meaning—to bow down or pay homage.⁴⁵ Yet even here we find those sacrificial elements of worship, particularly Abraham’s preparation

⁴⁵ Francis Brown, “7812- shâchâh” in *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 1005.

of a “choice calf” for presentation to his heavenly visitors. Again, worship is not worship if it fails to include the best blood-sacrifice that we can give in surrender to God.

The Exodus

The flight of Israel from Egypt documents how the children of Jacob came into their own as a nation with territory, secure borders, and freedom. Woven throughout the account, however, is a more profound narrative of how Israel came to be the people of God.

This goal was not so much the people’s desire but that of God Himself. Yes, the children of Israel grumbled under their taskmasters, but it was God who sent word to Pharaoh through Moses, saying, “Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness” (Exodus 7:16). This summons is repeated to Pharaoh four more times with slight variations and additions on each occasion (cf., Exodus 8:1; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3).

At first Pharaoh allows the Hebrews to make their sacrifices within the borders of Egypt (Exodus 8:25) but Moses insists that they can only perform proper worship according to God’s command out in the wilderness (Exodus 8:27). As Moses and Pharaoh parley back and forth, each verbal confrontation brings into greater focus the exact nature of what God wants: men, women, children, livestock, location, sacrifice. In the end, God’s requirements for worship pushed far beyond what was convenient, what was politically feasible, or even what was culturally normative.⁴⁶

Surprisingly, the goal in all of this is not the Promised Land but worship itself; worship spelled out according to God’s rule and measure. Israel is not being called out of Egypt simply to be a nation like the other nations. Instead it is being summoned to perform the service of God.

⁴⁶ The requirement for having the women and children participate in worship was wholly foreign to the religious culture of Egypt where the current practice held that only men were the active participants in worship.

And while the end result appears to be the Promised Land—the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham—it is a land given to Israel by the hand of God in order to be a place for His true worship. Cardinal Ratzinger comments:

Mere possession of the land, mere national autonomy, would reduce Israel to the level of all the other nations. The pursuit of such a goal would be a misunderstanding of what is distinctive about Israel’s election....[T]he land, considered just in itself, is an indeterminate good. It only becomes a true good, a real gift, a promise fulfilled, when it is the place where God reigns....In its wanderings, Israel discovers the kind of sacrifice God wants,...[through] a covenant concretized in a minutely regulated form of worship....Israel learns how to *worship God in the way he himself desires* [emphasis added].⁴⁷

As Webber reviews the Exodus narrative he also notes that “worship of God is to occur at a prescribed time and place with particular rituals.”⁴⁸ This is clearly revealed in the grand meeting between God and His people at Mount Sinai, thus providing immeasurable aid to our understanding of worship. According to Webber, “it contains the most basic structural elements for a meeting between God and his people.”⁴⁹ And as Webber demonstrates, these elements stand as the bedrock of public, corporate worship found in both Judaism and Christianity.

The first element is grounded on the call of God. God convened the gathering of His people out of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai, “the eternal altar erected for that purpose at the creation of the world.”⁵⁰ There, in His presence, they became the *qahal Yahweh*, the “assembly of God.” Thus we see, before any other consideration, that *true worship has its genesis in God’s desire for us*.

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 17.

⁴⁸ Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Introduction*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 20.

⁴⁹ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 20.

⁵⁰ J. H. Kurtz, Offerings, *Sacrifices and Worship in the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (1863; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), 18.

Second, we see the people arranged and structured according to responsibility. While authority and accountability rested in the hands of Moses, other elements of the nation's worship fell into the hands of Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, the seventy elders, young Israelite men, and the people. This is not a picture of entertainers before an audience, or professionals before laymen, but the full participation of the congregation. Since each person had his own distinct area of participation, we find this orchestration of responsibility to be a fundamental aspect of worship. In other words, *true worship is participatory*.

Third, this gathering between God and His people was characterized by the proclamation of the Word. There was a spelling out of God's will demonstrating that *true worship is not complete without hearing from the Lord*.

Fourth, the people entered into the conditions of the covenant, signifying their commitment to obey the Word. In this sense, then, *true worship involves a continuous renewal of personal commitment to the Lord*.

Finally, the meeting between God and His people came to a climax that was sealed with a dramatic display of ratification—a blood sacrifice to demonstrate the high price of this relationship. Through this we can see how Scripture continuously points to the definitive sacrifice of Christ and the reality that *true worship will enjoin Christians to that perfect sacrifice through the Lord's Supper*.⁵¹

The Tabernacle

We must always remind ourselves that while it is the divine grandeur of God's nature to be present everywhere, He specifically promised to be present in Israel's worship, involving

⁵¹ Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 21.

place, time, and people. In this sense, liturgy was not a human invention to gain the presence of God, but God's promise to engage Himself with His children through the means of His own choosing.

According to David Levy, the Tabernacle was of such great importance to God's redemptive plan that at least 50 chapters of the Bible are surrendered to the explanation of its unique design and service. "Nothing was left to Moses' speculation; God revealed to him in minute detail every aspect of the Tabernacle. More than 20 times in Exodus we read, 'as the Lord commanded Moses.'"⁵²

Of all the things that surround worship, we must remember that its primary activity is that of sacrifice. Sacrifice directed the spiritual cadence of the Old Testament as the Jews celebrated their many feasts. And these sacrifices were prescribed and detailed by God with exacting requirements. Again, Levy comments:

Although the Tabernacle made God accessible to the Israelites, He was only approachable in holiness. . . . Every aspect of the Tabernacle—from the brazen altar, where sacrifices were offered for sin, to the mediating high priest, who offered the sacrificial blood on the mercy seat—pointed to God's redemptive plan. The people could only approach God through a blood atonement and a mediating priesthood.⁵³

The second thing we must remember about worship is a point previously mentioned: that our worship was and is to reflect the worship of heaven. These details for worship are first found in Exodus 25-27, a blueprint about the nature and manner of worship birthed into physical reality through the construction of the Tabernacle. These instructions included its structure and dimensions, plans for the Ark and the other furnishings, details of the priestly vestments, the use

⁵² David M. Levy, *The Tabernacle: Shadows of the Messiah—Its Sacrifices, Services, and Priesthood* (Mellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1993), 18.

⁵³ Levy, *The Tabernacle*, 18.

of incense and anointing oil, precise guidelines for the many sacrifices and offerings, and even the use of images.⁵⁴

The Tabernacle becomes that prescribed place where heaven and earth intersect and where that union is set in motion. This ‘union’ is initiated in the last chapter of Exodus where God commands Moses to set up the Tabernacle for its inaugural use (Exodus 40:17-35). The grammatical construction of this text suggests that the Tabernacle was set up in seven stages or more likely in seven days. This distinct scheduling of labor closely parallels the seven days of creation as each ‘stage’ of the Tabernacle’s assembly is annotated with the phrase, “Moses did just as the Lord commanded him.”

Ratzinger suggests that the completion of the Tabernacle was an echo of the final day of creation and God’s Sabbath: “So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle” (Exodus 40:33b-34).⁵⁵ It’s within reason to believe that the completion of the Tabernacle anticipated or foreshadowed the final consummation of creation where mankind is invited to share in the dwelling of God and His eternal Sabbath.

As soon as God’s house was erected and properly appointed, the visible pillar of His glory rested over the central object of their worship: the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 40:34-38).

As Jewish scholar Nahum Sarna comments:

The function of the Tabernacle was to create a portable Sinai, a means by which a continued avenue of communication with God could be maintained. As the people move away from the mount of revelation, they need a visible, tangible symbol of God’s ever-abiding Presence in their midst. It is not surprising, then, that the same phenomenon as

⁵⁴ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 15.

⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 26-27.

occurred at Sinai...now repeats itself....The cloud is the manifest token of the immediacy of the Divine Presence.⁵⁶

Thus we witness the climax of the whole Exodus account as the glory of God settles upon His dwelling place. Walter Houston reflects in similar vein, “The object of all the work has been achieved: the presence of YHWH, as it had been on Sinai, is with his people forever, and guides them on their journeys.”⁵⁷

As Strong examines this conclusion to the construction of the Tabernacle, he notes that this supremely unique structure was raised up as the “visible hearthstone of the invisible Church.”⁵⁸ And since the Tabernacle had become the place of God’s habitation on earth, Strong continues:

It was the type of that “house of God” which was designed to embrace the globe, to be the germ of heaven, and yet to dwell in the humblest heart. Its archetype, modeled in the conclave of the eternal Trinity, and for a brief season disclosed to Moses, still remains in the celestial sphere, to be unveiled at length to the full satisfaction of all the saints. There we shall forever admire the perfection of the symbol and its object.⁵⁹

In a special sense, the Tabernacle stood as a prefigurement of the incarnation wherein the Son of God would live among us in human form. Thus we read in the Greek of John 1:14 that Jesus “tabernacled” with us rather than merely “dwelt” with us.⁶⁰

This immediacy of God was due, again, in no small part to the fidelity Moses displayed in carefully fabricating every facet of the Tabernacle down to the smallest detail. Nothing was

⁵⁶ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, vol. 3 of *The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 237.

⁵⁷ Walter Houston, “Exodus” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 90.

⁵⁸ Strong, *The Tabernacle of Israel*, 114.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 115.

left to his own invention; it was all done according to the heavenly patterns he was shown. As such, it was made to God's standards, operated within God's requirements, and met with God's approval.

Short of unfolding how the minutia of the sacrificial code, the layout of the various sacred precincts of the Tabernacle, and even how the arrangement of the key objects of worship helped the priests to move in ritual procession from the Outer Court to the Holiest of Holies are all tied to an orderly worship, it is sufficient to say that since all of these aspects of worship were revealed by God to Moses as His only acceptable means of approach (and since these patterns are the reflection of eternal worship), such liturgical service—albeit fulfilled in Christ—should continue to characterize the worship of His children today. Not that we strive for legalistic form or ostentation, but because this is what God desires as His corporate community of faith gathers for authentic worship—such attention to detail pleases Him. Or as The Anglican Breviary states, “Officers [as well as the laity]...are often negligent in these niceties, and need to be reminded that reverence is not primarily a matter of feeling pious, but rather of taking pains”⁶¹—that is, the pains of doing the right thing the right way.

The Temple

Before focusing on the liturgical worship of the Temple, a brief survey of the transitional period that existed between the Tabernacle and the Temple is in order.

Starting with the latter half of Joshua's administration the Tabernacle was resident at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1). It remained there throughout the turbulent period of the Judges down to the priesthood of Eli when the Ark was ‘conscripted’ for war (1 Samuel 4:4), captured by the

⁶¹ *The Anglican Breviary Containing the Divine Office According to the General Usages of the Western Church* (1955; repr., Long Island, NY: Frank Gavin Liturgical Foundation, Inc., 1998), xxvii.

Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11), returned to Kiriath Jearim (1 Samuel 7:1), and finally brought to Jerusalem many years later by King David (1 Kings 6). During its time in Shiloh the poles and coverings of the original Tabernacle were so old and unserviceable that Talmudic tradition speaks of their replacement by a permanent stone structure, traces of which archeologists say are still discernable.⁶²

This was an unsettled time which required the transfer of God's worship to several locations (1 Samuel 7:6; 9:12; 10:3; 20:6; Psalm 132:6). During this point in history the various implements and furnishings of the Tabernacle were split up. Scripture records that the Bread of the Presence was temporarily made and kept with several of the sacred utensils at Nob (1 Samuel 21:1-6)—perhaps because a large number of priests dwelt there (1 Samuel 22:11) and a part of their residence may have served as a makeshift sanctuary (e.g., 1 Samuel 21:9). Toward the close of David's reign other fragmented portions of the Tabernacle, including the Altar of Burnt Offering, were kept at the 'high place' of Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39; 21:29; cf., 1 Kings 3:4; 2 Chronicles 1:3-6). This is the last record we find in Scripture regarding the structure itself.

In the meantime a secondary base of worship was established by David on Mount Zion at Jerusalem, to which he transported the Ark and reestablished the sacerdotal⁶³ ministries detailed by Moses. This was set up in a new structure simply called a tent (1 Chronicles 15:1; 16:1; 2 Samuel 6:17) which probably lacked the wooden paneling of the original (2 Samuel 7:2; 1 Chronicles 17:1).

With the Ark safely in Jerusalem, David sets in motion his plan to build a temple—unrivalled in the ancient world—to the glory of God. He begins by stockpiling massive quantities

⁶² Strong, *The Tabernacle of Israel*, 12.

⁶³ Ministry specifically related to the priesthood via objects, functions, or ceremony; doing that which is sacred or sacramental.

of building materials, sets aside funding, and produces vessels and implements for temple worship. He also enters into agreements for resources from neighboring kings, negotiates for workers, and even produces detailed plans for the construction of the Temple. And even though his son Solomon who will actually build the Temple, David does something extraordinary: He codifies (and amplifies) the rubrics governing the worship of the future Temple.

While the basic design, furnishings, and sacrificial system of the Tabernacle were delivered to the people through Moses, the vocal and instrumental offerings of formal Hebrew worship were developed under King David. We read in 1 Chronicles 15:16, “David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their kindred as the singers to play on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise loud sounds of joy.” Although this doesn’t reveal the specifics of temple worship, these rubrics, however, did come to David by way of divine anointing—and perhaps even by divine command.⁶⁴ How do we know this? As David was giving Solomon the solemn charge for the Temple’s construction, we read these words: “‘All this,’ David said, ‘I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan’” (1 Chronicles 28:19).

David wasn’t engaging in some arbitrary exercise in creative worship that made him feel good, nor was it about what *he* thought God would like. This was orderly, liturgical worship—the earthly echo of heavenly worship—based on God’s chosen manner for how He wanted His children to approach Him. For while some reformed theologians would suggest that his designs for the structure and worship of the new Temple were simply based on the imagination of a devoted heart which was familiar with the layout of the Tabernacle and the chronicle of the

⁶⁴ C.F. Keil, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, vol. 3 of *Keil and Delitzsch—Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. Andrew Harper (1866; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), 572.

instructions given to Moses in the Law⁶⁵, a linguistic nuance in the text requires a second look.

According to J. Barton Payne,

Because the words “he gave me understanding” have no “and” before them in the Hebrew but are connected with the first part of the verse rather than its latter part, we should probably follow the other EV and read: “the Lord gave me understanding in writing.” David was saying that not only were the temple plans revealed by God (v. 12), but that they were given to him in written form from God, to be handed to Solomon (v. 11)—an ultimate testimony to their divine character. Such a “blueprint or possible scale model”...goes beyond the verbal instructions and vision shown Moses for the tabernacle (Exod 25:40;40:2).⁶⁶

In other words, God determined exactly what He wanted for His worship; not just in principle but in its practical and tangible execution. Nor was this incident lost in the annals of Jewish history. Three hundred years later, as a part of Hezekiah’s rededication of the Temple, the chronicler of the event says, “[Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king’s seer and of the prophet Nathan, for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets” (2 Chronicles 29:25).

Like the wilderness Tabernacle, the Temple of Jerusalem was seen as a ‘divine palace’ where God would be present among His people in some mysterious, palpable way. While the Temple’s history would seem to have its origins in David’s desire to build God a house (2 Samuel 7:1-2; 1 Chronicles 17:1-2), the true origins of a permanent habitation for God’s Name are actually found in Deuteronomy 12:5, a biblical mandate spoken by Moses regarding the only legitimate location for His worship.

⁶⁵ Robert L. Sawyer, *I and II Chronicles*, vol. 2 of *Beacon Bible Commentary*, ed. A. F. Harper (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), 550.

⁶⁶ J. Barton Payne, *1,2 Chronicles*, vol. 4 in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1988), 437.

In the larger context of Deuteronomy 12:5-28, the only two prerequisites for the Temple were that the Jews had to enter their ‘inheritance’ (vs. 9) and that they needed to be at rest or peace from their enemies (vs. 10). And while David gained rest over vast portions of his kingdom (2 Samuel 7:1), it was Solomon to whom God gave “rest on every side” (1 Kings 5:3; 8:56). Thus it could only be during the early years of Solomon’s reign that the construction of God’s sole, permanent place of worship could be accomplished (cf., 1 Kings 3:2; 8:16).⁶⁷

The location of the Temple’s construction—the threshing floor of Araunah—is also instrumental to our understanding of the particular care God takes in directing every facet of His worship. This location was ‘selected’ by an angel of the Lord, purchased by David, and validated with fire from God as heavenly flames engulfed David’s first sacrifices made on the site (1 Chronicles 21:18-26). In response to this miracle, David announced, “The house of the LORD God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel” (1 Chronicles 22:1).

It’s interesting to note that this purchase of Araunah’s threshing floor was predicated by the slaughter of 70,000 Jews at the hands of a destroying angel in response to David’s census of the nation. As the angel approached Jerusalem, God’s own grief over this punishment moved Him to speak out, “Enough! Withdraw your hand” (1 Chronicles 21:15). The verse continues with this significant detail: “The angel of the Lord was then standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” What a powerful picture this becomes when we understand that this threshing floor marked the place where God’s grief, expiation, satisfaction, and forgiveness all converged; where punishment and sacrifice met; and where the sword of judgment was stayed. It was indeed a most suitable place for the future construction of the Temple!

⁶⁷ Stephen Westerholm, “Temple” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 4:759.

This threshing floor is further identified as the mount or summit of Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1), the same location where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:2,14). There can be no doubt of the significance of this location as God's divinely sanctioned site for the liturgy and sacrifices of His chosen people (Psalm 78:68-ff; 132:13-ff).⁶⁸

The continuity of worship between the Tabernacle and the Temple is evidenced by God's divine approval when He filled the new Temple with His glory (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14), so much so that the priests were unable to minister before Him. This self-consecration of the Temple was to put an end to other competing sites of worship throughout the land, thus making them not only unnecessary but illegitimate; God's liturgy would be offered in the place of *His* choosing and according to the patterns *He* dictated. The Temple of Jerusalem was now the place where His Name, eyes, and heart were permanently and invisibly resident in the Holy of Holies, thus giving the "temple an aura of unparalleled sanctity."⁶⁹

Except for David's codification of the roles of temple servants (assistants to the Levites, cf., Ezra 8:20), singers, and musicians, the Temple service was the same as that of the Tabernacle in unbroken fidelity to the patterns of heaven—its offerings, sacrifices, feasts, festivals, and observances as handed down from God to Moses on Mount Sinai. So profound was the Temple's shadow over the civilized world that Simon the Just (High Priest in 200 BC) is recorded in the *Mishnah* as saying, "On three things does the world stand: on the Torah, on the temple service, and on deeds of lovingkindness (*Avot* 1:2)."⁷⁰ Thus for the ancient world, this

⁶⁸ Westerholm, "Temple," 760.

⁶⁹ Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 93.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 95. In essence, God chooses to 'incarnate' Himself to the world through (1) His Word, (2) through His liturgy, and (3) through our reflection of His nature toward others.

conformity to the prescribed worship of Temple liturgy stood at the apex of faith and belief; it was the nexus where God and those who feared Him met one another.

The Synagogue

The synagogue was birthed into Jewish experience as a result of the Babylonian exile. With no temple in which to worship and offer the prescribed sacrifices, observant Jews would gather around their elders to listen to the Word of God, to receive instruction, and to offer their prayers. Even after their return from exile, this form was retained and refined as a normative part of Jewish religious life. And while they would never construe their gatherings as ‘worship’ in the technical sense (i.e., the instruction and prayers were made apart from the sacrifice⁷¹), they did, however, pattern everything in the synagogue after the design and order of the Temple—including the times of its sacrifices—so as to maintain a sense of indissoluble continuity with the Temple and the Holy City.⁷²

Before we can understand the synagogue’s contribution to liturgy, a review of its history and development will be necessary.

Biblically, there is no direct reference or even a hint of synagogue devotion in either the Law or the Prophets. In fact, Edersheim argues that, under the Law, no divine provision even existed for such gatherings even though rabbinic tradition (fancifully) suggests that synagogues had their origins with the Patriarchs.⁷³ As demonstrated above, that was the period in Jewish

⁷¹ Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1987), 346.

⁷² Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 19.

⁷³ While it is true that the King James Version contains a curious reference to synagogues in Psalm 74:8 (“...they have burned up all the synagogues of God in land.”), at best this is a dubious translation of *mô‘êd* which is usually rendered throughout the Old Testament as *feast*, *festival*, and *appointed time*. In other words, it’s a reference to places and opportunities for regular gatherings and should only be used as a technical description of the *congregation* of Israel when, as a nation, they were legitimately gathered before God at the Tabernacle or Temple.

history when the sacrificial service was Israel's chief manner of approaching God and the way in which God communicated His blessings back upon His people.⁷⁴

Quite a different state of affairs emerged, however, during the Babylonian captivity. Deprived of the Temple, some kind of religious community needed to be maintained. Religious meetings would become an absolute necessity to keep the people from lapsing into heathenism—a danger which, despite the warnings of the prophets, could not be totally avoided.

The preservation of their national identity as well as their continued religious existence necessitated the institution of the synagogue as something both needful and desirable. In fact, a reading of Ezra and Nehemiah will reveal that during the return from Babylon the rudimentary beginnings of the synagogue are briefly discernable. Although the chief purpose of this new religious invention was mostly for the instruction of those exiles who, ignorant of their faith, had returned to Israel, it still formed a starting point.⁷⁵

Moving forward to the time of the Assyrian oppression and even further into the Maccabean uprising, we can see how this era in Judaism necessitated an even greater need for synagogues, bringing them into the place and proportion of what we find in the New Testament. As the Temple service was lost to Israel, and as Judaism became a matter of outward ordinances, legal minutia, and logical discussions, the synagogues would grow in corresponding importance. Thus by the time of Christ, “there was not a foreign settlement of Jews without one or more

Thus the “synagogues of the land” may refer to the several resting places of the Ark (e.g., Shiloh) where religious devotion was still maintained. Psalm 74:8 could also describe the many high places where the practices of Judaism were sometimes mingled with the worship of the surrounding nations. This text, however, lends no credence to the idea that synagogues were a part of Jewish religious culture until well into the exile and the destruction of the Second Temple.

⁷⁴ Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, 230-231.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 231.

synagogues—that of Alexandria, of which both the Talmuds speak in such exaggerated language, being especially gorgeous—while throughout Palestine they were thickly planted.”⁷⁶

The Babylonian Talmud establishes the inestimable value that Judaism placed on the synagogue. In its pages the rabbis taught that:

- The prayers offered to God only have the proper effect when offered in the synagogue (*Berakoth 6a*).
- If a person whose life is patterned by frequent, daily visits to the synagogue for prayer should miss it, even once, God will demand an account of him.
- If God should find less than ten gathered for worship, His anger is kindled according to Isaiah 50:2 (*Berakoth 6b*).
- If a person has a synagogue in his own town and is not a faithful member of it, he is to be called an evil neighbor, inviting exile upon himself and his children according to Jeremiah 12:4.

On the other hand, if a community resorted early to the synagogue in times of dire need, they would be granted longevity (*Berakoth 8a*). Thus long before the Talmudic period, the institution of the synagogue had spread as a perceived necessity not only among the Jews in Israel but throughout the Diaspora.⁷⁷

Synagogue Architecture

The basic synagogue was a rather simple design, the interior arrangement of which was patterned after that of the Tabernacle or Temple. The oldest standing synagogue—that of the Cyrenian Jews on the Tunisian island of Djerbe—is tripartite in its arrangement following the model of the Court, the Holy, and the Most Holy Place. And in all synagogues, with the outer ‘ring’ set apart for women, we see the representation of the Court of the Women. Likewise at the highest and innermost place of the synagogue behind the veil we find the Ark containing the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 231-232.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 229.

scrolls. This represents the Holiest of Holies itself. Since the first Christian believers were Jews, this basic layout seems to have been the model adopted for the earliest house churches. Continuity and fidelity to God's 'pattern' was paramount since paganism could offer no reasonable alternative upon which to model a house of worship.⁷⁸

Interior arrangement

What are the particulars of the synagogue's interior arrangement? Chief among the features is the Seat of Moses which Jesus Himself mentions in Matthew 23:2. So important was this place of prominence that the synagogue could only gather because someone among them was held as the "authentic depository of the living tradition of God's word, first given to Moses, and able to communicate it anew, although always substantially the same."⁷⁹ This individual was the rabbi.

The rabbi did not speak from his own thoughts as a result of reflecting on the Word of God in a speculative way. By religious necessity he made the Word of God both present and immediate just as when Moses first addressed Israel. Through the rabbi, Moses continued to speak to the people, both doctrinally and legislatively, and those who sat on the Seat of Moses bore the weight of magistracy⁸⁰ as Moses' legal successors, possessing all of his authority.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid., 236.

⁷⁹ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 19.

⁸⁰ John Lightfoot, *Hebrew and Talmudic Exercitations upon the Gospel of St. Matthew*, vol. 2 of *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (1859; repr., n.p.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2003), 289-290.

⁸¹ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 472.

Ultimately, the Seat of Moses simultaneously stood for God's visitation at Mount Sinai as an historical event and as a present, ongoing reality.⁸²

The second key feature was the Ark. Every synagogue had an Ark protected by a veil before which burned the Menorah, the seven-branched candlestick. The Ark was the repository of the Torah. Even more, each synagogue's Ark spiritually pointed to the Ark of the Covenant in the same manner that the physical alignment of the synagogue also pointed to the Temple. In fact, the ultimate intention of the synagogue was to spiritually carry the congregation up to the Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem. Consequently, a Jewish community would never view its synagogue as being independent of or self-sufficient apart from the Temple.⁸³ And to ensure this symbiotic parallel, when the people gathered with the rabbi around the Ark on the Sabbath, the reading of the scrolls was always scheduled to coincide with worship in the Temple. As Ratzinger notes, "The prayers said at the unrolling and reading of the scrolls of Scripture developed out of the ritual prayers originally linked to the sacrificial actions of the Temple and now regarded, in accord with the tradition of the time without the Temple, as the equivalent of sacrifice."⁸⁴

Elements of the synagogue service

Jewish scholars have been faithful to document the structure of ancient synagogue worship, providing a picture of those elements that helped give birth to Christian worship and liturgy. While there is debate over some particulars, the New Testament provides us with a

⁸² Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 65.

⁸³ Ibid., 66.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 66-67.

wealth of information (e.g., Luke 4:15-21). These descriptive narratives usually reveal three key components of a synagogue service: praise, prayer, and instruction.

Element #1: Praise

Corporate praise opens the service. This follows the principle laid down in the Talmud: “Man should always first utter praises, and then pray” (*Berakoth* 32a). Luke 4:20 demonstrates how the synagogue ruler summons the minister to invite someone from the congregation to begin the liturgy with a call to worship. According to Martin, this leader of worship begins with the cry, “Bless ye the Lord, the One who is to be blessed,” and the people reply with words drawn from the benediction of Nehemiah 9:5, “Blessed be the Lord... forever.”⁸⁵ From the very opening words of worship, then, the congregants are invited to fix their minds upon God and to acknowledge His greatness and blessing.⁸⁶ We also see this ‘praise rubric’ being observed among the early Christians in Corinth as Paul admonished the believers to begin the proper ordering of their corporate worship with a psalm of praise (1 Corinthians 14:26).

Element #2: Prayer

The prayers in synagogue liturgy fall into two groups. The first group is comprised of several parts, beginning with the two ‘beautiful utterances’—the *Yotzer* and the *Ahabah*.⁸⁷ The

⁸⁵ This Jewish call to worship provides the foundation for the opening words spoken in many Anglican worship services: [Celebrant] “Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” [Congregation] “And blessed be His Kingdom, now and forever. Amen!”

⁸⁶ Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 24.

⁸⁷ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 20-21. The authors draw heavily from the exhaustive works of Alfred Edersheim, particularly from his book, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (London, England: Longmans & Co., nd), 436-450.

former, which means *He who forms*, reflects the theme of God as Creator;⁸⁸ the latter, which means *love*, recalls God's love for His people and also serves as a pledge of the worshippers' obligation to love Him in return, ending with the words, "Blessed are Thou, O Lord, who hast chosen Thy people Israel in love."⁸⁹

After this would follow the *Shema*; a Jewish creedal statement knit together from portions of Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41. Its name comes from the opening word of Deuteronomy 6:4 where *shema* is translated "*Hear*, O Israel." This liturgical formula, including the benedictions, is found in the Mishnah (*Berakoth* ii. 2; i. 4; *Tamid*, v. 1) which tells us that this part of the service existed long before the time of Jesus (*Berakoth* i. 3), and that all males were bound to repeat the *Shema* twice a day (*Berakoth* iii. 3). This means that we have a clear demonstration of certain liturgical prayers which our Lord Himself not only heard, but regularly and faithfully participated in according to Jewish religious tradition.⁹⁰

The opening prayers and the *Shema* with its benedictions were led from the synagogue lectern. The next series of prayers, however, was said by the leader of the devotions who stood before the Ark (*Mishnah, Megillah*, iv.). These prayers consisted of the 18 eulogies which formed the *tephillah*, or supplications of the people.

⁸⁸ "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, King of the world, Who formest the light and createst the darkness, Who makest peace, and createst everything; Who, in mercy, givest light to the earth, and to those who dwell upon it, and in Thy goodness, day by day, and every day, renewest the works of creation. Blessed be the Lord our God for the glory of His handiworks, and or the light-giving lights which He has made for His praise. Blessed be the Lord our God, Who has formed the lights."

⁸⁹ "With great love hast Thou loved us, O Lord our God, and with much overflowing pity hast Thou pitied us, our Father and our King. For the sake of our fathers who trusted in Thee, and Thou taughtest them the statutes of life, have mercy upon us, and teach us. Enlighten our eyes in Thy Law; cause our hearts to cleave to Thy commandments; unite our hearts to love and fear Thy Name, and we shall not be put to shame, world without end. For Thou art a God Who preparest salvation, and hast in truth brought us near to Thy great Name that we may lovingly praise Thee and Thy unity. Blessed be the Lord, Who in love chose His people Israel."

⁹⁰ Edersheim, *Sketches*, 245.

These supplications (today they number 19) originated at different points in history with the first three and the last three being the earliest. These would be the same supplications that Jesus heard when He went to the synagogue. To these original six supplications were added eulogies 4-9 and 16 after the downfall of the Jewish commonwealth. Of these, eulogy 12 was a petition against early Jewish converts to Christianity. Scholars believe that it was the original practice in synagogue gatherings to insert personal prayers of petition between the first three and the last three eulogies and that these petitions were eventually formulated and finalized into the full 18 eulogies that marked the synagogue's prayer life.⁹¹

These 18 eulogies cover a wide spectrum of themes and concerns. They express praise; they petition the Lord for spiritual and material benefits; and they also serve as supplications for those in need, including such people as exiles, judges, and counselors. The overall tone of these prayers is reflected in the final petition: "Grant peace upon Israel Thy people and upon Thy city, and upon Thy inheritance, and bless us all together. Blessed art Thou O Lord, the Maker of peace." These, then, were the corporate, liturgical prayers on Jesus' lips when He joined in the religious devotion of His synagogue.

Element #3: Instruction

In addition to the eulogies and the priestly benedictions, the most solemn part of the synagogue liturgy was the teaching of the people. This was accomplished through the reading of the Law. In ancient Palestine, the Pentateuch was divided into lectionary readings that spanned across three years (or, according to some, three and a half years or one half of the Jubilee period). These lections were further subdivided so that up to seven men could be called upon at

⁹¹ Ibid., 248-249.

every service to read, with each portion equivalent to three or more verses. The first reader began with a benediction and the last reader closed with a benediction.

As Hebrew gave way to Aramaic, a *meturgeman* (lit., interpreter) stood next to the reader. Skilled in languages, he would translate the readings into the vernacular for the peoples' understanding. This use of an interpreter traces its roots back to the time of Ezra when the Levites stood among the congregation of Israel to "make the meaning clear" as Ezra read from the Law (Nehemiah 8:8).⁹² This lectionary arrangement also included a section from the Prophets—selected to complement the readings from the Law—and could be traced back to the time of the Syrian persecutions.⁹³

A sermon immediately followed the lectionary readings. The preacher was called a *darshan* and his sermon was a *derashah* (from the Hebrew *darash*, to ask, inquire, or discuss). When the sermon was an academic or theological discussion, it was not delivered directly to the people. Rather, the weighty sayings of the rabbi were whispered into the ear of an *amora* (lit., speaker), who interpreted the message to the congregation in terms easy enough for them to understand. The more popular sermons, called a *meamar*, would be either rabbinical expositions of Scripture or doctrinal discussions which would appeal to tradition and to the great teachers from whom they learned.⁹⁴

Luke 4:16 records that it was Jesus' regular Sabbath custom to not only attend but take a liturgical leadership role in synagogue services.⁹⁵ The accompanying text provides us with an

⁹² Ron Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church* (Baltimore, MD: Leader Books, 1996), 10-11.

⁹³ Edersheim, *Sketches*, 253.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁹⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, vol. 3 of *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing

excellent account of first century synagogue liturgy. On this particular Sabbath in Nazareth—and perhaps many times before—Jesus was asked to be the *Sheliach Tsibbur* (lit., representative of the people). According to the *Mishnah*, the man who read the lection from the Prophets was also expected to conduct the devotions.⁹⁶

Remember, now, that when the people gathered with the rabbi around the Ark and Torah on the Sabbath, it was always scheduled to coincide with the sacrificial worship of the Temple. The teaching of the Word of God was, in fact, spiritual communion with the most holy presence of the living God. For as they gazed at the Ark of Scripture, the Jews understood that they were also gazing upon the Temple of Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God on earth. Thus the synagogue and the Temple—by some means of divine grace and favor—were seen as being dynamically linked thus providing the Jews outside of Jerusalem a way, even though less than ideal, to approach God through those immutable patterns given to Moses two millennia earlier. Even more, we see those unchanging elements that are so integral to liturgical worship today: ritual praise, formal prayers, intercessions, creedal formulas, fixed lectionary readings, lectionary-based sermons, and benedictions.

Transition

The transition in worship from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant came as a result of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in Whom was fulfilled all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17). In fact, the incarnation didn't produce a transition in worship—which implies a shift from one form to another or the exchange a lesser form for a better one—as much as it unveiled the *fullness* of liturgical worship intended by God for His children from the very beginning. And

Company, 1997), 209.

⁹⁶ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 20.

although we briefly touched on Jesus' involvement with the synagogue, we must now examine His central role in modeling how the Church approaches God. Yes, there were unmistakable patterns for worship that were revealed by God, blessed by God, and sought by God. Yes, the Tabernacle was the first concrete manifestation of those liturgical patterns in a unified way that *re-presented* the worship of heaven on earth. And, yes, within this structure of worship a firm liturgy was birthed that centered on the sacramental nature of sacrifice. But these were only faint echoes compared to the perfect worship that would come through Jesus Christ. For now One greater than Moses was here (John 6:32-33); One greater than Jonah was here (Matthew 12:41); One greater than Solomon was here (Luke 11:31); and even One greater than the Temple itself was here (Matthew 12:6).

Jesus entered the physical, temporal affairs of mankind as the “Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8; cf., Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). As the ‘eternal lamb’ He was both the means and modality of heaven’s worship even before God said, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). And from those first days in the Garden of Eden, as God progressively lifted the veil of what His worship should look like—whether antediluvian, Patristic, Tabernacle, Temple, or synagogue—there was woven throughout that history a supporting lattice of elements that carried worship unmistakably forward to its highest culmination in Jesus Christ, the full revelation, incarnation, and epiphany of the eternal worship of heaven.

Jesus: Perfect Pattern

We must remember that Jesus did not come as the *successor* of the earlier patterns of Jewish worship but as the *fulfillment* of those patterns. Clearly, what the Patriarchs revealed in

part, shadow, outline, or foretaste is, while of the same stuff, not of the same degree (cf., Matthew 12:6; 12:41; Luke 11:32). So how does Jesus fulfill what was begun in the Tabernacle, the Temple, and the synagogue?

Nowhere in the Gospels did Jesus say He would supplant or destroy the Temple, although that was the false version of the charges brought against Him. What Jesus spoke of was the destruction of His own body—a prophecy of the impending cross that awaited Him. It was also the divine notice that, with His resurrection, the Temple era was coming to a close and a new Temple would begin; the Church, the Body of Christ, the locus of *true* worship into which God now desired mankind's full inclusion and participation.

It's this new tabernacle “not made with human hands” which superimposes the final reality over its previous shadow, clearly demonstrated at the moment of Jesus' death when the Temple veil—the shroud and guard the Holiest of Holies—was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). This divine rending was the moment when heaven itself declared that the function of the old Temple had now come to an end; dissolved; no longer God's footstool; no longer the place of His dwelling; no longer the locale of His glory. Even more, the torn curtain stood as the prophetic harbinger of the Temple's physical destruction that would follow a few decades later.

Ratzinger contends that the previous worship of the Jews through types, shadows, and substitutes ended at that very moment when this first act of real worship took place and to which the torn curtain was a witness: “the self-offering of the Son, who has become man and ‘Lamb’, the ‘Firstborn’, who gathers up and into himself all worship of God, takes it from the types and shadows into the reality of man's union with the living God.”⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 44.

Ratzinger, looking at Christian worship (and the Eucharist in particular) as the perfect fulfillment of every longing of the Old Testament, says of Jesus:

In virtue of Jesus' Cross and Resurrection, the Eucharist is the meeting point of all the lines that lead from the Old Covenant, indeed from the whole of man's religious history. Here at last is right worship, ever longed for and yet surpassing our powers: adoration "in spirit and truth." The torn curtain of the Temple is the curtain torn between the world and the countenance of God. In the pierced heart of the Crucified, God's own heart is opened up—here we see who God is and what he is like. Heaven is no longer locked up. God has stepped out of his hiddenness.⁹⁸

With Christ's incarnation into the temporal affairs of mankind (cf., Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20) came also the satisfaction, fulfillment, and completion of God's original patterns for worship. With Jesus came the *right* interpretation of sign and symbol, form and function. In order to understand how Jesus fulfilled these original patterns—giving them heightened expression as the organic, divine expression of authentic faith—we must focus on Christ as Sacrifice because the apex of all sacramental liturgy takes place on the altar.

Perfect Sacrifice Is Perfect Worship

The question should now be settled as to the revealed manner in which God desired Israel's worship. The question should also be settled as to the primary function of worship: that it was, and still is, sacrifice. It began with the offering of animals to serve as both propitiation and atonement for the sins of God's people, and this continuity continued into the New Testament through the sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ. His sacrificial gift to the Father supplanted all Temple sacrifices as the means of propitiation and atonement. Jesus became the propitiation for the sins of all mankind, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). The question *is* rightly raised, however, as to why this pattern of sacrifice should be continued on the Christian altar if there is no further need of sacrifice?

⁹⁸ Ibid., 47-48.

Eucharist

Eucharist is the catholic term for the Sacrificial Meal that Christ made of Himself for the sake of His followers. Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Mass; these are other terms which point to the same great act of Christ at the Last Supper and worked out on altars and communion tables throughout the Church since the Book of Acts. Eucharist comes from the Greek *ευχαριστία* (*eucharistia*) and literally means thanksgiving. It is drawn from Luke's version of the Last Supper when Christ 'gave thanks' (Luke 22:17,19). It is the central act of sacramental worship and the supreme act of Christian thanksgiving. The roots of the Eucharist, however, go much deeper than a reenactment of the surface events of the Last Supper.

As the Lamb of God, Jesus stands as the fulfilled sacrament of the sign of Passover. Horton demonstrates this by showing how each of the plagues of God, delivered against Egypt for Pharaoh's refusal to let the Children of Israel go, was a direct answer to each of the chief gods of the Egyptian pantheon.⁹⁹ This went on until God announced His plans to take the firstborn, man and beast, from every home.

That night, as recorded in Exodus 12:1-14, God instituted the Passover; a rite that would reach out to all succeeding generations so that even those born in the distant future could *together participate* with their forefathers in this redemptive event: the blood of the unblemished lamb that would seal their deliverance.

As Horton is keen to observe, the rite of Passover was instituted on the very night that Egypt's firstborn males were snatched away in death. Unlike other rituals designed to celebrate the agricultural cycle of nature or to draw attention to some great universal moral principle,

⁹⁹ Horton, *A Better Way*, 113.

Passover was a “rite of commemoration of *and participation in* [emphasis added] a redemptive-historical event that God brought about in the concrete existence of a particular people.”¹⁰⁰

As the Lamb of God’s own choosing (Revelation 13:8; cf., 1 Peter 1:20; 1 Timothy 1:4), Jesus knew exactly what this rite and sign was truly meant to convey. “Passover,” says Williams and Anstall, “is perhaps the ultimate example of the transformation by Jesus Christ, of a Jewish worship practice into something new and different.”¹⁰¹ During the time of Jesus, every family brought a lamb to be sacrificed in the forecourt of the Temple. A portion of that lamb was to be eaten by the family during the *Seder* or Passover supper.

This lamb called to mind the lambs that were slain in Egypt in order to provide a blood covering over the homes of the Jews during the visitation of the death angel. Williams and Anstall continue: “More than just symbolic, this sacrificial lamb accomplished the deliverance of the people of God for yet another year, while the *seder*, the Passover supper, established the reality of communion between God and mankind....only in Jerusalem was it possible to celebrate the Passover completely.”¹⁰²

Jesus was desirous to share this significant, final meal with the disciples. He gave instructions as to how He wanted the meal to be arranged. What happened next, however, is not what the disciples expected. Jesus, within the context of supper, offered Himself as the Lamb of God for the world. Within hours He would become the blood covering for all who believe on Him throughout the world (cf., John 19:29,36; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:6-ff, 13:8). What we must believe is that Jesus was using this meal to expand and reinterpret—

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 114.

¹⁰¹ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 26.

¹⁰² Ibid., 26-27.

or more to the point, provide correct ‘exegesis’ for—the Passover tradition handed down over the centuries from Moses.¹⁰³ Our Lord Himself took a specific Jewish worship practice, one that had been revealed by God, filled it with the new meaning of the New Covenant, and transformed it into Christian communion.

While the historical and theological backgrounds of the Last Supper are generally accepted, we must now examine the intended sacramental nature of this meal. In some churches the service of the Lord’s Table is simply a memorial observance in much the same way that Thanksgiving dinner reminds us of the Pilgrims and how they survived their harsh beginnings in the New World. The Eucharist was granted to the Church as much more than simply a mnemonic device.

The gifts of Communion tangibly convey to the faithful what they represent because they exist in relation to something that really happened—and which spiritually and dynamically continues to happen. They are intrinsically bound to a reality that is substantially present. Otherwise, as Ratzinger points out, “it would lack real content, like bank notes without funds to cover them.”¹⁰⁴

Jesus was able to say that His body was ‘given’ only because it had, in fact, already been given, and not only given but given and slain since the foundation of the world (cf., Revelation 13:8). Likewise, He could present the cup as His blood because He really had shed it, even though His trial and crucifixion were still several hours away. Through the mystery of Eucharistic sacrament, the past, present, and future interpenetrate each other and together they are woven into eternity. In liturgical celebration the image is fused with reality as time moves in contemporaneous lockstep with timelessness.

¹⁰³ Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 112-113.

¹⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 55.

While this description of the sacramental nature of the Eucharist is the meat and potatoes of catholic seminary training, the very fact that it speaks of ‘spiritual mystery’ necessitates the use of rather numinous vocabulary. How can the grandeur of this sacrament be explained in a more concrete fashion to those of Reformed or Free Church traditions without blunting its theological ramifications? John Calvin was faced with this very question in 1559 as he wrote his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Regarding the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, these extended quotations are offered:

But as our faith is slight and feeble unless it propped on all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers, totters, and at least gives way. Here our merciful Lord, according to his infinite kindness, so tempers himself to our capacity that, since we are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to flesh, and, do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual, he condescends to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and to set before us in the flesh a mirror of spiritual blessings....Now, because we have souls engrafted in bodies, he imparts spiritual things under visible ones...[*Institutes of Christian Religion*, IV, 14, 3].

Now here we ought to guard against two faults. First, we should not, by too little regard for the signs, divorce them from the mysteries, to which they are, so to speak, attached. Secondly, we should not, by extolling them immoderately, seem to obscure somewhat the mysteries themselves...[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 17, 5].

Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ’s flesh, separated from us by such great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit towers above all our senses, and how foolish it is to wish to measure his immeasurableness by our measure. What, then, our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive: that the Spirit truly unites things separated in space...[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV 17, 10].

But when these absurdities have been set aside, I freely accept whatever can be made to express the true and substantial partaking of the body and blood of the Lord, which is shown to believers under the sacred symbols of the Supper—and so to express it that they may be understood not receive it solely by imagination or understanding of mind, but to enjoy the thing itself as nourishment of eternal life...[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 17, 19].

Now, if anyone should ask me how this takes place, I shall not be ashamed to confess that it is a secret too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words to declare. And, to speak more plainly, I rather experience it than understand it. Therefore, I here embrace without controversy the truth of God in which I may safely rest. He declares his flesh the

food of soul, his blood its drink [John 6:53-56]. I offer my soul to him to be fed with such food. In his Sacred Supper he bids me take, eat, and drink his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine. I do not doubt that he himself truly presents them, and that I receive them...[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, 17, 32].¹⁰⁵

Even so, a mystery is partnered to its foundational truths, and the truth of the Eucharist is bound to the setting of the meal itself.

The disciples asked Him where they should prepare for the Passover meal. Jesus, noting that His “time is at hand” (Matthew 26:18), directed them to make preparations in a certain man’s house. The Supper unfolded as follows:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:26-29, NKJV).

Like the first Passover in Egypt, the event and the institution of the sacramental rite—the *Last Supper* and the Eucharist—occur on the same night. Paul makes note of this when he writes, “that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed” instituted the supper (1 Corinthians 11:23, NKJV). Note how the parallels unfold.

When the Children of Israel gathered in their homes to eat unblemished, firstborn, male lambs with wine and unleavened bread, they were not only acknowledging God’s act of delivering their own firstborn children from the death angel that night, but they were also partaking in the promise of the greater substitution yet to come. As Horton says, “Instead of sacrificing a lamb, putting its blood on the doorposts, and then eating the flesh inside the house,

¹⁰⁵ James F. White, *Documents of Christian Worship: Descriptive and Interpretive Resources* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 133, 203-205.

God himself would offer up his own Son as the firstborn lamb.”¹⁰⁶ Luke’s Gospel further illuminates Matthew’s account:

When the hour had come, [Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. Then he said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” Likewise he also took the cup after supper saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you. But behold, the hand of my betrayer is with me on the table” (Luke 22:14-21, NKJV).

There was a divine strategy for instituting the Eucharist on this night, for “the hour had come”—the hour when the firstborn, spotless Lamb of God was delivered over to judgment in the place of sinners. Jesus loved His disciples and knew this night would be their last night together. He also knew that this Supper, continued by them in its full expression, would anticipate the even greater Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Again, Paul says, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26, NKJV).

In each of the Gospel accounts (and in Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth) the words of institution are the same: Jesus takes the bread, breaks it, and distributes it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body which is given for you.” Then He does the same with the wine: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you.” In literary terms Jesus is using a *synecdoche* where the ‘part’ is equivalent to the ‘whole’.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Horton, *A Better Way*, 115.

¹⁰⁷ As a literary device, a synecdoche is a figure of speech where a part is made to represent the whole (e.g., “There was a new face at the meeting,” where *new face* means the same thing as *new person*). This device is used throughout the Old Testament to link items together in dynamically relational ways. For instance, the sign of circumcision is so intimately bound to the covenant of grace that God actually qualifies physical circumcision *as* the spiritual covenant (cf., Genesis 17:10). Similarly, God refers to the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and the Temple as if He were referring to Himself. These dynamic relations are finally resolved in Jesus Who is God—“I

Jesus provided His own exegesis of the significance of the Last Supper. When He said, “This is my body,...this is my blood,” He was being spiritually faithful to what the Jews had always been taught about their own annual participation in the Passover meal. When the head of the household lifted up the bread and recited the litany drawn from Deuteronomy 16:3, the family was somehow conjoined in a vivid, palpable, and even mystical union—as if they themselves were actually eating that final rushed meal in Goshen—with God’s deliverance of the Jews almost two millennium earlier. Thus there was already a theological precedent in place when Jesus encouraged His disciples by saying that their frequent participation in this meal would vividly, palpably, mystically, and sacramentally knit them to Himself (cf., John 6:48-58).

When Jesus reinterpreted (or *rightly* interpreted) the liturgical table service of the Passover, He brought three distinct elements into focus. The first element was the words of institution (cf., Matthew 26:26-ff; Mark 14:22-ff; Luke 22:19-ff). The reasonable assumption is that in the private company of His disciples (as during the bulk of His ministry and teaching), He spoke Aramaic. This is significant because the Aramaic does not make use of the verb ‘to be’. Rather, we insert ‘to be’ into our English translations based on our own linguistic sensibilities, believing that its presence is necessary to and inferred from the context. This is not the case with Semitic idiom. When Jesus spoke the words of institution over the bread and wine, He literally said, “This bread—My body;...this cup—My blood,” the ‘part’ being equivalent to and not merely a symbol of the whole.

The second element Jesus revealed at the Last Supper was the superseding of God’s original covenant with Israel (Exodus 24:3-11) with the establishment of His ‘new’ covenant. The Bible clearly states that the first covenant was inadequate to produce redemption for Israel

and the Father are one” (John 10:30)—where the part and the whole, the sign and the thing signified, are one and the same.

because of their continual defection and rebellion (Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 3:20; 31:32; Hosea 6:7-ff). Thus Jeremiah spoke of the new covenant yet to come (Jeremiah 31:31-34) and which Christ announced in the Upper Room.

That night, as Jesus looked beyond the meal to His impending sacrifice, His use of a cup as the symbol of His death fell squarely on the shoulders of Old Testament usage and typology; the ‘cup’ being an integral part of the vocabulary that described man’s relationship with God. When blessed, man’s life was a cup filled with joy (cf., Psalm 16:5; 23:5). When standing in rebellion against God, man’s cup is full of bitter judgment (cf., Psalm 11:6; Ezekiel 23:33; Psalm 75:8). This same cup can be filled with God’s wrath and condemnation (cf., Isaiah 51:17) or with goodness and thanksgiving (cf., Psalm 116:13). Even more, the sharing of a common cup denoted the deepest level of intimacy (cf., 2 Samuel 12:3).

Jesus drew on these nuances when He proclaimed, “This cup [is] my covenant-blood.” In this statement we find the forth-telling of His death, the propitiation of our sins through His blood, and the inauguration of the new covenant. And while His work on the cross would be solitary and unique, at this table He called on the disciples to share in the bitterness of the sacrifice as well as the blessing of the victory it would achieve, for in drinking the cup, as in eating the bread, they would appropriate His death, life, and power.

Even more, John 6:32-ff preserves the Lord’s teaching that His work is non-efficacious unless it is received, just as food is unable to nourish unless it is first digested. Thus, both the bread and the cup are the means of a real and sacramental sharing in the precious body and blood of Jesus offered for our redemption.¹⁰⁸ As Jesus said, “Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6:27, ESV).

¹⁰⁸ Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 117-118.

The third element of the night was Christ's command to the Disciples to frequently repeat what He was doing with them. Since Jesus clearly attached the reality of His death to the elements of the bread and cup, He naturally instituted a command for this meal of meals to find its way into the active, ritual, liturgical, and sacramental life of His followers. Thus we are commanded in Luke 22:19, "Do this in remembrance of me," an instruction repeated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25.

Perhaps no other single passage of Scripture has caused more controversy among the various communions of Christendom than this phrase, "Do this in remembrance of me." Martin suggests, however, that the key to what Jesus is saying may be found in the Passover vocabulary of Jewish worship. He notes:

The Hebrew Pascha was instituted 'for a memorial' (Exodus xii, 14; xiii, 9); and (as we observed earlier) by this 'sacramental' means the nation is carried back to, and caught up into, God's redeeming action. Likewise, at the Table of remembrance, the Church does not simply reflect (as a mental exercise) upon the Cross of Calvary, but relives the accomplished redemption, is taken back to the Upper Room and the Hill, shares in that saving work which it knows as a present reality—because its Author is the Living One in the midst of His ransomed people.* And this present consciousness of the living Christ at His Table is a foretaste of and prelude to a richer fellowship in His Kingdom;..."¹⁰⁹

We must now look at the chief text of the New Testament regarding the significance of Christ's body and blood: Jesus' own explanation in John 6:26-58. His lengthy discourse with the Jews no doubt shaped the earliest theology and practices of the Early Church. While some may debate the intent of the imagery (eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood) as a reference to communion, many Christians understand this to be the case. In fact, numerous

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 118-119. * Martin's footnote to this text states, "In this sense, we may approve the phrase 'the real Presence' (cf. Matthew xviii, 20; Revelation i, 17, 18; iii, 20)."

communion prayers and service books draw heavily from this text, adjuring communicants to “feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.”¹¹⁰

This prospect must have repulsed the Jews, for drinking the blood of an animal, let alone that of a man, was absolutely abhorrent (Leviticus 17:10-ff; 1 Samuel 14:34). And yet Jesus, even in the face of these complaints, unswervingly reiterated:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food and blood is true drink....so he who eats Me, he also will live because of me” (John 6:53-55, 57b, NASB).

This profound teaching, coupled with the Eucharistic formula presented to the Disciples during the Last Supper (“This bread is my body,...this cup is my blood”) sets up a dilemma for non-sacramentalists (the majority of whom would also consider themselves as being biblical literalists). It brings them to a place where something more than a memorial acclamation is taking place at the communion table, if for no other reason than because Jesus says it is so. If otherwise, He could have reasoned differently with the departing crowd in John 6:66—“Wait a minute, I was speaking figuratively, symbolically. It was all a metaphor. You misunderstood me!” Jesus, however, remained fixed on His words. Rather than placate the crowd for the sake of greater harmony and understanding, He took His stand on a rich heritage of biblical precedents and asked the remaining disciples, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” (John 6:67).

In fact, He hammered His point into a conditional truth by declaring, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). How often we miss the fact that the “except ye” used here is the exact same phrase used in John 3:3-ff regarding the new birth. Neither the heavenly birth nor the heavenly food is optional.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹¹¹ Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 105-107.

This sacramental understanding is no different in type or significance than the Old Testament scapegoat of Leviticus 16:8-10,20-22. The hands of Aaron (and his successors) were annually laid upon the goat and the sins of the nation were confessed over it, thus transforming a simple herd animal into much more: the *Azazel*, the ‘goat of removal.’ From there it was led into the desolate places of the wilderness where, as God says, “The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities...” (vs. 22).

The goat *became* sin; the sin was sent into the wilderness. So dynamic was the reality of this ritual that even the man who was designated to lead the goat into the desert had to ceremonially wash his body and clothes before he was counted clean enough to reenter the camp (vs. 26). Thus the goat wasn’t merely a symbol of the nation’s sins, nor a reminder, nor a mnemonic, nor a tribute, nor an enactment but, according to God’s divine instruction to Moses, it received the total impartation of the transgressions of Israel and carried those transgressions away. It became sin.

While piles of rocks often stood as reminders and memorials for various events (cf., Joshua 4:1-7; 24:26; 1 Samuel 7:12), this goat was infinitely more. Similarly, Jesus’ teaching in John 6, coupled with the Eucharistic actions and words of the various Upper Room accounts, demonstrate that Jesus was leading His followers into a place of deep ritual, liturgical, and sacramental truth. The significance of what took place cannot be underestimated, particularly as Jesus gave liturgical shape to His declaration in John 6:51, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any eat of this bread they will live forever; and that bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

We must focus a little more on the phrase, “Do this in remembrance of me.” The word ‘remembrance’ is our English rendering of the Greek word *anamnesis*; a difficult noun to

translate. There is no direct English equivalent because our Western understanding of remembrance is built on a static, past tense, punctiliar sense of reflection; a re-enactment that looks back to an original event like, as previously mentioned, a Thanksgiving dinner. Its usage in the ancient world, however, was not punctiliar but linear, a participation in an event that drew the original incident into the present even as it drew the participants back to the original incident, indissolubly linking the event and the participants together in time and space.

According to Johannes Behm, *anamnesis* differs from pure memory or a memorial act because it is, in fact, a “reliving of vanished impressions by a definite act of will...whereby the object is re-presented.”¹¹² In the mindset of the Early Church it was understood to mean a “calling forth again;” a continuing actualization of the original Supper celebrated as a means of literally touching and receiving the main event of our salvation—the crucifixion of Jesus.¹¹³

This is why Justin Martyr used the word *anamniskomen* when writing about the Eucharist and a clearly different, *genomeno*, when speaking about the four Gospels as memorials of Christ. Justin Martyr was extremely particular about theological clarity. Thus, in remembering the central event of the Eucharist the word *anamnesis* rightly describes how the great Means and Mystery of salvation is continuously brought before us.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Johannes Behm “ἀναμνησις [anamnesis]” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 1:348-349.

¹¹³ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 172.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

Continuity with the Past

Jesus did not remain on earth. He was received back into heaven in Acts 1. But before His ascension the disciples were commissioned to carry on His ministry by faithfully conveying and doing all that He said and did. This meant they had to engage the next generation of believers in faithfully liturgizing the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” For those early believers who came directly out of Judaism—those familiar with both the synagogue and the Temple service (we even read in Acts 6:7 that a ‘great company of the priests’ was obedient to the faith)—there was no need to invent new forms of worship; Christianity was merely the new fruit and inheritance of an already existing pattern of worship, ritual, and liturgy. These cycles of liturgy governed the daily, weekly, and yearly observances that made the lives of observant Jews so rich and so totally centered on God. Since the earliest Christians were Jews it was natural for them to continue in these patterns and, because the patterns pointed to their fulfillment in Christ, there was no conflict.

It should come as no surprise, then, to find a remarkable similarity in both form and content between ancient Temple and synagogue and the worship employed in those churches that use traditional liturgies today. According to Williams and Anstall, the three key elements of synagogue devotion previously discussed—praise, prayer, and instruction—can be further refined into six sub-components:

Praise

- The Litany. The opening part of the synagogue service was a litany that blessed God for His love toward mankind. In some of the ancient Christian liturgies still in use today, this would be comparable to the Great Litany.

Prayer

- The Confession. The Litany was immediately followed by a confession recognizing both mankind’s sin and God’s faithfulness to forgive.
- Intercessory Prayer. This was the Eulogy, or prayers of intercession. Complementing the confessions, the prayers of intercession also prepared the congregation for the hearing of the Scripture.

Instruction

- Scripture Readings. This drew from portions of both the Law and the Prophets. Today this would be mirrored in the Old Testament, Psalter, New Testament, and Gospel readings.
- Preaching. The readings were followed by a sermon which expanded and clarified what Scripture said and made applications to the congregation's daily life.
- Benediction. The service concluded with a 'good word' or benediction spoken over the people.¹¹⁵

In this way all of Jewish worship history was a witness and testimony of the shape of things to come. Surely God, from the beginning, was guiding His chosen people to that place where all things would find their resolution and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

As the cradle and catapult for Christian worship, the Jewish synagogue would have a decidedly profound influence upon the Church for the next 1,700 years.¹¹⁶ Perhaps W.D.

Maxwell says it best:

Christian worship, as a distinctive, indigenous thing, arose from the fusion, in the crucible of Christian experience, of the synagogue and the Upper Room....The typical worship of the Church is to be found to this day in the union of the worship of the synagogue and the sacramental experience of the Upper Room; and that union dates from New Testament times.¹¹⁷

That first generation of believers, then, worshipped in God's chosen way as originally revealed to the nation of Israel while adding and adapting those elements that were uniquely christological in nature, producing a truly complete and fulfilled order of worship.

The establishment of these rich elements of worship took place prior to the admission of the Gentiles into the Church and prior to the mission activity of the Gospel outside of Judea.

Thus, by the time the Gospel was carried to the Gentiles in 38 AD, this order was accepted as the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 22.

¹¹⁶ Martin refers to several older, standard works that demonstrate how Christian liturgy is indebted to the patterns of synagogue worship. These include C.W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office* (Oxford, 1944) and W.O.E. Oesterly, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* (Oxford, 1925).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 26-27. Here Martin quotes W.D. Maxwell in *An Outline of Christian Worship* (Oxford, 1945), 5.

legitimate, authentic, and historically valid form of Christian worship. It was not a Gentile invention.¹¹⁸ As Williams and Anstall note,

Going from Old Covenant to New Covenant, then, did not mean going from liturgy to no liturgy. It meant going from a good sacrifice to a better one, within the same basic structure of worship.¹¹⁹

The Apostles and the New Testament Church

Now it is time to see how those patterns, fulfilled in Christ, were continued by the Apostles and their successors. We will again focus on the sacramental and liturgical nature of the Eucharist since this is the chief act of Anglican worship.

Eucharist

To fathom how the Apostles transmitted the Eucharistic Tradition entrusted to them by Christ, we must understand more fully who they believed Christ to be and what His relationship was to the Passover. Paul helps us when he writes, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8, NKJV).

The Apostles understood that this liturgical Feast, the Eucharist, of which Christ is both Celebrant and Sacrifice has to do with the ongoing, eternal worship of heaven. Hebrews 8 describes Jesus as our eternal high priest. Not only does He stand before the Father as the Lamb who was slain (Revelation 5:6), but He is also the High Priest of heaven’s perpetual liturgy. Hebrew 8:1-2 properly reads, “We have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, the liturgist (*leitourgos*) in the sanctuary and true tabernacle

¹¹⁸ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 14.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 12.

which is set up not by man but by the Lord.” I would contend that the translators of Scripture have erred in the plain and proper rendering of this word, *liturgy*, in almost every instance and in all of its forms.

Clearly the worship of heaven, the *liturgy*, had been established by God since the foundations of heaven itself. But Hebrews 8:6 continues, “Now Jesus has been given a liturgical work (i.e., the work of liturgy) which is superior to theirs, just as the covenant which He arranged between God and His people is a better one....”¹²⁰ According to Scripture, then, what we do on earth should be scrupulously patterned after the things in heaven.

It’s unfortunate that modern translations of the New Testament render every occurrence of the Greek *leitourgos* for ‘minister’ or ‘ministry’ when, in fact, it means liturgy or liturgical worship. This is a critical piece of the puzzle in understanding why the early believers sustained the worship patterns of the Temple and the synagogue within the Church. It was the worship that had been revealed to them by God.

Nobody guessed at what to do in hopes that the Lord would be pleased. God told His people what He wanted and Jesus was the fulfillment of everything He promised in the Old Testament.¹²¹ As long as an altar stands before the throne (Revelation 8:3; cf., Isaiah 6:6), and as long as the Lamb slain from the foundations of the world stands at the right hand of God (Revelation 5:6; 13:8), the Eucharist will be lifted up as the proper sacrifice from the altar of the Bride of Christ here on earth because the worship of God (liturgy) requires the sacrifice of God (Eucharist). The corollary, then, must also be true: worship without sacrifice is an oxymoron.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 17. This is the authors’ literal translation of Hebrews 8:6.

¹²¹ Ibid.

With this in mind, how were Christ's words understood by the Apostles during the Last Supper? While the Gospels faithfully record the words and events of the Last Supper, only Luke includes the words of the Lord, "do this in remembrance [*anamnesis*] of Me" (Luke 22:19, NASB), and then only in reference to the bread. These are also the words we find in Paul's instruction regarding the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. However, whereas Luke only records Jesus action of *anamnesis* in reference to the bread, Paul applies it—invoking the 'formula' in the words of Christ—to both the bread and the cup. How did the Apostles understand this divine injunction and how did it impact the Eucharistic tradition of that first generation of believers?

While this will seem to be a point of review, it is essential for our understanding. Again, for the Hebrew mind, 'remembrance' was a dynamic reality rather than a mental exercise. For example, the story of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:18) illustrates how the woman could accuse Elijah of *recalling* her sin from the past and how the potency of that remembrance fell upon her son in the form of death. According to Martin, to recall something means, "to *transport an action* [emphasis added] which is buried in the past in such a way that its original potency and vitality are not lost, but are carried over into the present."¹²²

The Early Church, likewise, recoiled at the idea of communion as being just a bare, historical, mental reflection upon the cross. They understood it as a dynamic "recalling of the crucified and living Christ in such a way that He is personally present in all the fullness and reality of His saving power, and is appropriated by the believers' faith."¹²³ But how? What was the spiritual work taking place on the Table of the Lord?

¹²² Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 126.

¹²³ Ibid.

Paul's instructions for the correct observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)¹²⁴ reveal that the act of remembrance was infinitely more than mental recollection. Nor was it simply a congregational participation in emotive, creative 'table theater.' The spiritual dynamic of *anamnesis* produced the immediate reconstruction of a past situation, making the past event present and actual, literally causing the original event—through the ministration of the Holy Spirit—to become active and effectual in the here and now. The Eucharist, then, sacramentally brought the crucified Christ out of the past and into the present so that the communicants could enjoin themselves both in and to His perfect sacrifice before God.

The Eucharistic action at the Table was not a kind of Passion Play. It was a declaration: "...you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). It is the death of Christ that is declared in the signs of bread and wine, not a reenactment of the dying of Christ. Thus we may agree in the light of the realism of 1 Corinthians 10:16 that, "Bread and wine are for Paul bearers of the presence of Christ."¹²⁵

This apostolic emphasis on *anamnesis* was drawn directly from the Passover liturgy practiced annually in every Jewish household. At the Passover meal, the tale of deliverance was to be retold and, in its telling, each family member was to relive the experience in order to make his nation's history his very own. To this, Markus Barth states, "Every one of those who shared in the Paschal meal confessed that he had personally been the object of [God's] redemption from Egypt."¹²⁶ It is our western misinterpretation of these events that causes us to castrate the

¹²⁴ It is not beyond reason to believe that Paul's theological application of *anamnesis* to the Eucharist comes from the Lord Himself (1 Corinthians 11:23) and was perhaps taught to him by direct revelation from Christ immediately following his conversion and during his three year 'sabbatical' in Arabia (Galatians 1:11-12,17-18).

¹²⁵ Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 127. Here he quotes from F. Hauck's article in Kittel's *Wörterbuch*, Vol. 3, 806.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Here he quotes from Markus Barth in A.J.B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (London, 1952), 35. For similar treatment, see also W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 108-ff, 252.

mystery of anamnesis from our worship. Martin rightly critiques our woeful, Protestant understanding of sacred mystery using, for example, the reactions of Christians who are invited to attend a local Passover Seder:

It is not uncommon for Christians to expect that Passover will be a rather heavy and somber event, one of great solemnity and deep spiritual introspection. Still others, through vague associations, think the mood of Passover will be like that of *a memorial service to a dead person*. These types of preconditioning have largely come through an attempt, whether conscious or unconscious, to *impose on the Passover Seder one's personal church experience of the Lord's Supper* [emphasis added].¹²⁷

In other words, Martin is saying that we employ a reverse hermeneutic—that we start with our current dogma and apply it backwards rather than allowing the roots of our faith to speak from the past and shape our present-day doctrine. Just how, then, this Jewish liturgical heritage shape the living Tradition of the nascent Church? An examination of Paul's instructions to the believers at Corinth will be helpful.

The church at Corinth was replete with vices, including sectarian strife, indulgence, sexual impurity, selfishness, and a collective worship that was rife with disorder. These were grave charges as Paul held them up for scrutiny before the throne of Christ. Thus Paul was correct in stating that whenever they came together for the Lord's Supper it had degenerated into an "each man for himself" free-for-all. So disruptive was this behavior toward dismantling the community and unity of the Corinthian church that Paul called on them to examine themselves before coming to the Table. As he says in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, "Therefore whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord....For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (NKJV).

¹²⁷ Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, 251.

While Paul's injunction is a serious one, we are also able to see in his words how the Apostles understood the nature of the Eucharist; the integral union between the sign and the thing signified. Theologically, to "sin against the bread and cup is to sin against the body and the blood."¹²⁸ Take note here: This action is not akin to, not tantamount to, not comparable to, not just as if; for these are all comparisons. Rather, sinning against the one *is* to sin against the other. Here, again, is the use of a *synecdoche* in understanding how the linguistic (and spiritual) pairing of these two items mean one and the same thing. This failure of spiritual discernment was so egregious to God that some in the fellowship at Corinth even died because of their wickedness at the celebration of the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Our tendency is to make less of Paul's warning than what he intended, producing a reduction of the original Apostolic Tradition passed down through the Church. Such reductionism undermines the high nature of the sacrament, denigrating Communion to the level of a reward rather than an instrument of grace. The context of Paul's polemic makes it abundantly clear how important it was for the Corinthians to come to the Supper with extreme respect not only for the sign but for that which it tangibly conveyed directly into their midst. Here is a sacrament, says Paul, that testifies to, confirms, and strengthens the unity of Christ's Body. Here is a sacrament that signifies and seals the believer's union with Christ while also filling the believer with the Body and Blood of Christ. This is what Paul holds out to the church at Corinth though it seems they preferred uniting themselves to division, strife, prostitutes, and adulterers instead.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Horton, *A Better Way*, 120.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Paul's argument is strengthened with these words:

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (1 Corinthians 10:14-17, NIV).

At this point we can begin to see the connections Paul is making. The word used here for 'participation' ('communion' in the KJV) is *koinonia* and is translated as partnership, fellowship, or even intercourse. As Horton notes, it is the perfect word for describing this "sacramental union" between the sign and the thing signified. When we come to the Lord's Table to receive the Eucharist, believers are, indeed, sharing in the true Body and Blood of Christ while also being knit one to another in His covenantal body, the Church. Horton continues:

[Thus we] cannot identify with Christ apart from our identification with his church, nor can we truly receive the benefits of this sacrament apart from personal faith in Christ. The communion occurs through the ministration of the church, but it derives its efficacy only through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁰

Justin Martyr, writing in 139 AD, makes it clear in his *First Apology* that the nature of the Eucharist was embedded with at least four distinct aspects: (1) that it was a true anamnesis, a re-calling into time and space Christ's atoning passion suffered on our behalf; (2) that outside of Israel it became a lifting up of the perfect sacrifice unto God which fulfilled Malachi's prophecy of a pure offering from the Gentiles; (3) that it knit into sacramental fellowship all of the baptized—present, absent, and from across time—into a spiritual and eternal body, the Bride of Christ; and (4) that it was the Church's ultimate expression of thanksgiving for creation, providence, and most importantly for the life and death of Jesus Christ.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 7.

Clearly, Apostolic Tradition and Church history are unanimous in declaring that Christ's presence is *real* in the Lord's Supper. Ignatius of Antioch (35-107 AD), Peter's disciple and successor, in writing to the Smyrnaeans of those who hold 'strange doctrines': "They abstain from eucharist and prayer, because they allow not that the eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ."¹³² If Ignatius deemed it essential to warn believers about those who held 'strange doctrines' regarding the Eucharist, it would seem, then, that among the heretics troubling the Primitive Church were those who saw the Meal as nothing more than a memorial acclamation.

Shortly thereafter Irenaeus (130-200 AD) adds this further clarification: "...the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly" (*Contra Haereticos*, 4, 18, 5).¹³³

Athanasius (296-373 AD), to whom we are indebted for defending Christianity against Arianism, said, "But when the great and wondrous prayers have been recited, then the bread becomes the body and the cup the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Sermon to the Baptized*). These words spoken by Athanasius stood in concert with the other ancient Doctors of the Church including Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, et al.¹³⁴

This theme continues to flourish centuries later among the great thinkers and reformers of the Church. Of the prayer that is invoked over the bread and wine and the spiritual change that occurs at the Eucharist, John Wycliffe said that it "effects [makes real] the presence of the body of Christ" (*De Eucharistia*, 100-ff.). Bohemian Reformer John Hus echoes with, "The humble

¹³² Howard, *Evangelical Is Not Enough*, 107.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 107-108.

priest doth not say that he is the creator of Christ, but that the Lord Christ by His power and word, through him, causes that which is bread to be His body;...” Luther also wrote in his *Small Catechism*, “What is the Sacrament of the Altar? It is the true Body and Blood of Christ, under the bread and wine.”¹³⁵

Even John Calvin, who abhorred the high church corruption of Europe, spoke of the true nature of the Eucharist in his *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper*, saying:

It is a spiritual mystery which cannot be seen by the eye nor be comprehended by human understanding. Therefore it is represented for us by means of visible signs, according to the need of our weakness. Nevertheless, it is not a naked figure, but one *joined to its truth and substance*. With good reason then, the bread is called body, because it not only represents, but also *presents it* [emphasis added].”¹³⁶

There is no doubt that, for the Apostles, the celebration of the Eucharist occupied the apex of Christian corporate worship because the Eucharist brought Christ into their midst. Every opportunity to come together in formal worship was an opportunity to worship in obedience to Christ’s words (“as often as you do this...”) as well as the joy and privilege to worship in Christ’s sacramental presence (“is this not a participation in the blood/body of Christ?”).

In the end, according to Howard, the mystery of the Eucharist remains as baffling as trying to understand how Jesus is both man and God, or that Mary was a virgin, or of how the Bible is God-breathed. It will not easily yield itself to logic or scientific examination. Under the prayers of epiclesis the bread becomes body and the wine becomes blood. We must take it by faith if for no other reason than simply because Jesus said it was so. Any attempt we make to reduce the mystery of the Eucharist into something we can rationally or scientifically cope with

¹³⁵ Ibid., 108.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

is akin to the attempts of liberal Christians who want to label the resurrection and ascension of Christ as myths recorded in the Bible as a means to convey abstract truth.¹³⁷

The Further Riches of the Apostolic Era

The Apostles and their successors did more than celebrate the Eucharist. While the Eucharist is the apex of corporate worship, it is offered within the context of a complete liturgy; it is not ‘standalone’ component but is part of a larger, more complete order of worship. This worship included such elements as a dynamic hymnody, authoritative liturgy, formal prayers, prescribed lectionary readings, and creedal statements that bore witness to the Church’s authentic deposit of Truth. These were the things that nurtured the Church in its growth and development as the Body of Christ. And while this thesis has briefly touched on the importance of liturgy—and even some of its basic elements as evidenced in the worship rituals of the Old Testament—we must give attention to how that liturgy took on its Christological shape in the New Testament.

Worship - Liturgy

How did the Early Church actually worship under the watchful eye of Apostolic Tradition? Contemporary Christians often ask this question in order to shape their church services on the Apostolic model, but this question is usually asked with a lack of historical objectivity. Many Christians who disdain ordered, structured, liturgical worship grasp for any hint that liturgy was a later invention of the Church; something imposed upon the pure worship of the earliest Christians after the first century. However, since Jewish worship was very liturgical and since it provided the worship structure for the first believers, Jewish and Gentile alike, then our reading of the New Testament must necessarily hold these issues in mind.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 109.

If we are careful to read Paul's letters with such a view, one can see numerous references to liturgical worship, not just in principles that we must somehow apply to our own settings and hope that we get them right, but in matters of practical structure and content. Our earliest references to liturgical worship come from the Book of Acts. This is where we find the church at Antioch; the first Gentile church established outside of Jerusalem when Stephen, Barnabas, and others were sent there to preach (Acts 11:19-24). Not long after its establishment, Barnabas and Saul were sent from this church on the First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-3). By this point in time the believers at Antioch were a well-established and structured community.

Luke records that the call of Saul and Barnabas to missionary life was steered through the work of the Holy Spirit and that it occurred within the context of *liturgical* worship. A literal rendering of the Greek text in Acts 13:2 would read, "As they were liturgizing [λειτουργούντων] before the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to the work to which I have called them.'"

Modern Bible versions generally translate this verse, "As They were 'worshipping' or 'ministering' to the Lord and fasting,...(cf., NIV, NASB, ESV, NLT, RSV)." However, the Greek word used by Luke is not the primary word for either 'worship' (προσκυνέω) or 'to minister' (διάκονει). Instead he used the participle form of *leitourgeo* (λειτουργούντων), a technical term which means a specific, structured act of precise worship or prescribed service; a classical Greek term for the communal action of a gathered assembly.

While the original usage of this word in Greek antiquity was non-ecclesiastical, its biblical usage draws deeply from its primary meaning. As a compound word, it's formed from λῆϊτος, "of the people or national community," and the root ἐργ, "work." While we often simply translate this as "the work of the people," it more precisely means "service rendered by the

people” and carries with it heavy national and political color. This is a critical observation because, as the term was employed by the Septuagint translators as the equivalent of the Hebrew *תָּרַשׁ* (to minister), its ritual or cultic status also became a matter of national, common concern.¹³⁸ In other words, it meant the precise and correct way in which the people worshipped God and, through that right worship, God’s favor would be evidenced within the nation just as wrong worship would be met with disfavor. An example of the correct discharge of this liturgy is found in the historical account of the high priest Simon in Sirach [Ecclesiasticus] 50:11-20 where the text records reads:

He [Simon] put on his glorious robe...went up to the holy altar...received the [sacrificial] portions from the hands of the priests...arranging the offering to the Most High...poured out a libation of the blood of the grape...they sounded the trumpets...for remembrance...all the people together...fell to the ground...the singers praised Him with...full-toned melody....And the people besought the Lord Most High in prayer...till *the order of worship of the Lord* was ended; and they completed *His service*. Then Simon...lifted up his hands...to pronounce the blessing of the Lord [emphasis added].

“The order of the worship of the Lord.” “His service.” In other words, “the Lord’s order of worship; His...liturgy.” What a marked difference of perspective from the worship services we so often want to cobble together from the things we think the people want rather than the things that God Himself has declared to be His proper means of approach!

Not by accident, then, liturgy came to mean proper, legal, prescribed, and ordered service rendered to the Lord in great reverence and solemnity and through which service the gracious disposition of God promoted the national welfare of the nation. And it was the priesthood, instituted by God, which could mediate the appropriate sacrifices. This sense of liturgy—of ‘proper’ worship (i.e., the ‘right’ rite) was carried over into the New Testament to the point

¹³⁸ A. C. Hervey, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 18 of *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 401.

where Paul himself, in writing to the Philippians, pairs the words sacrifice (θυσία) and service (λειτουργία) together in the vocabulary of sacred priestly ministry.¹³⁹

We must remember that Luke (a scholar, historian, and physician) chronicled the story of the earliest believers with great care. Accordingly, we must defer to his account of this event and take at face value what he meant to say about worship: that the community was gathered in formal, ritual worship—accompanied with fasting—when the Holy Spirit broke into their midst.¹⁴⁰ This, according to Williams and Anstall, was the normative practice for those first Christians. As they observe, “The reality is, in A.D. 46, this early church was worshipping in a liturgical manner using a Christian form carried over from the Synagogue!...This was within sixteen years of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!”¹⁴¹

It seems clear, then, that during the active ministry of the Apostles and their hand-chosen deacons (individuals who would be the most concerned about a worship that their imminently returning Savior would find desirable), formal liturgy stood as the Church’s pattern for authentic worship; worship that opened the door for the work of the Holy Spirit—and not just the gifts of the Spirit but the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself.

This liturgy for the first Christians was drawn directly from the sacrificial ritual of the Temple and those Temple patterns carried into the synagogue. In fact, so close was this relationship with the components of Jewish liturgy that it carried over into Christian usage

¹³⁹ H. Strathmann, “λειτουργέω [leitourgeo]” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 4:222-227.

¹⁴⁰ In the marginal study references of the original 1599 Geneva Bible (notes written by such Reformation leaders as John Knox and John Calvin), Acts 13:2 is annotated with the following alternate translation: “*Whiles they were bulie doing their office...*” (i.e., “while they were busy doing their office”). Specifically, the Reformers understood that it was within the context of the variously celebrated liturgical offices of worship patterned on the Jewish daily prayer cycle (e.g., Morning Prayer, Noon Prayer, Evening Prayer, etc.) that the Holy Spirit broke through and spoke to the assembly.

¹⁴¹ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 25.

largely intact and in its proper order. This is evident in the fact that for nearly two thousand years liturgical Christian worship still follows the basic, six-point structure of synagogue liturgy, namely: the worship litany, the confession, intercessory prayer, Scripture reading, preaching, and the benediction.

While many contemporary churches have dispensed with this order—reducing the liturgical elements (if any) to their “bare bones” along with a nearly wholesale removal of the Eucharist—it was the worship for which the Early Church stood and for which it often died. Worship was not just an offering of those things that struck the fancy of the first Christian leaders, but a direct transfusion of those six major elements of Jewish worship.

Williams and Anstall note this as a “dependency of order” which verifies the historical and theological truth embedded within worship; an order which fulfills what God began with Israel on Mount Sinai. Reflecting from their Orthodox perspective (yet equally true for all of Christendom), they keenly observe:

The faith and practice of Orthodox Christianity is in direct continuity with what God began in the Old Covenant and fulfilled in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! To remain outside Orthodox Christian worship is honestly to be a liturgical amputee; a Christian unfulfilled in the worship of the New Testament Church.¹⁴²

As the early believers continued in the patterns of Jewish worship, they also added their distinctly Christian components which were, in fact, adapted and rightly-interpreted Jewish worship practices. Among these additions were baptism, the Eucharist, and the *Agape* meal. These first Christians, however, were not without concern about the proper way to conduct their worship. They possessed a Spirit-revealed understanding of how most of the Jewish elements of worship actually found fulfillment in Christ and they gladly accepted this continuity with the old; but how could they rightly blend the truth of the old with the celebration of the new?

¹⁴² Ibid., 26.

The initial answer was to acknowledge the old and the new through integrated observance. They kept the Temple hours of prayer and sacrifice and attended the synagogue for corporate devotion, but their hearts were now focused on Christ as the fulfillment of those prayers and sacrifices. They would observe these liturgical observances every day, going to the Temple if they lived in Jerusalem. And on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath, they would be found at either the Temple or in their local synagogues. But what did they do with the Eucharist? They could not add it to the synagogue service, yet it was to be celebrated according to the command of Christ. The answer was eventually and indissolubly linked to Sunday, the day of the resurrection.

Jesus was crucified on a Friday, the day before the Jewish Sabbath. He rose again on Sunday, the third day. Thus the day after the Sabbath was celebrated as the day of the Lord's Resurrection or the Lord's Day. Since Jesus made it clear that His presence was somehow bound to the consecrated elements of the Eucharist, it was only natural that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated each Resurrection Day.

In this way the typical pattern for the early believers was to participate in the synagogue liturgy on the Sabbath followed by a gathering for the Lord's Supper on the 'next day'. Since the Jewish day ended at sundown and the next day began with nightfall, the pattern became one of worshipping in the synagogue during the day on Saturday and then gathering together again that night (i.e., the 'next day') for the Eucharist. As Luke states in Acts 20:7, "On Saturday evening we gathered together for the fellowship meal..." (NEV). The initial practice of the Early Church, then, was to celebrate the Lord's Supper at the end of this *agape* or fellowship meal.

As a carryover of the Passover Supper tradition, this was a means for the believers to demonstrate the love and unity they possessed in Christ. Every person brought what they were

able and the meal concluded with the Eucharist, the ‘thanks-giving’ for the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

As a sacrament it conveyed the understanding and symbolism of the Passover Supper, now consummated and made complete in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the eternal Lamb of God. Williams and Anstall suggest that, for Gentile believers, it was probably their ignorance of this purely Jewish understanding of the *agape* meal that lead to its quick removal from their worship and allowed them to focus primarily on the Eucharistic portion of the service.¹⁴³

The Early Church pressed forward in this manner until two significant events occurred: the mission to the Gentiles and the persecution of the Church. The Gentile mission filled the Body of Christ with people who did not possess a Jewish worship tradition. And the persecutions, which shook the coexistence between the Temple and the Upper Room for Jewish believers, caused the devout Jews to cast off their Messianic brothers, fueling the transition of Jewish-Christian worship into a more distinctly Christian form of worship.¹⁴⁴

Sadly, the first persecutions (recorded in Acts 6-7) were at the hands of devout Jews and included the martyrdom of Stephen. These persecutions were aimed at the growing band of believers whose *heretical* (from the Jewish perspective) joy and fervor were winning converts from the synagogues. This was the start of the Church’s expulsion from Judaism and the redefining or ‘Christianizing’ of its worship liturgy.

It wasn’t long, however, before Christians were totally excluded from Jewish worship; unwelcome and unable to gather in either the synagogue or the Temple. By the time of the events recorded in Acts 21, Paul was being mobbed within the Temple grounds in response to his

¹⁴³ Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 32.

Christian faith. Like a bird being thrust from its nest, this exclusion drew Christians—Jewish and Gentile alike—toward new, Christocentric worship traditions. These traditions, while still remaining faithful to the ancient patterns established by God, were now able to enter into a new fullness of authenticity through the Holy Spirit who spiritually, mystically, and sacramentally knit them into the eternal realities of heaven. The nascent Church finally left the Jewish ‘nest’ for good without ever abandoning its spiritual DNA.

This resultant order of Christian worship departed little from the synagogue structure.

According to Williams and Anstall,

[It] consisted of a litany of prayers, a confession, eulogies, readings from the Scriptures, an address or homily, and a benediction. This form constituted the core of what was to become specifically Christian worship.¹⁴⁵

Added to this core structure from the synagogue (technically referred to as the *synaxis* or Liturgy of the Word) was the celebration of fulfilled Temple worship in the form of the Eucharist (technically referred to as the *anaphora* or Liturgy of the Table). The Eucharist was incorporated into this pattern just prior to the closing benediction.

We have the evidence for this in the archeological finds of the earliest Syrian churches as well as in the rubrics of the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Didache*. We even see this in the unchanged practices of the various Nestorian Churches.¹⁴⁶ As Bouyer states in his work, *Liturgy and Architecture*, “The old Syrian church appears as a Christianized version of a Jewish

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴⁶ The Nestorian Church is also called the Church of the East, the Persian Church, the East Syrian Church, the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, and several other names. This branch of Christian faith traces its Apostolic line back to the missionary work of Peter and Thomas and have, as their own liturgy demonstrates, a literally pure version of worship that has gone unchanged for nearly two millennia. The Nestorian Church is currently found in the nations of India, Arabia, Assyria, Central Asia, and throughout the Middle East. More information can be found at www.nestorian.org.

Synagogue.”¹⁴⁷ There is a *bema* (i.e., raised platform or dais) in the center of the church along with a veiled ark to hold the Scriptures and the writings of the Apostles. In front of the ark is a candle stand. On the *bema* is a seat for the bishop which is representative of the seat of Moses. And to these synagogue features was also added an altar at the east end of the church.

Throughout this early period of transition, the Church that remained in Jerusalem was still viewed as the ‘Mother Church’ for the first generation of believers. The Church-at-large appealed to this congregation and its council—the ‘pillars’ of the church (cf., Galatians 2:9)—for guidance in all things liturgical and theological. It was natural, then, for the missionary churches to follow the worship of the Jerusalem church in form and pattern. Thus even the Gentile churches that were birthed through Paul’s missionary activity followed this same Jewish rule of prayer and order of worship.

A key document bears out the Church’s continued reliance on these Jewish patterns. Eusebius, bishop and historian of the fourth century, quotes the first century Jewish historian Philo in *The History of the Church* (18.1) regarding the nature and form of Christian worship. Philo describes Christian worship as including, “...all-night vigils of the great festival, the spiritual discipline in which they are spent, the hymns that *we* [i.e., Jews; emphasis added] always recite, and how while one man sings in regular rhythm the others listen silently and join in the refrains of the hymn.”¹⁴⁸ This is clearly the antiphonal singing of those litanies which Philo easily recognized as being drawn from his own Jewish liturgical practices and which the

¹⁴⁷ Pere Louis Bouyer, *Liturgy and Architecture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 23.

¹⁴⁸ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 34-35.

new Christians were heartily employing—practices that could be traced as far back as Ezra 3:10-11 (ESV) and Nehemiah 12:24 (NKJV).¹⁴⁹

As the Church began to spread across the Empire its worship was, by necessity, also very simple. Since the Church was under unremitting persecution, worship services were often held in secret—usually in the homes of its members. In the typical form of this setting one would find the bishop surrounded by his presbyters (elders) who, together, faced the assembly. Before them was the Table on which the deacons placed the gifts of bread and wine. There was preaching, litany prayers, the prayer before communion, and the distribution of the Eucharist.

Short-lived was the original freedom of that first generation of Christians which allowed them to be both liturgically knit to Mount Sinai while also celebrating the Eucharist. What emerged under persecution was a liturgical tightening of the ancient pattern with the ‘lesser’ elements of the synagogue service being highly compressed; in other words, a simplified service that focused chiefly on the Eucharist while still reflecting the principle elements of the Temple and synagogue form. But as Williams and Anstall remind us, “[W]e cannot take this liturgical contraction to imply that the Early Church was primitive [or that it] had no ceremony and subscribed to simple beliefs.”¹⁵⁰

Did such a contraction of worship elements also diminish or ‘devolve’ the theology behind what the Early Church believed? Absolutely not! Approximately fifty years after the death of the Apostle John, Justin Martyr wrote regarding the Lord’s Supper: “For we do not receive these things as though they were ordinary food and drink...[T]he food over which the

¹⁴⁹ Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 40.

¹⁵⁰ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 35.

thanksgiving has been spoken becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus in order to nourish and transform our flesh and blood.”¹⁵¹

Nor was this an isolated sentiment. Rather it was the uniform view and teaching of the Early Church. A generation prior to Justin, St. Ignatius (d. 107 AD), a contemporary of the Apostles, believed the Church to be “a Eucharistic society which only realized its true nature when it celebrates the Supper of the Lord, receiving His Body and Blood in the Sacrament.”¹⁵²

This view was directly reflected throughout the Church, impacting its theology and shaping its worship. In essence, the theology of the Church was actualized in the praxis of the Church—orthodoxy shaping orthopraxy and orthopraxy safeguarding orthodoxy. Thus the Church clearly began as a ‘christological synagogue.’

Some Christians may object to this conclusion, however, believing that such a description only reflects the state of the Church at the turn of the century and does not truly represent the Church of the Apostles. However, if we appeal to Ignatius once more—this same Ignatius who thought of the Church as a ‘eucharistic community’ in which its true nature was only realized in the presence of the Eucharist—we can begin to see just how close in time this teaching was to the Apostles.

Ignatius became the bishop of Antioch under the hand of Peter in 67 AD¹⁵³ during which time most of the original Apostles were still alive. In as much as Antioch received regular visits from Paul (during each of his three missionary journeys), Barnabas, and Mark, and since Antioch

¹⁵¹ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 38. They are quoting Justin Martyr from the work of W. Rordorf, ed., *The Eucharist of the Early Christians* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., n.d.), 75.

¹⁵² Ibid., 39.

¹⁵³ Some scholars debate this, believing that he was not consecrated as bishop under Peter but under the hand of Peter’s successor, Euodius, in 69 AD—but no scholar denies that his office of bishop took place prior to destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

was the place where believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), we can safely conclude that Ignatius' "understanding of the nature of the Church and the Eucharist was representative of that held by the Apostles and the Church at large."¹⁵⁴

Between the middle and the end of the first century, then, this basic order of liturgy was fixed and universally celebrated throughout Christendom, though expressed with slight regional and cultural (i.e., indigenous) flavor. At the center of this new Christian *synaxis* was the worship of Jesus Christ and the reception of His Holy Gifts at the Table while remaining liturgically true to its Jewish roots, being faithful to the forms which the Lord Himself practiced and which God first revealed to His people. Williams and Anstall conclude:

Thus as the lives of the Apostles ended, as the responsibility for the Church was being handed on to the next generation, her worship of God was established. The basic form of the Liturgy was settled, to be refined and enhanced over the coming years, but never altered in its basic form and meaning.¹⁵⁵

Chapter Summary

God's intention for our worship on earth is that it be *preparatory*, *anticipatory*, and *participatory* of what we'll be experiencing before His throne throughout eternity. Worship under God's terms was so important that whenever Israel fell away from *right* worship, her national freedom was torn away and exchanged for exile and slavery. The Church was the offspring of the Tabernacle, Temple, and synagogue, all of which faithfully reflected this pattern within their own abilities. This deep reverence for worshiping *rightly* was reflected wherever the Apostles planted communities of faith throughout Asia Minor and Europe. Many of the Old Testament

¹⁵⁴ Williams and Anstall, *Orthodox Worship*, 42-43.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 43.

rubrics for liturgical worship found their satisfaction in the Messiah and this, in turn, shaped a paradigm for New Testament worship.

The three are ‘dominical’ rubrics that come from Jesus are:

- Worship in spirit and in truth.
- “This is my body and blood, . . . Do this in remembrance of me.”
- Baptize new disciples.

The Apostles added nine additional rubrics based on the synagogue pattern:

- Singing.
- Prayers.
- The congregational “amen.”
- Scripture reading.
- The sermon or instruction.
- Confession of faith.
- The collection.
- Physical involvement in worship.
- Greetings and benedictions.

Paul added two additional administrative rubrics:

- All things should be done decently and in order.
- All things should be done to edify and build up the Body of Christ.

While many debates exist between our various traditions about how to embellish these patterns, what we do know is this: authentic, biblical worship falls short of the mark if it does *not* include these things. On the other hand, if our worship *does* follow the pattern—if we present to God a sanctuary that feels like His home—then the promise of Exodus 25:8 is ours: “I will dwell among them.” Fidelity to the biblical pattern is our tangible obedience given as a gift back to the Lord; a gift pleasing and acceptable.

Chapter 4.

Biblical House Church: A Worship Context

The roots of today's house church movement are to be found in the New Testament, for sure. The antecedents of the house church, however, go all the way back to the creation account in Genesis. With God's words, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26), we are immediately drawn into the principle of God's own communal dimension: a *concilium* within the persons of the Godhead; the eternal interconnection between the uni-pluralities resident within Elohim.¹ This same communal image is also woven into the fabric of our own spiritual DNA, so much so that Adam was fashioned to stand as a reflection, a perfect outline, the *imago Dei*, of the Creator.² According to Robert and Julia Banks,

The biblical writings show that God came to be increasingly understood as Father, Son, and Spirit, that is, as a communal being. If this is true of God, it would be very strange if we, as God's creatures, viewed ourselves only as individuals relating to God independently, rather than as interdependent beings who should be in community with one another as well as God.³

This communal interdependency was to be played out within the home and within family life. Consequently, households under the spiritual cover of ancient Judaism were expected to be places of:

- Circumcision for all male children, grafting them into the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 17:10).

¹ Thomas Whitelaw, *Genesis*, vol. 1 of *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 29,2.

² Thomas Whitelaw, *Genesis*, 30. See also Andrew Louth, *Genesis 1-11*, 28-30, as he quotes from the works of Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine.

³ Robert and Julia Banks, *The Church Comes Home: Building Community and Mission through Home Churches* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), 25. For a profound discussion of the interrelatedness of the Trinity and our own call to live out that same divine reflection with those around us, the reader is directed to Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let's Start with Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

- Instruction of the young in Jewish faith (Deuteronomy 4:5-14).
- Celebration of the Passover—a foreshadowing of the Eucharist (Exodus 12:11).

Even though these ‘expressions’ of worship had to be complemented with the more formal worship of the Tabernacle and Temple (e.g., presentation of sin and guilt offerings, sacrifices for the annual Day of Atonement, etc.), the home—in which the parents acted as ‘priests’ of the household—was never viewed as a second-rate player in the spiritual life of Israel but as a key pillar of authentic faith.⁴

In order to fully understand the role and nature of the New Testament house church, we must briefly examine these earliest origins of domestic worship. We must allow Scripture to bear witness to how God and His children met one another outside of the Tabernacle/Temple and what those common elements were that facilitated worship according to the eternal patterns revealed to Moses.

The Garden—O Happy Fault

Although not a house in the technical sense of the word, the Garden “eastward in Eden” was most certainly mankind’s first home. After God handcrafted man from the dust of the earth and filled him with the breath of life, this living zenith of creation was placed in the garden for it was to be his home. In fact, according to the Scriptural sequence of events, the garden was planted and prepared specifically by God—not by verbal command as in the five previous days of creation but, as He did with Adam, by His direct labor—in preparation of mankind’s requirement for a place of domicile (Genesis 2:7-8).⁵ And it wasn’t long before this new home also became the locus of worship initiated by God Himself.

⁴ J. H. Kurtz, *Offerings, Sacrifices and Worship in the Old Testament*, 33.

⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, vol. 1 of *The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia, PA:

Laying aside the particulars of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, of God's prescriptions and proscriptions for the actions of our first parents, of the serpent's subtleties, and of the easy seduction of our human nature, it is sufficient to say that, through Adam and Eve, sin entered the world. What does this have to do with worship? Wherever sin encroaches upon that which bears the image of God, a means of expiation is also close at hand. The events of the Fall are no different.

The fruit from the Tree of Knowledge—or perhaps their very act of disobedience for which the fruit was merely the test or catalyst—moved Adam and Eve from a state of innocence to an awareness of their guilt; a guilt that caused them to make coverings of fig leaves to conceal their nakedness (Genesis 3:7). And when God came walking through the garden, perhaps as part of a normal routine He had with Adam and Eve, they hid themselves in fear and shame (Genesis 3:8). This was so unlike Adam and Eve that God actually cried out, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9, ESV).

God was in their house but union and communion had been disrupted because of sin. The answer, of course, was to confront the sin—first by examining Adam, then Eve, then the serpent; then exacting the penance they brought on themselves; and finally providing remediation so that their ruptured union could be restored. How was this done? Scripture says, “Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

While a number of classic commentators believe that God Himself did not take the life of an animal in order to prepare the skins for clothing—believing, instead, that He merely instructed Adam and Eve with the necessary knowledge to do it themselves⁶—the clear sense of the text is

The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 18.

⁶ John Calvin, *Genesis*, 181. Calvin seems to stand as the originator of this opinion—that God would not stoop to such mundane labor—and it was quickly embraced by most of the theologians that immediately followed

that God took it upon Himself to cover their sin and guilt. As Lange comments, "...along with the word of death there is introduced the immolation of the animal for the need of man....This clothing would appear to be a sacramental sign of grace, a type of the death of Christ, and of being clothed with the holy righteousness of the God-man."⁷ Whitelaw recognizes in God's action of clothing Adam and Eve at the gate of Eden "the Lord Jesus Christ who, as the High Priest of our salvation, had a right to the skins of the burnt offerings (Levit. Vii.8) and who, to prefigure his own work, appropriated them for covering the pardoned pair."⁸ And he continues,

Though not improbable that the coats of skin were furnished by the hides of animals, now for the first time offered in sacrifice by Divine appointment, the simple circumstances that they were God-provided, apart from any other consideration, was sufficient to suggest the thought that only God could supply the covering which was needed for their sin.⁹

Regarding the contrast between Adam and Eve's hastily made coverings of fig leaves and God's skins from animals, Hamilton says,

The first is an attempt to cover oneself, the second is accepting a covering from another. The first is manmade and the second is God made. Adam and Eve are in need of salvation that comes from without [themselves]. God needs to do for them what they are unable to do for themselves.¹⁰

What do we find in this text, then, if the skins are taken as a precursor of the ultimate act of sacrifice and propitiation through Jesus Christ? That in the antediluvian home of our first

him for the next three centuries: Delitzsch, Hofmann, Drechsler, et al. More recent evangelical scholars (i.e., those not moved by the old German schools of Higher Criticism) prefer the literal sense of the text and the theological connotations expressed in that interpretation.

⁷ Lange, *Genesis*, 240.

⁸ Whitelaw, *Genesis*, 73.

⁹ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, vol. 1 of *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, eds. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 207.

parents, sin and guilt were covered by the sacrifice made by God so that their relationship between Him and themselves could be restored. That what they could not sufficiently do through their own labor and merits (i.e., fig leaf aprons) He alone could accomplish through the substitutionary blood of another. Thus the primeval Garden home of Adam and Eve became the first outworking of God's intended pattern of worship.

Noah's Altar

While it would be fitting to revisit Noah and the sacrifices he made upon exiting the ark (Genesis 8:20-21), we cannot fix Mount Ararat as his permanent home following the flood. For even though the narrative soon finds him engaged in viticulture and sleeping off the effects of excessive alcohol in his tent, there is no indication of intervening time or location between these references to domestic life and the altar he built for sacrifices immediately upon exiting the ark. If these locations are one and the same, then we again have an excellent example of pleasing worship enjoined by at least four families (Noah and his wife, and their three sons and their wives), centered on the gift and efficacy of shed blood—the language of which Paul would later use in Ephesians 5:2 to describe the suitability of Christ's perfect sacrifice,¹¹ and concluding with God's own benediction (Genesis 9:1-ff). Otherwise, Noah's gift of acceptable worship was treated in the previous chapter.

The Tent of Abraham

The account of Abraham and his three visitors by the terebinth trees of Mamre in Hebron is an excellent example of 'house church' in the Old Testament (Genesis 18). In fact, it's here in

¹¹ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Genesis—Esther*, 104.

the tents of Abraham where we are first introduced to a physical theophany of Lord¹²—whether the three angels represented the intercommunion of Elohim (as previously discussed) or that the Lord in some sense stood before Abraham while in the company of two other angels. In any event, these three “addressed Abraham as if they were the Lord Himself!”¹³ As Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown observe in their classic commentary on this text:

This chapter records another manifestation of the Divine presence more familiar than any yet narrated, and more like that in the fullness of time, when the Word was made flesh. The Divine Being had condescended to give several special revelations of His will to Abraham. But having taken him into a covenant relation, God was pleased to treat him as a friend, whose house He would visit.”¹⁴

This holy visitation sets in motion several key elements of worship within Abraham’s domestic setting.

Upon perceiving God’s presence, Abraham’s immediate response is reflected in his action, intention, and position. Simply put, (1) he ran to them (2) in order to meet them and (3) bowed himself to the ground before them (Genesis 18:2). While there was certainly a keen urgency on his part to be in their company, what concerns us here is the position he assumed and what he said once he came into their presence: the bow accompanied with the salutation ‘my Lord’ (*Adonai*, אֲדֹנָי, used in Judaism as the proper name for God rather than the unutterable name of God). If Abraham indeed perceived that this was the Lord’s visitation upon him, then

¹² George Herbert Livingston, *Genesis*, vol. 1 of *Beacon Bible Commentary*, ed. A. F. Harper, Ralph Earle, W. M. Greathouse, and W. T. Purkiser (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1969), 80.

¹³ George A. F. Knight, “Theophany” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 4:829. See also John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, vol. 2 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 142.

¹⁴ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Genesis—Esther*, Vol. 1 (Part 1), 155.

the bow was the only proper thing he could do.¹⁵ This bow is the first appearance in Scripture of the Hebrew word *shachah* (שָׁחָה); and while it certainly means ‘to bow down’ it is also a word pregnant with religious meaning.

Etymologically, *shachah* is derived from a now vanished root word, *hwh* (חָוָה), and when it is combined with *artsah* (אֲרָצָה, to the ground, as in this text), it means to ‘fall prostrate’ or to ‘fall on one’s face.’ In a religious context it also describes homage and worship, particularly before the angel of Yahweh or even before Yahweh Himself.¹⁶

Above all these considerations, *hwh* doesn’t merely describe the external action of bowing down, but is also used to convey the inward religious attitude which it represents. While this verb generally denotes an external gesture, it is part of a more inclusive action—referring to the position of the inward heart, one of obeisance, before a person of higher rank; in this case, before Yahweh with whom Abraham is dealing. In time, this word took on cultic or religious action as one of the Old Testament’s principle words for worship.¹⁷

In Genesis 22:5, Abraham uses this same word to describe to his servants what he and Isaac were about to do at the top of Mount Moriah; the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice: “And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.’” At this point, our English translations of the Scripture understand that this word embraces the full range of authentic worship, including the shedding of

¹⁵ Keil, *The Pentateuch*, 146.

¹⁶ H. P. Stähli, “חָוָה *hwh* hišt. to bow down” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 1:398-399.

¹⁷ H. D. Preuss, “חָוָה *hwh*; השתחוה *hishtach’vāh*” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 4:248-252.

blood. Indeed, as noted earlier in this thesis, this story is the first time our English word for worship is used in the Bible.

What follows this act of bowing before the Lord? The presentation of bread (Genesis 18:6), the shedding of blood (Genesis 18:7), the consuming of what the Law of Moses would eventually prescribe as ‘priestly’ sacrifices (Genesis 18:8; cf., Leviticus 7:14, 10:18, 14:13; Numbers 18:9; 1 Corinthians 10:18)¹⁸, the bestowal of blessings upon Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18:9-14), and a period of “intercessory prayer” based on God’s character of love and mercy (Genesis 18:17-33).

The beautiful part of this account is how this theophany of Yahweh and His divine attendants received this worship. They literally took it into themselves. As Keil comments on this passage:

The eating of material food on the part of these heavenly beings was not in appearance only, but was really eating; an act which may be attributed to the corporeality assumed, and is to be regarded as analogous to the eating on part of the risen and glorified Christ (Luke 24:41ff), although the miracle remains physiologically incomprehensible.¹⁹

God alone is to be the recipient of our worship and He enjoins Himself to that worship which is pleasing to Him; worship that responds to who He is with the very best we have—our deepest reverence and humility, our timely attention to detail, our costliest gifts and sacrifices—even when it’s offered from the door of our tents in the shade of a terebinth tree.

Blood on the Doorposts

There can be no discussion on the biblical basis for house churches without an examination of the first Passover; that event which proved once and for all the tangible,

¹⁸ Kurtz, *Offerings, Sacrifices and Worship*, 39.

¹⁹ Keil, *Genesis*, 146.

prophetic, and sacramental means whereby God established the mark of His fellowship and favor on those who claim His as their own. On three separate occasions God told Pharaoh that He would demonstrate a clear demarcation between that which was His and that which was not:

- Exodus 8:22-23—regarding land (Goshen vs. Egypt).
- Exodus 9:4—regarding livestock (Jewish-owned vs. Egyptian-owned).
- Exodus 11:7—regarding the firstborn (those covered by blood and those who were not).

All three occurrences used the Hebrew word *palah* (פָּלַח) which means to be treated differently or treated with honor or distinction. Again, this was not a claim that Moses made about God; these were God’s words to Moses which he was to share with Pharaoh—a dealing that would be “revelatory of God’s presence and power.”²⁰ God was going to take the initiative to carve out of the larger population those who in faith would embrace His means for divine identification.

The ultimate revelatory ‘dealing’ would be in response to the precautions taken by the faithful on the night of the final plague. Even more, the ritual act of the people and the divine response of God would lay the groundwork for the concept of ‘sacrament’ (see Glossary) whereby something tangible becomes the mark or “point of entry” for an invisible grace²¹ and the concept of the ‘Church’, the *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία), those “called out” and set apart from the world. Let’s take a few moments to unpack this remarkable narrative.

The storyline is familiar: God has heard the cries of the Israelites under the burden of their Egyptian taskmasters (Exodus 2:23-24). He is ready to put into motion His plan to release them from their captivity (Exodus 3:8,16-17; cf., Genesis 15:13-14; 46:3-4; 50:24-25). Moses is given authority to perform a number of signs to prove that he is God’s intermediary or *shaliah*—to both his people and to Pharaoh. Pharaoh is calloused to Moses’ petition to let the Israelites go

²⁰ Elmer A. Martens, “פָּלַח 7111” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 3:620.

²¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch (Exodus)*, 332-333. See also, Lange, *Exodus*, 38.

into the desert to worship God. This resistance is met with a series of judgments, each one more formidable than the preceding one. The final plague involves the release of a deadly destroying angel and the killing of every firstborn male, man and beast, across the land (Exodus 11:4-6). But unlike the other plagues which spared the Jews in Goshen, this one was categorical and indiscriminate—Egyptian or Jew—except for those who precisely followed the instructions God gave them for their cover and safety (Exodus 12:3-13,21-23).²²

This ritual consisted of three critical elements: making a sacrifice, coming under the protective sign of the blood, and consuming the sacrifice. Whether from their sheep or goats, a ‘lamb’ was selected by the head of the house for every household (with smaller households gathering under the roof of larger homes). The Hebrew phrase used here is *bet ‘avot* (לְבֵית־אֲבוֹת), literally ‘a house of fathers.’ This is usually understood to mean a subunit of a tribe or clan comprised of a man, his wife (or wives), unmarried daughters, sons with their wives, unmarried children, and the elderly—in other words, a multi-generational, multi-relational, extended family.²³ The lamb was to be sacrificed and its blood, collected in a basin, applied to the top and sides of the doorframe. Once the ‘mark’ was made on the house, each family was to roast the lamb whole and eat it.

We must pause here for a moment and consider the profound theological foreshadowing taking place in this narrative.

- Scripture itself interprets this unblemished lamb as a ‘type’ of Christ—God’s perfect Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7; cf., Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6,9,12; 13:8) Whose blood alone covers us from the judgment of death and destruction (Hebrews 9:13-14).²⁴

²² Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 160.

²³ Sarna, *Exodus*, 54.

²⁴ Lienhard, *Exodus*, 60.

- This blood of the sacrificial substitute, applied to the doorposts of each home in faith and obedience, sealed the family in a protective grace, saving them from the destroyer angel who recognized the blood as God's distinguishing mark of ownership and as evidence that the requisite death had already taken place, thus sparing those inside.²⁵ The blood rebuked the judgment of death and is effectively a type of our own salvation through the blood of Christ. This judgment was to reign down upon the firstborn male of every family. How does this apply to believers today? Interestingly, in Exodus 4:22, we find God referring to Israel as His firstborn son. From this 'first' among the nations, He next chooses the Levites, the priestly class, as His firstborn (Numbers 8:18). And through the sprinkling of Christ's perfect blood, this corporate priesthood of faith has now been passed onto the "Church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23-24), setting Christians apart as a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9; cf. Exodus 19:5-6).²⁶
- The whole-roasted lamb is a 'type' of our participation in consuming the body of Christ, often seen as a foreshadowing of the Eucharist. In the Law of Moses this kind of sacrifice could only be consumed by the priests (Leviticus 7:6-7). Only the priests—or males in the priest's family—could eat from the roasted sacrifices; these were holy offerings and could only be consumed by those who were consecrated as holy. It should not be surprising, then, that when Paul codifies the correct manner for observing the Eucharist, it is now the whole Church, the new royal priesthood which may consume the holy sacrifice of Christ at the altar (1 Corinthians 10:16-18). In other words, the family which dwelt under the protection of the sprinkled blood and consumed the [priestly] roasted sacrifice is now the Church of the firstborn, where there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28), consuming the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

The fact that this incredible archetype of salvation and communion took place in the private home—and with extreme emphasis on careful attention to prescribed action, "doing as the LORD had commanded" (Exodus 12:28)—is what makes a biblical theology for liturgical/sacramental house churches so very compelling.

The Inn of the Nativity

If the first Passover serves as the clearest archetype of sacramental worship in the home, then the birth of Christ in Bethlehem is the richest expression of sacramental house worship. In

²⁵ George Rawlinson, *Exodus*, vol. 1 of *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 259.

²⁶ Kaiser, *Exodus*, 372.

Philip Weller's English translation of the *Roman Ritual*, the very first paragraph of the first section—an introduction to the sacraments—says this:

In the fullness of time, when our heavenly Father was to exercise the most lavish act in His economy with mankind, He did so by means of a sacrament, the *foremost sacrament*: the incarnation with its extension throughout the ages in the Church, the mystical body of the Word made Flesh....The incarnation and the Church together is the *primal sacrament*; in fact, it may well be considered the *one full sacrament of the New Covenant*, all others by that name being fundamentally the unfolding communication of this supreme work of God's manifest kindness, mercy, and grace [emphasis added].²⁷

The incarnation of Christ is the foremost sacrament; the outward, tangible sign of God's invisible grace. And that this quintessential sacrament had its earthly, temporal nexus in the most humble of surroundings is, again, evidence of God's joy at meeting His people through sign, symbol, and sacrament in their homes. Surrounding this narrative, however, is a deeply cherished and firmly entrenched mythos that, once dispelled, will only serve to increase its poignancy.

What is the story as we have come to accept it? Briefly, in response to a Roman census Mary and Joseph find themselves traveling as strangers through the Judean wilderness on their way to the small village of Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-5). Mary is going into labor, so they find themselves at the door of a small inn where they're met by a coldhearted innkeeper. Insensitive to their plight, he turns Mary and Joseph out onto the street—there's no room for them at the inn (Luke 2:7).

Where can this young couple go in a strange town on a cold night? In some popular retellings of the story, the innkeeper's young assistant secretly shows them to a stall in a nearby barn or cave where Jesus is born and, lacking any other kind of a bed, God's Son is placed in a manger (Luke 2:7) where He is soon visited by shepherds (Luke 2:16) and wise men (Matthew 1:11).

²⁷ Philip T. Weller, trans., "The Holy Sacraments—Introduction" in *Rituale Romanum* (Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1964), sec 1.

In terms of a house church theology, the incarnation is truly the “primary sacrament” of God. This sacrament did not take place in the Temple. It did not take place in a synagogue. It took place in a peasant’s home.²⁸ And in this setting:

- We find a home gathering of relatives, shepherds, and wise men.
- We hear a proclamation from the shepherds as they relayed their testimony of an angelic visitation which confirmed the incarnation (Luke 2:17-18).
- There is the rendering of worship and the giving of costly gifts (Matthew 2:11).
- And there is sacrifice.

On Mary’s part this sacrifice came in the form of relinquishing her own life’s ambitions; the surrender of the gift of her virginity; her submission to impregnation from the Holy Spirit; the ridicule she most certainly experienced from her pregnancy outside of wedlock; and the promise of her own travail in childbirth (cf., Genesis 3:16) which included the tearing of tissue, bleeding, the risk of internal hemorrhage, and even the prospect of dying in the process of delivering a baby (cf., 1 Samuel 4:19-20).²⁹

For Christ’s part, He came to make real, in temporal reality, the eternal sacrifice which He freely offered to His Father from before the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8; cf., Ephesians 1:4; 1 Timothy 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20); He came wrapped in strips of cloth (i.e., swaddling cloths; Luke 2:7,12) which prefigured the strips of cloth would be wrapped in for His burial (Luke 24:12; John 19:40);³⁰ As the “Bread of Life” (John 6:32-ff), He

²⁸ For a full and compelling treatment of how the nativity was centered in a private home rather than a cave or stall, the reader is directed to the work of Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 25-37. This is a companion volume to his earlier combined edition *Poet and Peasant* and *Through Peasants Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), wherein he establishes the basis of his exegetical method and hermeneutic principles.

²⁹ For a profound examination of conservative biblical feminism, particularly as it relates to a woman’s role in childbearing, the reader is directed to Alice von Hildebrand, *The Privilege of Being a Woman* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2005), 53-66.

³⁰ Strips of cloth, from *othonion* (οθόνιον), a diminutive plural referring to several strips or bandages of linen rather than to a single larger sheet. Hence, the NIV translation, “strips of linen,” is a more accurate rendering

was placed in a feeding trough (Luke 2:7,12); and from a prophetic perspective, the Bread of Life was made manifest to the world in Bethlehem (Βηθλέεμ), a compound Greek word from the Hebrew which can mean ‘House of Bread’ or ‘House of Flesh.’ In other words, Jesus came as the Primary Sacrament of God which liturgical/sacramental churches continue to recognize every week in the celebration of the Eucharist—and even more appropriately so when it’s celebrated in a familial setting as on the day of His birth!

The Last Supper

The Last Supper was treated extensively in the previous chapter in terms of its liturgical and sacramental contribution to this study. Now we can briefly examine how this night of worship in the guest room of a private home also dynamically altered Christ’s relationship with His followers. Up until this point they were His disciples (Matthew 26:18). But since the Passover was typically enjoined by a family in blood relationship to one another, a spiritual (and even legal) shift was taking place in the disciples’ “family of origin” as a result of this meal.

Once they consumed His Body and Blood, they were grafted into Christ’s eternal lineage with Himself as the elder and firstborn among them. So much so that the next time He spoke of them collectively, He did not call them disciples but brothers.³¹ In speaking to the women who came to the tomb on Sunday morning, He said, “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matthew 28:10; cf., Hebrews 2:11). Nor is this simply a new designation of

than the more generalized “linen cloths” found in other versions.

³¹ A. Lukyn Williams, *St. Matthew*, vol. 15 of *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 642. See also Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, vol. 1 of *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 396. See also, John Peter Lange, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, vol. 8 of *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, trans. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 546.

ministry camaraderie. He is speaking of familial ties and strengthens this new relationship by clearly delineating who their Father truly is: “Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to My Father and your Father’” (John 20:17).³²

Breaking Bread in Emmaus

The account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) is the first post-resurrection appearance of Christ recorded in Luke—and Luke was the only Gospel writer who documented this event in detail (cf., Mark 16:12-13). The elements of this story are also succinctly captured in the “Collect for the Presence of Christ” found in the *Book of Common Prayer*. This prayer is a part of the Daily Office for Evening Prayer (Rite Two). It simply intones:

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. Amen.³³

This humble dwelling of two disciples, this breaking of bread, and this epiphany of Christ are the components which now call for our attention, for this narrative reveals yet another perfect example of sacramental worship in the private home. But the stage must first be set.

It’s the day of the resurrection; the women have already relayed their startling news from that morning to the gathered apostles (Luke 24:9-11; Matthew 28:7-8; Mark 16:9-11; John 20:2,18); Peter and John have examined the empty tomb (John 20:3-9); and disbelief continues to hold sway over the disciples (Mark 16:11; Luke 24:11). In spite of the evidence—the word of angels, the missing body, burial linens left behind, and even Jesus Himself meeting the women (Matthew 28:8-10; John 20:14-18)—confusion, fear, and sadness seem to define the mood of His

³² J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, vol. 4 of *New International Biblical Commentary*, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 340. See also, Ben Witherington, III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 332.

³³ *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 124.

followers. Their apprehension is understandable to a point: the chief priests and Pharisees were certain that the disciples would steal Christ's body (and so told Pilate) in order to deceive the naïve that the resurrection had, indeed, taken place (Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15). We can safely infer that disciples were hiding behind locked doors (John 20:19) because a search for the body of Christ was being conducted throughout the city and that they would be implicated in this Messianic charade. As Henry observes, "...for they feared the Jews, who would prosecute the disciples as criminals, that they might seem to believe the lie they would deceive the world with, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away."³⁴

Although it was this smaller core group of disciples who were hiding from the authorities, other believers from Christ's larger circle of followers were still moving about Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. Two of these disciples were making the seven-mile walk from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. Jesus came up alongside of them and joined Himself to their company; overhearing their conversation and bewilderment over the events of the past several days. They, however, were "kept from recognizing Him" (Luke 24:16).

The end result was Christ's ability to carry on an extended conversation with them, allowing the Scriptures (apart from emotionalism if they had recognized Him) to prove irrevocably the Messiah's mission of sacrifice, death, propitiation, and resurrection. His intention was to show them that the eternal perspective of Scripture is different from the immediate circumstances and doubt which were pressing upon them that weekend.³⁵

³⁴ Matthew Henry, *An Exposition, with Practical Observations, of the Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 5 of *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, 1985), 1216-1217.

³⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 848.

What we find here, then, is that these two disciples were removed from the concerns of the world and brought into the presence of Christ through a time of instruction in the Scriptures. And while this didn't necessarily happen in their home, I stand in agreement with Matthew Henry's assumption of what happened when they invited Him to stay with them for the night:

We may suppose that he continued his discourse with them, which he began upon the road; for thou must talk of the things of God *when thou sittest in the house as well as when thou walkest by the way*. While supper was getting ready...it is probable that he entertained them with such communications as were good and *to the use of edifying*; and so likewise as they *sat at meat* his *lips fed* them [emphasis his].³⁶

What happens next is a matter of some dispute between the Early Church Fathers, classic Reformed theologians (i.e., those who try to negate any interpretation that might appear “Romish”), and more current scholarship. The context, however, is simple. According to the *Talmud* (Beracoth 45.1), when at least three people eat together, the ‘father’ of the house is obliged to offer a thanksgiving; and as a guest with religious ‘superiority’, Jesus was granted this task.³⁷ Luke’s record of the event is straightforward: “he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them” (Luke 24:30).

The unified witness of the Early Church and those theological doctors who could more closely ascertain the hermeneutical nature of near eastern culture clearly understood what this action signified. Augustine writes of this verse in his *Letter 149*, “And no one should doubt that his being recognized in the breaking of bread is the sacrament, which brings us together in recognizing him.” And again in his *Sermon 234.2*,

³⁶ Matthew Henry, *An Exposition, with Practical Observations, of the Gospel According to St. Luke*, vol. 5 of *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, 1985), 839.

³⁷ J. J. van Oosterzee, *The Gospel according to Luke*, vol. 8 of *Lange’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, trans. Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 392.

The faithful know what I'm talking about. They know Christ in the breaking of bread. It isn't every loaf of bread, you see, but the one that receives Christ's blessing and becomes the body of Christ. That's where they recognized him.³⁸

Spence appeals to this Early Church witness, saying,

This taking the bread, and blessing it, and breaking it, and then giving it to them, was no ordinary act of courtesy, or welcome, or friendship, which, from a master or teacher might be shown to his disciples. It resembles too closely the great sacramental act in the upper room, when Jesus was alone with his apostles, for us to mistake its solemn sacramental character. The great teachers of the Church in different ages have generally so understood it. So Chrysostom in the Eastern, and Augustine in the Western Church; so Theophylact, and later Beza the Reformer all affirm that this meal was the sacrament...that in this solemn breaking of bread the Church would recognize their Master's presence.³⁹

And, finally, Franklin offers his own exegesis on this verse, saying,

To ask how two people could walk 7 miles without recognizing someone who was not familiar to them but was also at that time in the forefront of their concerns, is to misread the nature of Luke's story, which is told, not so much as to describe a past encounter, as to show how the *eucharistic meals of his church unite them to the living presence of the risen Lord* [emphasis added]. Acts will put the 'breaking of bread' at the heart of the life of the young community (2:42). That formed the climax of the act of Jesus at the last supper as Luke tells of it (22:19a), and it is that action that realizes and discloses his presence after the resurrection (24:35).⁴⁰

Inasmuch as Christ's post-resurrection appearances frequently happened within the context of meals (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:41-143; John 21:21-ff; Acts 1:4; 10:41), the Early Church expected the Lord to sacramentally 'appear' within the setting of the Eucharist; that He would truly be 'present' within the offering of the Bread and Wine—the 'Real Presence' of His Body and Blood.⁴¹

³⁸ Just, *Luke*, 382.

³⁹ Spence, *St. Luke*, 272.

⁴⁰ Eric Franklin, "Luke," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 958.

⁴¹ I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, vol. 3 of *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,

What happened as a result of this sacred meal with Christ? One aspect has already been mentioned: “their eyes were opened” (Luke 24:30). With open eyes also came the witness of the Holy Spirit which they recognized as a ‘burning’ in their hearts (24:32). This internal witness compelled them to share the resurrection kerygma with others; a message made all the more spectacular because of Christ’s sudden and supernatural departure from their presence. Let us briefly examine these two results.

Just as their eyes were held from recognizing Jesus at the beginning of their encounter, He is revealed to them in this meal, their eyes are opened, and they now recognize Him. The meaning of this detail is clear: their eyes were opened by God through divine action,⁴² perhaps even using the sacramental nature of the bread itself as the means.⁴³ Again, Matthew Henry comments: “Whatever it was which had hitherto concealed him from them, it was now taken out of the way; the mists were scattered, the veil was taken off, and then they made no question but it was their Master.”⁴⁴

Once they recognize Him the catalyst is introduced, the seed is planted, the revelation is made clear, and He supernaturally dismisses Himself so that He can complete His promises made to the women at the tomb to meet with the rest of the disciples (Matthew 28:7-10; cf., Mark 16:7; Luke 24:9-10; John 20:17).⁴⁵ And as a result of His time spent with the two disciples at Emmaus, the fact of His resurrection can finally be verified on the word of “two or three

1989), 898.

⁴² Evans, *Luke*, 351. See also Walter L. Liefeld, *Luke*, vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 1054.

⁴³ van Oosterzee, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 392.

⁴⁴ Henry, *St. Luke*, 839.

⁴⁵ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 850.

witnesses”—the witness provided by the angels at the garden tomb(Matthew 28:5-7; Mark 16:4-7; Luke 24:4-7; John 20:11-13), the witness of the women who heard and embraced Jesus (Matthew 28:8-10; John 20:15-17), and the witness of the table fellowship shared with Jesus at Emmaus (Luke 24:35). What a retooling of this important role: under the Law it only took two or three witnesses to condemn someone to death (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:5; Hebrews 10:28); now it was two or three witnesses declaring that death itself had been conquered!⁴⁶

What the disciples say next brings the final element into the picture: their hearts were burning, *kaïomenē* (καίομένη), within them. Again, the Greek is telling. Their hearts were passive in this, receiving the ‘burning’ from something without; it was being kindled within them—like a precursor “to John Wesley’s own conversion experience [when he was ‘strangely warmed’] as he heard the gospel being expounded in the words of Martin Luther.”⁴⁷ This alone is the work and witness of the Holy Spirit. Origen comments on this in the 3rd century, saying,

Do you want me to show you how the fire goes out from the words of the Holy Spirit and ignites the fire in the hearts of believers?...And again in the Gospel it was written, after the Lord spoke to Cleopas, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” Where will your burning come from? What “coals of fire” will be found in you who are never set on fire by the declaration of the Lord, never inflamed by the words of the Holy Spirit?⁴⁸

It was fire, however, that would not stay contained within these two disciples, for soon it would become a “fiery enthusiasm [that] would soon be unleashed with the Pentecost proclamation.”⁴⁹

This peek into a ‘house church’ setting has allowed us to identify those prominent elements that should be a part of authentic worship everywhere: (1) the ‘Service of the Word’

⁴⁶ This piece of exegesis is the author’s; it is not found in any commentary.

⁴⁷ Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, 899.

⁴⁸ Just, *Luke*, 382.

⁴⁹ Evans, *Luke*, 351.

through Scripture and catechesis; (2) the ‘Service of the Table’ through the celebration of the Eucharist; (3) the witness of the Holy Spirit regarding the Real Presence of Christ on and at the altar—“Then the two told...how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread” (Luke 24:35); and finally (4) the passion to witness that ‘realized’ faith to the world beyond.

Acts and the Birth of the Church

When the followers of Christ became the “Church of the Firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23), they were grafted into a divinely revealed pattern of worship that began with Moses and was faithfully transmitted from generation to generation down through the ages. These were patterns of liturgy, patterns of prayer, patterns of sacrifice perfected in Christ; unalterable patterns because they faithfully echoed the eternal worship of heaven. These patterns were codified in the Tabernacle, made resplendent in the Temple, spiritually embraced in the synagogue, and were finally transmitted with all fullness and fidelity into the worship of the fledgling Church. In fact, the issue facing the Apostles wasn’t whether Jews could participate in this fresh move of the Spirit, but whether the Gentiles, upon reconciliation to God, could participate in what was Jewish sacred liturgy. Even Paul made it clear that the Jews alone had been uniquely entrusted with *the worship*, the divine service, the sacred ministration of God (Romans 9:4).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The word Paul uses here, *latreia* (λατρεία), has been variously rendered as ‘the temple service’ (HCSB, NASB), ‘the service of God’ (KJV, NKJV), ‘the temple worship’ (NIV), and ‘the worship’ (RSV, NRSV, ESV), all speaking the unique ‘religious duty’ that God expects. It has also been very poorly translated as “They have the privilege of worshipping him...” (NLT), casting the emphasis on the people rather than on the nature of the worship. At its root is the sense of cultic, ritual, liturgical ministry to God through the use of proper forms and sacrifices. In the three of its five NT instances it refers specifically to sacrificial ministry as governed by the Law. Apart from this, an equally significant element in this list of gifts given to Israel for its stewardship is the constant repetition—like a hammer to an anvil—of the definite article which, in the Greek, conveys to its accompanying noun a heightened sense of singularity or importance. We don’t often see this distinction in our English translations since we generally add the definite article even when it’s not in the Greek text, thus diluting the intentionality of the definite article when it is in the Greek text. In the case of this verse, the definite article is repeated over and over, thus signaling to the reader that these items are of an extremely unique and dynamic nature—with one of them being “*the worship*” by which Paul intends to clearly distinguish it from other kinds or forms of worship. In other words, Israel was ‘gifted’ with the only worship that God accepted. See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “latreuo [to serve], latreia [service]” in *Theological*

Christianity was, for all practical purposes, liturgically Jewish to the core. According to Moseley, “for its first one hundred years, the Church remained very much a part of first-century Judaism,...The structure of the local synagogues was carried over directly into the structure of the early Church.”⁵¹ How does this Jewish connection apply to our study on house churches?

Moseley continues:

All of the initial Christians were either Jews by birth or by conversion, and apparently there were no Gentile members for at least the first ten years. This conclusion is implied by several texts, including Acts 10, where, approximately ten years after His ascension, the Lord had to instruct Peter three times to go into the house of a Gentile. This strongly suggests that the Jewish Church had been *meeting house to house and breaking bread only in Jewish homes up to that time* [emphasis added].⁵²

What we see, then, is that synagogue order, structure, leadership, and liturgy were carried into private homes; a worship made complete with the addition of the Eucharist; a worship that brought the new Christians full circle into the original patterns of worship in the Tabernacle and the Temple. And since the religious traditions of Judaism contained everything necessary (at least in type and shadow; cf., Luke 24:27) to faithfully worship Christ, there was no need to invent new forms of worship. As Martin suggests, “Christianity entered into the inheritance of an already existing pattern of worship, provided by the Temple ritual and synagogue Liturgy.”⁵³ The only ‘issue’ was how to transfer these patterns into the home.

After the destruction of the Temple and the deportation of the Jews into exile, rabbis referred to the home as a miniature temple consecrated for the worship of God (a “house of

Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 503-504.

⁵¹ Moseley, *Yeshua*, 8.

⁵² Moseley, *Yeshua*, 11.

⁵³ Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 19.

prayer”), for training in Torah (a “house of study”), and for the serving of community needs (a “house of assembly”). This religious nature of the home was easily transferred to the corporate life of the Early Church with little or no theological modification. So ready were the first believers to use their homes as places of worship that,

Not until the third century do we have evidence of special buildings being constructed for Christian gatherings and, even then, they were modeled on the room for receiving guests in the typical Roman and Greek household.⁵⁴

It wasn’t long before the people, gathered in these homes, would be referred to as the “household of God” (οἶκος θεου, cf., 1 Timothy 3:15); a term clearly reflecting two important aspects about the Early Church: (a) that the house/family constituted the fundamental unit of the local church, and (b), the church’s social structure was patterned after the household.⁵⁵ These were the homes that hosted mighty moves of the Holy Spirit, defining moments for the strengthening of faith under difficult trials, all-night prayer vigils, preaching and teaching, miraculous interventions, baptisms, and the celebration of the Eucharist (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4; 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 10:22-23; 12:12; 16:31-32; 16:40; 18:7-8; 20:8; 20:20; 28:30).

Among these many familiar stories and events, perhaps two deserve a moment of special treatment. The first is found in Acts 8:3 where Saul is zealous to destroy the Church, having been given written authority from the high priest and council of elders to stamp out the ‘Way’ (cf., Acts 22:4-5; 26:10). In his quest to root out the faithful, he becomes nothing less than the arch-persecutor of Christ Himself (Acts 9:4-5), “invading Christian homes to seize men and women

⁵⁴ Robert J. Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2007), 35.

⁵⁵ Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2009), 7.

and fling them into the gaol.”⁵⁶ Why their homes? Because these were the known locations of Christian assembly.⁵⁷

This act of going “from house to house” is recounted by Paul almost 25 years later as he stood on trial before Agrippa. In defense of his conversion and mission activities, and recounting his earlier days as an antagonist of the Faith, he said, “Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished” (Acts 26:11; cf., 22:4). We must remember here that Paul’s use of the word synagogue, *sunagōgas* (συναγωγάς), means simply an assembly of people or the ‘meeting’ itself (and that, by Jewish tradition, a ‘synagogue’ only required the gathering of 10 people); only secondarily does it mean the location or building.⁵⁸ In other words, Paul went to the various assemblies of Christians gathered in private homes. He was destroying house churches.

The second event is a brief notation made in Acts 18:7. Paul’s ministry in Corinth “to the Jew first” (Romans 1:16) was met in the local synagogue with opposition and hostility (Acts 18:5-6). In response to their rejection of the Gospel, he “left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshipper of God” (18:7). Hervey comments: “It does not appear to be a question of where Paul lodged, but where he preached. Justus had probably a large room, which he gave Paul the use of for his sabbath and other meetings.”⁵⁹ Bruce continues, “A man

⁵⁶ Richard N. Longenecker, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1981), 354.

⁵⁷ David J. Williams, *Acts*, vol. 5 of *New International Biblical Commentary*, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1990), 152. See also Matthew Henry, *An Exposition, with Practical Observations, of The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 6 of *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (McLean, VA: Mac Donald Publishing Company, n.d.), 95.

⁵⁸ The use of ‘synagogue’ to describe a local Christian assembly is not unique to Paul. James uses the same Greek term for confronting discrimination among the brethren in James 2:2 when wealthy visitors who enter the ‘assembly’ (ESV) or ‘meeting’ (NIV) are treated with more favor than poor visitors. See Philip Schaff, *Apostolic Christianity: A.D. 1-100*, vol. 1 of *History of the Christian Church* (1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 456.

⁵⁹ A. C. Hervey, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Vol. II), vol. 18 of *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence

whose house was large enough to accommodate Paul's voluntary congregation and (later) the whole church of Corinth."⁶⁰

By using the Book of Acts as our historical narrative for the birth and early life of the Church, we can see how private homes were absolutely instrumental for the worship of local believers. This should not surprise us due to the rich Jewish tradition surrounding the sacredness of the home. With this cursory overview of Acts now complete, let us briefly attend to the epistles as our final biblical record of house church worship.

Paul's Letters to the Church

Paul sends three of these letters to house churches and one letter to a private individual in whose home the local church regularly meets. He makes specific mention of them in Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, Colossians 4:15, and Philemon 1:2. The dates of these letters (ranging from 57 to 60 AD) show that the house church model was the standard for worship at least 25 to 30 years after the resurrection of Christ, spreading from Jerusalem to the regions of western Asia, southern Europe, and perhaps as far as Spain and the Iberian Peninsula (cf., Romans 15:24,28).

Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians was written in approximately 55 AD and was sent to the house church that met in the home of Titius Justus (cf., Acts 18:7; see above).⁶¹ This

and Joseph S. Exell (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 89.

⁶⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, vol. 5 of *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 350.

⁶¹ If Titius Justus (his Roman *nomen* and *cognomen* names) is identified as the same man as Gaius (his *praenomen* name)—i.e., Gaius Titius Justus—in 1 Corinthians 1:14 and Romans 16:23, then he was probably a well-to-do citizen with a home commodious enough to host large worship gatherings. See also Donald S. Metz, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, vol. 8 of *Beacon Bible Commentary*, ed. A. F. Harper and Ralph Earle (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1968), 298-299.

letter also shows Paul's development of the theology and nature of the church, particularly in its local expression. Two motifs immediately rise to the surface: (1) that the local church is God's temple in that city (3:16-17) and (2) that the church is the Body of Christ (10:17; 11:29; 12:12-26).⁶² What profound pieces of imagery for a congregation that meets in someone's home!

1 Corinthians also demonstrates how this house church was highly liturgical and sacramental. Even though this epistle was written 25 years after the resurrection of Christ, the proper manner for celebrating the Eucharist was still of the utmost importance; Paul did not leave the details to their own whims of liturgical creativity or cultural relevancy (10:14-22; 11:17-34a). Even more, these codified rubrics were just a fraction of the instructions he would verbally share with them upon his next visit (11:34b), thus giving rise to what would become Apostolic Tradition alongside of the Scriptural Tradition.

Paul's next mention of house churches is found in Romans, written approximately in 57 AD while he was ministering in Corinth during his third missionary journey. As he brings this letter to a close, a number of Christians are to be commended and blessed, including three groups of particular importance. The first is to Priscilla and Aquila and "the church that meets at their house" (16:3-5). Next are the believers Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas "and the brothers with them" (16:14). And finally Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas "and all the saints with them" (16:15). Each of these references speak of key people with additional numbers of believers associated with them, perhaps indicating that Priscilla and Aquila don't have the only house church operating within that city.⁶³

⁶² Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 7 of *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse and F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 18-19.

⁶³ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 6 of *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse and F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,

The last two letters written by Paul that mention house churches are Colossians and Philemon, penned during his house arrest in Rome, c. 60 AD. These two letters are mentioned together, not because Paul wrote to them at the same time or from the same location, but because the intended recipient may be one and the same. Paul's letter to the Colossians was written to the congregation that gathered in the house church at Colossae; Paul's letter to Philemon was written to the man in whose home the house church gathered for worship. This, of course, is in addition to Paul's greetings to the church in Laodicea that meets in Nympha's home (Colossians 4:15).

The final observation we must make in Paul's letters concerns his instructions regarding the sharing of letters between the house church in Colossae and the house church in Laodicea (Colossians 4:15-16), a distance of approximately 25 miles. His letters were of such spiritual benefit to the larger Christian community that they were frequently shared among congregations as circular encyclicals or exchanged with each other under his specific instructions (cf., 1 Thessalonians 5:27).⁶⁴ Even more important is the evidence that house churches did not operate as independent congregations but enjoyed real-time fellowship with each other throughout their respective regions;⁶⁵ growing together in a common corpus of apostolic teaching and tradition. Whitehead makes the following observation of what would characterize these early believers:

They did not see themselves as independent, self-selected, self-governing congregations of like-minded people; they saw themselves as linked together in the one body of Christ according to an already established, well-understood system, even though they happened to be geographically separated.⁶⁶

1996), 926.

⁶⁴ Robert W. Wall, *Colossians & Philemon*, 175. See also F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse and F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 184.

⁶⁵ Arthur G. Patzia, *Colossians*, vol. 10 of *New International Biblical Commentary*, ed. W. Ward Gasque (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1990), 101.

⁶⁶ Kenneth D. Whitehead, *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic: The Early Church Was the Catholic Church* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2000), 39.

This shared fellowship and kerygma stands as the basis of true catholicity. It also demonstrates how a small Anglican house church is not only knit into the larger diocesan life of the communion to which it belongs; it does not stand alone!

Chapter Summary

From the Garden of Eden to the Pastoral Epistles, Scripture testifies to God's favor upon small worshipping communities; particularly those that gather in the private home. In the forgoing examples we see a unified witness of sacramental house church liturgy that embraces worship, instruction, and sacrifice. We have seen how this fidelity to the heavenly patterns of worship make visible the very presence of the Lord. And we have seen how these small congregations became the launching pads of intercession and evangelism.⁶⁷ It would seem apparent, then, that of all the church models in operation today—traditional, organic, emergent, cell, body-life, cyber, multi-site, mega, recovery, attractional, extreme⁶⁸—only the liturgical house church model has the *imprimatur* of Scripture.

⁶⁷ Though not fully developed in this thesis, the role of the house church in evangelism is documented in several masterful texts. For further study, the reader is directed to Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976).

⁶⁸ For an excellent study on various church models, see Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer, and Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church: How Today's Leaders can Learn, Discern and Move into the Future* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995).

Chapter 5.

Post-Biblical Precedents for House Churches

In this chapter we will present a succinct treatment of house church worship in church history, documenting how the house church was more than a temporary, first-century solution for Christian worship locations. The house church was a legitimate expression of corporate worship that stood in fellowship with (and sometimes at odds with) large congregations that were now meeting in grand, church-specific buildings.

The house church model was the normal gathering place for local congregations well into the third and fourth centuries AD. There were no basilicas as yet; no Christian life centers; no mega-church campuses; just handfuls of people worshipping in private homes. And yet this church model, which many today would consider as a ministry afterthought, was the church that God used to win over Europe, Asia Minor, North Africa, and India to Jesus Christ even before the close of the second century. Notable historian Will Durant describes Early Church expansion with these words:

The roads, rivers, and coasts, the trade routes and facilities, of the Empire largely determined the lines of the Church's growth: eastward from Jerusalem to Damascus, Edessa, Dura, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon; southward through Bostra and Petra into Arabia; westward through Syria into Egypt; northward through Antioch into Asia Minor and Armenia; across the Aegean from Ephesus and Troas to Corinth and Thessalonica; over the Egnatian Way to Dyrrhachium; across the Adriatic to Brundisium, or through Scylla and Charybdis to Puteoli and Rome; through Sicily and Egypt to north Africa; over the Mediterranean or the Alps to Spain and Gaul, and thence to Britain: slowly the cross followed the fasces, and the Roman eagles made straight the way for Christ.¹

What drove this remarkable spread of Christianity? Banks offers this observation: "The Christianity that conquered the Roman Empire was essentially a home-centered

¹ Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ: A History of Roman Civilization and of Christianity from Their Beginnings to A.D. 325*, vol. 3 of *The Story of Civilization* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 602.

movement....[T]he practice of hospitality within Christian homes did more to forward the advance of Christianity than anything else.”² Church historian Justo L. González agrees with the same outcome but from a liturgical and sacramental, saying,

The answer may surprise some modern Christians, for the ancient church knew nothing of “evangelistic services” or “revivals.” On the contrary, in the early church worship centered on communion, and only baptized Christians were admitted to its celebration. Therefore, evangelism did not take place in church services, but rather, as Celsus said, in kitchens, shops, and markets.³

This evangelistic faith, however, drew its impetus, strength, and nourishment from the unseemly private hearthstone set aflame with the Holy Spirit.

Pre-Constantine

While this mode of Christian gathering became the norm across the Empire, it did not spread without antagonism or resistance. Christianity was first viewed by the Roman government as a sect within Judaism and was ‘protected’ under Judaism’s status as a *religio licita* (i.e., legal religion). It didn’t take long, however, before this protection began to sour as a number of incidents coalesced and conspired to undo the fledgling church, usually resulting in persecution. Some persecutions were regional and short-lived; others were Empire-wide and lasted for years. These persecutions began in earnest in 51 AD when Emperor Claudius began punishing and expelling Jews from Rome—including the Christian ‘sect’ of Judaism—because of the ‘uproar’ being created over ‘Chrestus’ (which scholars believe refers to ‘Christus’ or Christ; cf., Acts 18:2). Shortly thereafter, in 64 AD, Nero laid the blame for Rome’s conflagration on the

² Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 49-50.

³ Justo L. González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol.1 of *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press/Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 98-99.

Christians and had them arrested, tortured, and killed. This was followed by persecution under Domitian in 70 AD when the Jews rebelled in response to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (again, the Christians were made a part of this persecution because they were considered as a ‘sect’ within Judaism). Trajan ordered the next round of persecutions in 111 AD; Marcus Aurelius, in 161 AD; Septimius Severus, in 193 AD;⁴ Decius, in 249 AD; and Diocletian in 284 AD. In fact, persecution during the reign of Diocletian was so severe that it became known as the “Era of the Martyrs.”⁵

Constantine

It seems almost impossible that the Church was able to survive during the first three hundred years of its existence since Christianity was persecuted by the state as an outlawed and proscribed religion.⁶ In fact, it was during this time that the Church moved in what may have been its greatest purity and strength. And then, in 313 AD, the Emperor Constantine lifted the edict of Diocletian and Christianity was thrust into the public vogue. Why this change in official policy? Whitehead provides us with this answer:

If the empire could not destroy the Church, as the failure of the persecutions had shown, then the wisest policy was to attempt to enroll this far-flung, well-organized, and highly motivated body of believers as an ally of a Roman commonwealth increasingly beset by barbarians from beyond the frontiers and steadily declining from within through decay of the old Roman virtues. This was the policy that Constantine and succeeding Christian emperors followed.⁷

⁴ González, *The Story of Christianity*, 1:32-48.

⁵ Christine Chaillot, “The Ancient Oriental Churches,” in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 133,139.

⁶ Whitehead, *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic*, 61.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

This sentiment is reflected in a remarkable edict of toleration that finally granted Christians the right of assembly so long as they did not disturb the order of the state. The edict concludes with the instruction that the Christians, “after this manifestation of grace, should pray to their God for the welfare of the emperors, of the state, and of themselves, that the state might prosper in every respect, and that they might live quietly in their homes.”⁸ How remarkably similar are God’s own words to Israel during their time of Babylonian captivity:

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, *seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper* [emphasis added] (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

The Church, through Constantine, was lifted out of second-class obscurity and persecution, exonerated, and made the ‘darling’ in a Roman world of state absolutism. And with imperial sanction, protection, and favor “it seemed that the house church had served its purpose.”⁹ With Constantine’s legalization of Christianity came enormous financial support, donation of lands and basilicas for church use, and the construction of new churches. The Church expanded in geometric proportions throughout the course of the fourth century.¹⁰ But some felt this sudden growth came with a price; that this renewed, liberated, larger, more popular, wealthier, and politically astute church had sold its soul.

⁸ Philip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity: A.D. 100-325*, vol. 2 of *History of the Christian Church* (1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 71.

⁹ Mike Barnett, “Why Do House Churches and Small Groups Persist Throughout Church History?” in *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader*, ed. Rad Zdero (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 163.

¹⁰ Wainright and Tucker, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, 78.

Many scholars characterize this religious windfall from the Edict of Milan as being detrimental to the Church in ways that far outweighed any positive value it may have received. With its new-found freedom, Christianity quickly became a popular fad, the religion *du jour*, opening its doors to a flood of nominal, opportunistic people which resulted in a dilution of its spiritual passion. Another consequence came with the construction of purpose-specific buildings for worship, forever altering the spiritual and physical nature of the *ekklesia*. Christian worship was no longer small and intimate, but was transformed into large, ornate, impersonal, and spectator-type experiences. And still another consequence of Constantine's support was the increased influence accorded to Christian leadership. This influence led to increased power; this power was translated into a bloated hierarchical system; and this system shifted more and more political authority into the hands of the clergy until bishops and cardinals held as much secular power as princes and kings.¹¹ Suffice it to say that, from the fourth century onward, protests against the Church's perceived failure to maintain a pure faith and worship moved a number of Christians to maintain the house church model in 'parallel' with the now fully enculturated basilica/cathedral model.

The Monastic Movement

Perhaps one of the most easily recognized expressions of the need for deeply communal life was the monastic movement, epitomized in the life and example of St. Benedict (480-550 AD). Although there were certainly monks prior to this time, their expression of monasticism was of a more solitary, ascetic, and hermetic sort, such as that embodied by St. Antony of Egypt

¹¹ Rad Zdero, "Constantine's Revolution: the Shift from House Churches to the Cathedral Church (AD 300 and Beyond)" in *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader*, ed. Rad Zdero (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 192-193.

(251-356 AD) and the “Desert Fathers.” But with Benedict, small enclaves of men (and soon for women) gathered together as extended Christian families, seeking to live and worship together in personal holiness and common life.¹²

Dean Kelley suggests that these ‘religious houses’ should be seen as intentional little churches within and alongside the wider church, the *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*, striving to safeguard the purity, vigor, and resilience of Christ’s call to community life and holiness.¹³ While community life was the earmark of monasticism from its earliest days, the original meaning and practice of ‘community’ stands far removed from our contemporary ideas of church community.

When St. Benedict composed his original Rule in Latin, he used the word *communis* to describe the fellowship unique to his religious houses. This word has no direct English equivalent. In fact, the only other Latin word derived from *communis* is the word *communio* which, for St. Benedict, referred exclusively to the Eucharist. Accordingly, St. Benedict referred to the members of these small clusters of monks—spiritually knit together through the presence of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist—as *fratres*, the brothers, forsaking the world in order to live as a family in sacrifice and submission to one another as unto Christ. Thus, these early monastic enclaves vividly expressed the house church model lived out in the fraternal fellowship of spiritual siblings.¹⁴

The monasteries operated, by and large, as religious orders under the growing authority of the Episcopal See of Rome and, like large segments of the Church, a number of these religious

¹² Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 52.

¹³ Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1972), 114.

¹⁴ Patrick Barry, trans., *Saint Benedict’s Rule* (Mahwah, NJ: HiddenSpring/Paulist Press, 2004), 31-32. See also Columba Stewart, “Living the Rule in Community,” in *The Benedictine Handbook* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 279-286.

houses were soon characterized by corruption, size, power, and increased wealth.¹⁵ So while their worship still reflected a continuation of the liturgy that came out of the Apostolic Church, new undercurrents of renewal and reformation were beginning to manifest themselves in groups that stood in critical opposition to the institutional church. The corrective was once again in need of correction.¹⁶

Priscillian

The next house church movement came through the efforts of Priscillian (340-385 AD), a Spanish nobleman. He was a student of philosophy in his earlier life but eventually converted to Christianity and was baptized. Being an educated man, he soon began an earnest study of Scriptures which led to a personal ministry of lay preaching and teaching. His reputation for scintillating oratory and disciplined, ascetic lifestyle drew significant interest and those who followed him were established into ‘brotherhoods’ (a collective term that included both men and women) throughout Spain, Portugal, and France. These small groups of baptized believers met in homes for worship, Bible study, and prayer.

A significant number of clergy, both priests and bishops, soon joined this house church movement and sided with Priscillian in affirming the autonomy of each house group—a move which caused tension with the official state church. This tension led to censure, and censure led to excommunication.

¹⁵ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., “Benedictine Order,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 186.

¹⁶ Bruno Bürki, “The Reformed Tradition in Continental Europe,” in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 436.

In spite of these official actions he was eventually ordained a priest and then consecrated as the bishop of Avila, Spain. His episcopal status, however, still wasn't enough to stop his detractors from charging him with heresy (some of his personal teachings had leanings toward Manichæanism—physical matter is evil—but this may have arisen from the practice of celibacy among the early members of his movement). Priscillian and six of his friends were finally arrested and beheaded despite pleas for clemency from such eminent bishops as St. Martin of Tours and St. Ambrose of Milan. Nevertheless, this house church movement continued to grow—even in the face of persecution—for the next 200 years.¹⁷

Waldensians

At the turn of the first millennium a number of grassroots movements began sweeping across Europe; many were solidly biblical while others were clearly heretical. The simple message of these movements, however, compelled laymen across hundreds of towns and villages to embrace Christ and Christian living with renewed vigor. Common features of these movements included recognizing the spiritual priesthood of all believers, the use of offerings to assist the sick and poor, the support of traveling evangelists who preached the Gospel to the unsaved, and house meetings. One of the largest of these movements was the Waldensians.¹⁸

The Waldensians sought to reclaim the communal life and participatory worship of the Early Church. Under the guidance of its founder, Peter Valdes (later, Waldo), this way of life

¹⁷ Nate Krupp and Janice Woodrum, "Church Revitalization Movements Using House Churches and Small Groups (AD 150 – 1500)," in *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader*, ed. Rad Zdero (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 196-197. See also Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity: A.D. 311-600*, vol. 3 of *History of Christianity* (1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 142-143.

¹⁸ Zdero, "Constantine's Revolution," 197.

was given papal sanction at the Third Lateran Council under the proviso that his followers would refrain from preaching except at the invitation of the clergy (perhaps due to the Church's jealousy at the popularity of the movement).¹⁹ The early Waldensians "met at farms and houses throughout the countryside, supporting each other in strong familial ways and encouraging the contribution of lay as well as ordained members."²⁰

Soon the movement spread to Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, and Bohemia. Although their services were simple, they included Scripture, prayer, a sermon (with discussion), and the Eucharist. They were eventually excommunicated as a movement by Pope Lucius III in 1184 for unauthorized preaching. Not for their lifestyle; not for their turning aside from worldly vanity; not for their celebration of the Lord's Supper; but for 'unauthorized' preaching!²¹ It survived under a cloud of persecution for the next several hundred years until it gained legitimacy when one of the more orthodox branches of Waldensians adopted Calvin's Geneva Order of Worship.²²

Martin Luther

At the same time as the Reformation was altering the landscape of the institutional Church, the house church movement was also gaining some rather surprising sympathizers and adherents. One of these sympathizers was Martin Luther. Although the house church movement was not embraced or heralded by the major mainline Reformers, Luther saw this model as the highest goal for those congregations that cast in their lots with him.

¹⁹ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., "Waldenses," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1714.

²⁰ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 52.

²¹ Krupp and Woodrum, "Church Revitalization Movements," 198.

²² Cross and Livingstone, "Waldenses," 1714.

As the Reformation continued to grow across the continent, Luther noticed several trends that caused him great frustration. These included the overall trajectory of the larger Reformation, the mounting hesitancy of those who had originally joined him, the increasing political complexities that were making things more and more difficult, and the lack of vigor in those churches that had first responded to his teaching. While he was frustrated by these trends, he was also deeply captivated by the growth of the Anabaptists and the quality of their spiritual passion. This is what he coveted for his own followers, and it “placed him in a difficult position, for he felt he had to warn his people against these ‘enthusiasts’ while developing a model of church life similar to theirs.”²³

He envisioned a solution that was finally set out in the preface—now mostly ignored by many church historians—to his *German Liturgy* (or more specifically, *The German Mass and Order of Divine Service*). In this document Luther outlined the order of worship for three different kinds of worship services that he wanted the German church to embrace. The first service was the Latin Mass (*Formula Missae*), to be conducted in academic chapel settings so that students could become proficient in Latin and because so much of the Church’s rich hymnody was in Latin. The second service was also the Mass but it was contemporized into vernacular German for the sake of the general public and cast in such a way as to make it accessible to the average layman. The third kind of service was neither for the ‘average’ Sunday congregation nor was it to be celebrated publically. This service was for ‘mature’ Christians who wanted to gather privately in order to practice greater discipline and purer liturgy. The preface to his *German Liturgy* explains it this way:

²³ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 53.

But the third sort [of Divine Service], which the true type of Evangelical Order should embrace, must not be celebrated so publicly in the square amongst all and sundry. Those, however, who are desirous of being Christians in earnest, and are ready to profess the Gospel with hand and mouth, should register their names and assemble by themselves in some house to pray, to read, to baptize and to receive the sacrament and practice other Christian works.²⁴

Luther's only lament was that, as much as he desired this kind of house worship among his followers, he would never see it through to fruition. He said, "I cannot and do not wish yet to set up or to organize such a congregation, for I do not yet have the people for it."²⁵ Although he never realized his dream, a few other Reformers finally began to grasp the importance of small fellowships and using the private home as a meeting place for worship. Martin Bucer in Strasbourg called for a similar plan with his development of small groups called "christliche Gemeinschaften" (Christian communities)²⁶ and, in Scotland, John Knox advocated that "privy kirks" (home worship meetings) should be set apart for earnest believers.²⁷

The Anabaptists

What Luther was unable to achieve, the Anabaptists could. According to church historian Donald Durnbaugh, the Anabaptists were formed into "covenanted and disciplined communities of those walking in the way of Jesus Christ."²⁸ Coupled with a strong passion for missions and

²⁴ Steven Wedgeworth, "Martin Luther's 3 Services," The Calvinist International, <http://calvinistinternational.com/2013/09/04/martin-luthers-3-services/> [accessed February 25, 2014]. For a complete text of Luther's German Liturgy, see Hanover Historical Texts Project, "The German Mass and Order of Divine Service," Hanover College, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/luthserv.html> [accessed February 25, 2014].

²⁵ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 53.

²⁶ Peter Bunton, "Church Revitalization Movements Using House Churches and Small Groups (AD 1500-1800)," in *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader*, ed. Rad Zdero (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 205-206.

²⁷ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 54.

²⁸ Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believer's Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (New

evangelism, the Anabaptists advocated for deeper levels of community between the members of each fellowship and a greater degree of participation in their worship services. The ‘marks’ of these churches were expressed in baptism, mutual edification, spiritual discipline, a biblical approach to church order and structure, and the carryover of their ‘Sunday’ faith into daily life—all of which they believed were essential elements of the Early Church.²⁹

The first documented Anabaptist meeting took place in Zurich, Switzerland in 1525 when about a dozen people trudged through the snow to meet in a home for a worship service conducted within the shadow of the city’s cathedral. The nature of these services was captured in the opening stanza of an early Anabaptist hymn:

What is this place where we are meeting?
 Only a house, the earth its floor,
 Walls and a roof sheltering people,
 Windows for light, an open door.
 Yet it becomes a body that lives
 When we are gathered here,
 And know our Lord is near....
 And we accept bread at His table,
 Broken and shared, a living sign.
 Here in this world, dying and living,
 We, too, are each other’s bread and wine.³⁰

The Moravians

Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf gathered around him those Hussites which had been exiled from Moravia because of their pietism. He granted them asylum in Herrnhut, Germany, forming them into *ecclesiolae*, or little churches, within the broader Lutheran Church.

York, NY: Macmillan, 1968), 33.

²⁹ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 54.

³⁰ Translated from an early collection of Anabaptist hymns in *Neder-landische gedenck-klank* (Zurich, Switzerland: n.p., 1626).

Because they expressed their commitment to one another in small, communal, family-centered settlements (attempting to recreate their pre-exiled lives as the *Unitas Fratrum*, ‘The Unity of Brethren’), they essentially became Protestant versions of earlier Catholic monasteries. They were essentially the Free Church spiritual heirs of the Catholic monastic orders.³¹

Seeing his followers as an evangelical renewal movement within the larger Church rather than as a new denomination, he said, “We must establish the principle that the happy, fruitful, and almost irresistible calling in many thousands of souls, supposes a little flock in the house, cleaving to our Savior with body and soul.”³² And like those early house churches of first and second centuries, the missionary zeal that burned within each *ecclesiolae* proportionally exceeded that of any other Christian movement in its day. “Never has a single expression of the church had so many of its members involved in mission, traveled to so many places, reached out to so many different peoples, or influenced to many other churches to follow its example.”³³

The Hutterites

While some Christian groups were being expelled from Moravia, one group, under the leadership of Jacob Hutter, established itself in 1526 as the Hutterite Brothers. The organization of his brothers followed that of the early chapters of Acts, particularly in the sharing of community goods. Each local community was gathered into a ‘brother-house’ (or *Bruderhof*) and consisted of several large and small buildings. The ground floor of each building was used

³¹ Justo L. González, *The Reformation to the Present Day*, vol.2 of *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press/Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 208-209.

³² Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 57-58.

³³ Ibid., 58. See also J. H. Foy, “Moravian Worship,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J. G. Davies (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 377-379.

for common life, a dining hall, school, nursery, kitchen, laundry, and various workshops while the families lived in the upper floors or attics. Each brother-house was managed by an elected steward or elder, and the Eucharist was celebrated in the dining hall. Their daily order of activity was somewhat reminiscent of the various rules of life in medieval monasteries and manifested, within a family context, the original ascetic ideal.³⁴

Little Gidding

In 1625 a devout Anglican, Nicholas Ferrar, settled at Little Gidding, an estate near Huntingdon, England. He was a brilliant scholar and Fellow at Cambridge, was later the Deputy-Treasurer of the Virginia Company, and finally a Member of Parliament. None of these activities brought him satisfaction; only his faith gave him any sense of peace. When he moved to the estate, he was joined by his mother, brother, and sister along with their families in order to establish a kind of house-based Christian community according to the monastic principles current within the Church of England. He was ordained a deacon in 1626 and, under his leadership, this household—now composed of 30-40 people—lived a life of prayer, work, and worship under a modified rule of life.³⁵

The community members took rotational turns at maintaining a prayer ‘office’ for 15 minutes at the start of every hour, day and night, with the intention of keeping the house under a constant cover of worship. The offices included hymns and portions from the Psalms and Gospels. The community also engaged in Christian service toward the surrounding neighborhood

³⁴ Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*, vol. 3 of *The Pelican History of the Church*, ed. Owen Chadwick (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1977), 192.

³⁵ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., “Ferrar, Nicholas (1592-1637),” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 607.

including visiting the sick, relief for the poor, operating a dispensary, and establishing a school for the village children. Little Gidding gained such a noteworthy reputation that it was visited by King Charles I. Sadly the community was disbanded in 1646 when the estate was invaded and destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's soldiers.³⁶

The Methodists

John Wesley wrote that it was through the preaching of a Moravian in Aldersgate that his heart was "strangely warmed," kindling anew in him the place of the affections in genuine religion. But that wasn't all he learned from the Moravians; he also adapted their ecclesial worship structure to the needs of the movement that was now growing around his own preaching. While Wesley encouraged his followers to continue as communicant members within their local Anglican churches, he also organized them into smaller "class" meetings (from the Latin *classis*, or division, whereby larger groups of people were divided into small groups of 12) within the larger regional Methodist "societies." This arrangement stood at the structural heart of his movement. Wesley writes,

The primary point of belonging was that this more intimate level of community and membership in a class was required before one could join the society....The class meeting was the cornerstone of the whole edifice. That classes were in effect house churches (not classes for instruction, as the term class might suggest), meeting in various neighborhoods where people lived.³⁷

Although Methodism had a deep impact on the Church of England, it had an even greater impact in the New World, and not just in the number of converts it drew into Christian faith. The

³⁶ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., "Little Gidding," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 986.

³⁷ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 58.

success of its small group structure—particularly through the efforts of John Wesley’s principal ‘evangelist’ in America, Francis Asbury—exerted a heavy influence on other denominations.³⁸

The Contemporary House Church

This chapter has provided a brief overview of house churches within the larger history of Christianity. Other groups that tapped into the practice of house church gatherings were the Celtic missionary movement, John Wycliffe and the Lollards, John Hus and his Bohemian Brethren, the Puritans and their house church “conventicles,” the Quakers and their Spirit-led meetings in homes of its members, and Jacob Spener and his Pietests meeting in small groups called *collegia pietatis* (or Groups of Piety). No century in Christianity has ever lacked a witness to the house church. And while many of the aforementioned groups straddled a trajectory away from an ordained clergy class and a move toward the diminution of the sacramental nature of the Eucharist, what never diminished was the understanding that a corporate gathering could use someone’s private home as their divine intersection between heaven and earth. This understanding remained unchanged as the Church entered the 20th century. Several examples follow.

Bonhoeffer’s Community

At the age of 21, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was installed as the vicar to a community of German expatriates in Barcelona, Spain. The year was 1928. But his popularity and scholastic ability were in such demand that he was returned to Berlin and admitted to the university’s theological faculty in 1930. The university sent him to Union Theological Seminary where he

³⁸ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1992), 171-172.

taught and wrote for a year. Upon his return to Germany he could sense the political rumblings that would soon jeopardize the nation and the Church. He came to the full attention of the Nazi party in 1933 when he delivered a lecture broadcast over Berlin radio in which he goaded the public for hankering after a ‘leader’ who was more than willing to be set up as an idol of the ‘misled.’ When Hitler came to power, Bonhoeffer accepted a call to pastor two German congregations in London because he refused to have any part in the compromises that were taking place between the German church and the Nazi government.³⁹

It was during this politically charged time—and at the height of his interest in Christian pacifism—that he received a call from the “Confessing Church” to return to Germany. The Confessing Church was a joint body of both Lutheran and Reformed congregations that opposed Hitler’s policies for overseeing a state puppet church that endorsed Nazism as being compatible with the Gospel. Their objective was to call all German Christians to test the words and policies of Nazism by the Word of God, and to accept only that which was found to be consistent with Holy Scripture. Their ‘Barnum Declaration’ rejected “the false [Nazi] doctrine, that the church ought to accept as the basis for its message, besides and apart from the one Word of God, other events and powers, figures or truths, as if they were God’s revelation.”⁴⁰ Hitler’s response was swift; any church other than that state-approved church was outlawed by the Gestapo as a threat to the Party. The Confessing Church went underground as did its training schools and seminaries for the clergy.

Bonhoeffer was asked to run one these illegal, clandestine seminaries for 25 vicars in Finkenwalde near Stettin. He called it an “Evangelical Brothers’ House” in which the ministers

³⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1954), 9-10.

⁴⁰ González, *The Story of Christianity*, 2:365.

would lay down their clerical status and serve each other by living out the Sermon on the Mount in a shared common life. This life not only included their theological studies but house worship, confession, prayer, and service to one another. It was life together, the life of the Christian community according to biblical principles. It also became the laboratory in which Bonhoeffer wrote his book *Life Together* in 1938.⁴¹

“Parish and People” and Beyond

The first half of the 20th century also marked a revitalized interest in liturgy and liturgical renewal in many mainline, Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches. This renewal centered not only on parish life but the reintroduction of liturgy into home life, particularly through the use of Morning and Evening Prayer as the baseline for Christian home life. Although many denominations and communions were involved in this seemingly domestic innovation, in the Church of England it evolved into the Parish and People movement, founded in 1949.

While it was an Anglican project in its original development, it was designed to be an ecumenical movement that would benefit a wide spectrum of churches in and beyond Anglicanism. The movement involved a focus on the Bible; worship, particularly as offered by the People of God in the Eucharist; and Christian action. One prime example of this movement was the house churches that Ernest Southcott set up in the industrial parish of Halton in the city of Leeds. Newspapers of the day reported that:

Early on weekday mornings there are house-church meetings with celebrations of Holy Communion in some of the small houses of the Halton Moor Estate....The kitchen table is set up within the living room in one of the compact, slum-clearance dwellings. Used candles from the altar of the parish church are placed upon the table that becomes the altar....Home-made bread, the same bread that the family had eaten for tea the night

⁴¹ Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson, eds., *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1995), 322-323.

before, is used for the service. The Bible and last evening's newspaper are close together; and they will shortly be in the same conversation, too.⁴²

This model, unfortunately, was slow to move beyond other Anglicans in England.

Nevertheless, it served as a catalyst for the start of a new trend in the 1950s and 1960s when the Charismatic renewal swept across England, particularly in the Plymouth Brethren and Baptist churches. Members of these churches, ignited with a passion to restore 'primitive' faith, reinvest the five-fold ministries of Ephesians 4:11, and prepare for the Lord's return (they generally referred to themselves as 'restorationists') banded together in house groups under the guidance of network leaders.

The structure of the movement became so large that it even boasted its own publications: *Fulness* magazine (published from 1970 to 1982) and *Restoration* magazine (begun in 1975). Conferences held by the movement were frequented by Pentecostal and Charismatic speakers from America including such teachers as William Baxter in 1974. Baxter was a part of the leadership of Christian Growth Ministries and on the staff of *New Wine* magazine. His ministry and magazine gave him the vehicles by which he was able to advocate for an American version of England's House Church Movement (HCM).⁴³

While the Charismatic renewal movement frequently created ostracism for those who embraced the 'Latter Rain' of the Holy Spirit—an ostracism that often forced them to leave their parent churches and form with others into small groups—another trend was taking shape during the 1960s and 1970s within the major Protestant denominations. On both sides of the Atlantic,

⁴² Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecumenical Convergences," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 728-729.

⁴³ Peter D. Hocken, "House Church Movement," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library/Zondervan, 1988), 450-451.

faithful church attendees were gathering in one another's homes during the week for 'serendipity' Bible studies.

The freedom in these Bible studies to question, explore, and debate hot-button texts and topics also made it the perfect environment for embracing the Charismatic renewal movement. In very short order these Bible studies turned into occasions for Charismatic worship and the participants began relying on these midweek home worship and study events as the major source for their spiritual fellowship, training, edification, and works of service.

This phenomenon spread through the majority of Protestant denominations and even sparked interest in the Roman Catholic Church, finally giving rise to today's expansive house church movement.⁴⁴ Sadly, the ethos of the house church movement is expressly anti-denominational. Consequently, those small groups that emerged from traditional denominations or 'legacy churches'—whether Southern Baptist, Episcopal, Mennonite, Christian Fellowship, etc.⁴⁵—now tend to be independent and non-affiliated. According to Dale and Barna, their motto is, "New wine needs new wineskins."⁴⁶

Chapter Summary

Our brief examination of the post-biblical history of house churches establishes a clear precedent for this mode of corporate worship. The study has been restricted to the house church movement of Europe and America. This is not meant to suggest that the house church is the

⁴⁴ Joyce V. Thurman, "House Churches," in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J. G. Davies (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 260-261.

⁴⁵ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 126-155.

⁴⁶ Tony and Felicity Dale and George Barna, *Small Is Big: Unleashing the Big Impact of Intentionally Small Churches* (n.p.: Barna/Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2011), 247. See also Kreider and McClung, *Starting a House Church*, 10-11.

spiritual legacy of western Christianity alone. A survey of any missions-minded organization or persecution-watch website (e.g., Inland China Mission, One Mission Society, Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs, etc.) reveals that house churches are not only an integral part of the indigenous church around the world but a critical stopgap in the preservation of the church where Christianity is under attack. China, North Korea, Estonia, Sudan, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Cuba, Saudi Arabia—Christianity would disappear if not for the house churches in these countries. And while it might be religious hubris to suppose that the contemporary American church is immune or protected from persecution by attacks or privations, a number of social and political moves are slowly chipping away at the landscape of Christian America so as to constrict the free expression of our faith.⁴⁷

Perhaps the day will come in this nation when house churches are no longer just an ‘option’ for worship and fellowship but a necessity. Thankfully the Church has a successful historical track record of how this model has stood the test of time. It is the one thread that has faithfully linked the Christian era to the manger in Bethlehem and to the skins of Adam and Eve in the Garden.

⁴⁷ From a political science perspective, see, for example, James V. Schall, “Obama’s ‘Right to Worship’ Ushers in New State Religion,” *Crisis Magazine*, <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2014/obamas-right-to-worship-ushers-in-new-state-religion> [accessed February 27, 2014].

Chapter 6.

Current Trends and Issues for Anglicans

In the last three chapters this thesis demonstrated a biblical theology for liturgical and sacramental worship, a biblical context for the practice of house church worship, and a post-biblical history from the Early Church to the present day that documents the ongoing place of house churches in Christian worship. That is not to say, however, that ordered liturgy and the house church worship model are necessarily complementary one to another, at least from the majority of contemporary “how-to” books on establishing and pastoring house churches, even though the Bible and history speak plainly of both. Why the apparent ‘divorce’ between these two elements?

On the one hand, *Christian History* magazine devoted an entire issue to the liturgical and sacramental nature of early house church worship. Article after article contained refrains similar to this one:

In the Rome of Justin’s day, Christian meetings were still being conducted in private residences, in much the same way as over a century earlier, during the ministry of Paul. This is remarkable in light of Justin’s depiction of Christian worship, which included baptism, common prayers, preaching, and Communion....Thus, the house church pattern, first articulated in the New Testament, continued for the first generations of the church’s expansion in the Christian world.¹

In this issue could be found constant references to structured liturgy, Apostolic Tradition, episcopal authority, the theological richness of the sacraments, and fidelity to the revealed patterns of Old Testament worship. Clearly this is how the Early Church came before the Lord. The record speaks for itself in spite of the many evangelical attempts to redact church history in lieu of a worship hermeneutic more readily suited to today’s worship patterns and styles, writing

¹ Christopher Hass, “Where Did Christians Worship? Tracing the Move from Simple House Churches to Splendid Public Buildings,” *Christian History* 37, vol. XII, no.1 (1993): 32.

history from the present backwards rather than letting the past speak into the present.² In fact, some writers would go as far as to say that “liturgy-driven” house churches “clearly stand outside the stream of traditional Christianity” and that the liturgy is a “dominating weakness of their gatherings.”³

On the other hand—at the opposite end of the spectrum—are magazines like *Outreach* which devote entire issues to the growing phenomena of the organic, small, emergent, and house church models of worship; all in direct response to what some see as the unsustainability of the mega church model. In one issue alone can be found the following articles: “Small is the Kingdom Big,” “Life in ‘The Small,’” “Small Church America,” “The Big Challenge of Small,” “Prepared to Think Small,” and “The Virtues of Small.”⁴ And while these articles may focus on such things as strategies for house church health, support through partnerships and networking, the role of seminaries to equip new pastors for the small church paradigm, etc., the perceived ecclesiology in each of these articles is rooted in the call for congregational independence and autonomy from outside authority, the weaning away of house church leadership from an authoritative clergy class, and worship ‘experiences’ that are a spontaneous gift from the people apart from any God-ordained, biblical pattern.

² For examples of this kind of historical polemic, particularly reflective among noted writers in the house church movement, see Wolfgang Simson, *The House Church Book: Rediscovering the Dynamic, Organic, Relational, Viral Community Jesus Started* (n.p.: Barna/Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2009), xi-xxvii, 1-29. See also Steve Atkerson, ed., *House Church: Simple, Strategic, Scriptural* (Atlanta, GA: New Testament Reformation Fellowship, 2008), 15-81. See also Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 49-72. See also Felicity Dale, *Getting Started: A Practical Guide to Simple Church Planting*, 2nd ed. (Woodland Park, CO: Karis Publishing, 2005), 30-34.

³ Frank Viola, *Finding Organic Church: A Comprehensive Guide to Starting and Sustaining Authentic Christian Communities* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 119.

⁴ As a specific example, see James Long, ed., “Small Church America,” Special issue, *Outreach* 10, no. 4 (July/August 2011).

With this background in place, one can begin to grasp the deep-seated nature of the chasm that exists between the Free Church (and the house churches that grew out of them) and the traditional church and the two ecclesiologies that separate them. This chasm impacts everything from the role of clergy, to issues surrounding congregational autonomy or episcopal obedience, to the difference between sacraments and ordinances, and even how each group appeals to Scripture for either revealed (objective) patterns or inferred (subjective) principles for the structure of worship. Even more, this background returns us full circle to the concerns of the original thesis abstract on page *iv*:

- What are the scriptural foundations for mandating the use of liturgy?
- What are the biblical, theological, and historical precedents for house churches?
- Can there be a complementary union between priestly liturgy and the house church movement?

This thesis answers the first two points at some length in chapters three, four, and five; but now we come to the crux of the matter: Is there a place for a complementary union between priestly liturgy and the house church model?

This question presupposes a void or vacuum where liturgical and sacramental house churches are concerned; and more specifically, sacramental house churches that require the leadership of a priest. For while this thesis indicated earlier that there are liturgical house churches within the larger house church movement (p. 2), these do not necessarily require the facilitation of a priest. A sacramental house church, however, does in that the sacraments can only be celebrated or conferred by a priest or bishop (p. 3). In as much as the remainder of this thesis will now focus on priest-led house churches—and since all sacramental worship is also liturgical in structure—all future references to liturgy or liturgical worship will include in its meaning the sacramental and sacerdotal aspects of priestly ministry unless mentioned separately for purposes of clarification.

Engaging the Survey Tool

As the reader may recall, Chapter Two stated that there are no resources, books, or manuals for facilitating this unique, small percentage of house churches from an Anglican perspective. Why is that?

House Church Governing Principles

This lack of sacramental house church resources created some initial difficulty in formulating the original outline for this thesis. The situation was exacerbated even further by the fact that of the 115+ different Anglican communions or independent diocese (Appendix A) which were queried about the role of house churches within their episcopal jurisdictions (Appendix B), 100% of the respondents indicated that they had house churches operating alongside their other ‘traditional’ parishes (Q1).⁵ This is a good thing. The frustration, however, was to see that 100% of the respondents also stated they had no formal written guidelines to help facilitate those house churches (Q2).⁶

Such a lack of formal guidance has proven detrimental to many house church congregations regardless of their parent denomination, affiliation, or theological affinity. Robert and Julia Banks comment that, “Over the years too many churches have failed, because they were not built on a proper foundation.”⁷ This foundation not only includes a proper theological understanding of who and what they are as a local expression of the Body of Christ, but also an agreed upon understanding of the group’s governmental structure, facilitation, leadership,

⁵ Q1: Do you have house churches operating within your communion or diocese?

⁶ Q2: If so, do you have canons, formal guidelines, or established policies which help to standardize your house church parishes?

⁷ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 109.

doctrinal faith statements, and the covenantal obligations of membership within that group.⁸

Frank Viola, on the other hand, advises against these “human props” of constitutions, bylaws, covenants, or doctrinal statements, believing instead that when a house church makes Jesus Christ its focus, “the rest will take care of itself.”⁹

While this seems to be a conflict between two house church experts, a principle truth among house churches is that they enjoy a greater sense of structural freedom and autonomy than traditional churches. Nevertheless, without ordering its ministry according to some basic ‘operating standards,’ a house church is prone to flounder. The same is true for liturgical house churches. For while the liturgy certainly follows a fixed ‘order of worship,’ all of the other issues of operating a liturgical house church are either awash in confusion or held captive to trial-and-error. In this case “Standard Operating Procedures” would be an invaluable aid, not a hindrance, in the corporate life of a liturgical house church.

These procedures are important because 100% of the respondents also viewed the liturgical house church as being able to represent a full parish expression of relational and sacramental life (Q5)¹⁰ because it is, as Viola describes it (although disdainfully), an institutional home church; a “traditional church that meets in a house” with a pastor, order of worship, etc.¹¹ This understanding, however, was negated by two-thirds of the respondents who also believed that those very same house churches should seek additional membership growth so as to expand

⁸ Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 110-113.

⁹ Viola, *Finding Organic Church*, 216.

¹⁰ Q5: Do you feel that house churches are able to represent a full parish expression of relational and sacramental life?

¹¹ Viola, *Finding Organic Church*, 117.

into “full service” parishes in more traditional settings (Q4).¹² This completely contradicts the most basic tenant of even the evangelical house church movement: that “the house church in itself *is* the church in its fullest and most holistic sense.”¹³ They are real, stand-alone churches that are small enough to meet in homes yet function in every as a church.¹⁴

Even more disappointing was the fact that only 50% of the respondents viewed their house churches as part of a larger church planting strategy (Q3).¹⁵ Given the financial obligations incurred by individual congregations or entire denominations to construct purpose-specific buildings in order to ‘plant’ a church in a new location, house churches are a “zero sum” solution for reaching a community. Consider these disturbing observations from Southern Baptist church expert and early cell group pioneer Ralph Neighbour in 1973:

Churches in the Unites States now own in excess of \$102 billion in land and buildings. I am not picking on my denomination, but simply using it as an example: We will spend far more than \$50 million this year simply to pay the interest on church mortgages. This profit by bankers from churches represents an investment which is several times million dollars more than the amount to be invested by those churches for all home and foreign missions causes.¹⁶

That was over 40 years ago at the time of this writing! Imagine what those amounts are in today’s economy as church ‘campuses’ grow in size and complexity. If the house church model can efficiently and economically place a parish in every neighborhood, how can this biblical strategy not be employed as the primary model of church planting?

¹² Q4: If so, are these house churches expected to grow and transition into ‘full service’ parishes or are they encouraged to remain as house churches?

¹³ Simson, *The House Church Book*, 46.

¹⁴ Kreider and McClung, *Starting a House Church*, 68.

¹⁵ Q3: Is the establishment of Anglican house churches part of a larger plan for church planting within your communion or diocese?

¹⁶ Ralph W. Neighbor, Jr., *The Seven Last Words of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 164.

This foregoing variance between the respondents in general governing principles may be a part of the reason why no methodologies exist for Anglican house churches. Indeed, as a trend, house churches are a relatively new addition to the diocesan structure of most Anglican jurisdictions (the phenomena took place before the administrative structure was in place). As a result, bishops are struggling to catch up with a definitive and ‘incarnated’ house church theology within their episcopal ecclesiologies.

House Church Leadership

If Anglican house churches are truly and fully sacramental parishes, then their leadership by necessity must be priestly—the sacraments can only be conferred by bishops and their priests. It came as a surprise, then, to find that 75% of the respondents (25% chose not to respond) reported 34% of their house churches are pastored by ordained priests; another 24% of their house churches are led by ordained deacons; and the remaining 41% of their house churches are facilitated by commissioned lay ministers (Q6).¹⁷

What do these numbers mean? While some of this will be covered in the next section, consider the ramifications: A deacon can lead a worship service and even distribute previously consecrated host, thus effecting a legitimate Eucharist without the priestly absolution after the confession and without the priestly blessing at the conclusion, but a commissioned lay minister is not able to perform even this function.¹⁸ The only other exception may be found in those dioceses

¹⁷ Q6: If you have house churches, are they led by priests, deacons, or lay ministers? (Indicate number for all that apply.)

¹⁸ *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 408. Contained in the “Additional Directions” for celebrating the Eucharist are these rubrics: “When the services of a priest cannot be obtained, the bishop may, at discretion, authorize a deacon to distribute Holy Communion to the congregation from the reserved Sacrament in the following manner.” The instructions that follow include the fact that the deacon does not make use of a larger ‘priest’ host, that there is no fracture of the host, that there is no consecrating or distribution of wine (i.e., communion under “one species”), and that he dismisses the people following the post-communion prayer without invoking a priestly

where the practice of licensing Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs) is followed. In this tradition the LEM acts more as a ‘runner’ who, at the consecration of the Bread and Wine during a parish Eucharist, is immediately charged to convey portions of the consecrated elements to the sick or homebound, and to return straightaway to the Celebrant any unconsumed portions. In this way incapacitated members are ‘communicated’ as a part of the parish that gathered around the altar even though they were physically absent. In like manner, the LEM simply ‘carries’ the Celebrant’s service to the incapacitated but in no way ‘conducts’ a Eucharist at their bedside.¹⁹

The issue of leadership is intrinsic to the Anglican house church. A parish is a parish for the simple fact that it is under the care of someone ordained into Holy Orders. So while individual bishops may be keenly concerned over the welfare of the house churches under their episcopal care, the larger conundrum of episcopal silence on house church structure, leadership, and facilitation is a symptom of each communion’s corporate understanding of what a sacramental parish is, of the local leadership’s ‘cover’ over that parish, and of how that house church parish relates to the larger diocese or jurisdiction.

This failure to fully grasp the value of the Anglican house church parish is not the fault of the bishops or their leadership. It’s rooted, rather, in the intractable nature of the Canons of each diocese or communion; some of which have stood unchanged for more than a hundred years and

blessing. This concern is also directly tied to Questions 17, 18, and 19 as follows:

- Q17: If you have house churches under the leadership of deacons, are they authorized to officiate at a “Deacon’s Mass” with pre-consecrated host?
- Q18: If not, are they authorized to officiate at a “Dry Mass” or “Ante-Communion” service (following the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist up through the prayers of the people and concluding with the Lord’s Prayer—e.g., per the rubrics in the 79 BCP, pp. 359,406-407)?
- Q19: If you have house churches under the leadership of commissioned lay ministers, are they authorized to officiate at a “Dry Mass” (same as above) and/or with the liturgies from Morning or Evening Prayer?

¹⁹ “Distribution of Holy Communion by Lay Eucharistic Ministers to Persons Who Are Ill or Infirm,” in *The Book of Occasional Services-1994* (New York, NY: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1995), 226-230.

fail to factor in the current ‘house church equation.’ For example, in the Canons of this author’s own diocese, two key paragraphs define and regulate what it means to be a parish.

Canon 4: Of Parishes and Missions

Section 2 - *Concerning the Definition of Parish/ Mission*

A Parish of the Diocese is defined as having an Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) of 50 and is financially self-sustaining. A Mission has an ASA less than 50 and may or may not be financially self-sustaining.

Section 8 - *Concerning Church Planting*

A parish, with the consent of the Bishop, should plant new churches whenever possible. In such case the parish shall provide spiritual cover and temporal assistance to the newly planted parish until it is self-sustaining. A newly planted parish is self-sustaining when it is able to call and provide for its own Clergy and is acceptable to the Bishop.²⁰

Though unintentional, these Canons produce an automatic bias regarding the full sacramental viability of the house church. It does so by first relegating house churches to a “mission” status which, by its definition, expects the house church to “grow up” into a full parish with at least 50 members and which can financially sustain itself. And what is the criterion for being self-sustaining? The answer is rooted in the question of parish leadership: When it can “call and *provide* for its own Clergy.” In other words, a parish is determined by its financial solvency. Nowhere in Scripture or early Church Tradition is this proficiency seen as a spiritual proof of the validity of the *ecclesia*.

The house church movement, by its very design, removes the matter of salary and compensation from the debate because house church ‘leaders’ (regardless of their denominational affiliation) serve their people through their own offering to God of financial sacrifice, either as ‘tent-makers’ or by sustaining themselves through a previous retirement or pension plan. According to J. Christy Wilson, Jr., the father of the contemporary Tentmaking

²⁰ The Constitution and Canons of the Missionary Diocese of All Saints, “Canon 4: Of Parishes and Missions,” The Missionary Diocese of All Saints, <http://www.themdass.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/2013MDASConstitutionCanons.pdf> [accessed March 3, 2014].

movement, Tentmakers are those involved in small church planting and leadership while simultaneously supporting themselves with secular employment.²¹ In fact, 100% of the respondents indicated that 100% of their house church leaders were either retired with pension income or bi-vocational clergy with only the smallest fraction of them receiving minute compensation for their immediate ministry expenses.²² And more humbling still was the fact that of all the house churches under the care of priests or deacons, 100% of the clergy were serving their house church parishes because they believed it was God's call rather than being assigned to a house church at the direction of a bishop.²³ There is a completely sacrificial ministry rather than a career path with an upward trajectory.

Perhaps another aspect of the confusion is the ever-changing nature of our ecclesiastical terminology. While it is true that today's dictionary definition of 'parish' includes "a local church community composed of the members or constituents of a Protestant church," that entry is not the primary definition even though it's the one to which we most likely appeal. It is also the implied sense of the word when the Canons say, "A Parish...is defined as having an Average Sunday Attendance (*ASA*) of 50 and is financially self-sustaining." What, then, is a parish?

²¹ J. D. Payne, *Missional House Churches: Reaching our Communities with the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing, 2007), 106. The concept of Tentmaking is based on Paul's practice of providing for his own needs so as not to "hinder the Gospel" (cf., Acts 18:3, 20:34; 1 Corinthians 9:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9). See also Patrick Lai, *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business as Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005) and J. Christy Wilson, Jr., *Today's Tentmakers: Self Support—An Alternative Model for Worldwide Missions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002). While these texts focus primarily on Tentmaking overseas for self-supporting missionaries, the information also applies to clergy who work at secular vocations in order to support their call to particular group of people.

²² These conditions were determined from Questions 7 and 9 as follows:

- Q7: If you have house churches led by priests, what percentage of them are bi-vocational (i.e., meeting their personal/family expenses primarily through secular employment)?
- Q9: If you have house churches led by priests, what percentage of them receive even a small portion of the offering in the form of a stipend, honorarium, or remuneration for ministry expenses?

²³ Q13: Do the majority of your house church leaders enter this model of ministry because they are personally answering a call from the Holy Spirit and ask for your authorization to proceed or are they assigned and appointed to this ministry by those in authority over them?

In its original setting, a parish was an *area* under the spiritual care of a clergyman—his “cure of souls”—in which all the inhabitants were entitled to his religious care whether they attended worship or not. The word itself comes from the Greek *παροικια* (*paroikia*) and, later, from the Latin *parochia*, and means ‘district.’ Originally the *parochia* was comprised of the bishop’s see (now the modern ‘diocese’), but from the 4th century onward it came to be applied to the geographical subdivisions of the diocese which were placed under the immediate care of the bishop’s resident priests.²⁴ Etymologically speaking, *παροικια* (a contraction from *παρα* and *οικος*) literally means “next to” or “alongside of the house” and, in a technical sense, meant a group of resident aliens. In the Early Church, ‘parish’ had a theological meaning and came to denote a “Christian society of strangers or aliens whose true state or citizenship is in heaven.”²⁵ Thus whether one’s flock consists of 50 people in a church which can financially sustain a priest or if it is merely nine people in a living room whose priest must find secular employment, *it is a parish*.

This original meaning of parish also has built into it the kind of evangelism that accompanies the call of a true parish priest. Since a parish is a geographical distinction rather than a member-oriented distinction, a priest’s duties do not end with those who fill the pews of his church on a Sunday morning. He is a priest to everyone who fills the houses in the ‘cure’ where God has placed him. This ministry might not look like choir rehearsals, or rector’s meetings, or midweek ‘extreme’ youth nights, or Saturday weddings. Instead, it looks like helping a battered wife find shelter from her abusive husband, discretely paying a poor

²⁴ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, “Parish,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1221.

²⁵ Karl Ludwig Schmidt and Martin Anton Schmidt, “*παροικια*,” in Vol. 5 of *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 841-853.

neighbor's heating oil bill when their tank runs empty in the middle of winter, providing an extra set of hands to a farmer who needs to get all of his freshly bailed hay in before it rains that night, taking food from his pantry or freezer to help feed a neighbor's family, or offering his home for emergency foster care. This kind of 'parochial' ministry was best lived out by the Russian *staretzi* (holy men) who found every opportunity to incarnate the hands and feet of Christ to the communities where they lived.²⁶

Perhaps Geoffrey Chaucer was a bit closer to describing the true nature of Anglican parish life through his introduction of the 'Parson' in the Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*. Note how the issues of *sacrifice*, *humility*, and *community* mentioned above characterize this Parson's cure even when opportunities were available for 'greater' things:

There was a good man of religion, a poor Parson, but rich in holy thought and deed. He was also a learned man, a clerk, and would faithfully preach Christ's gospel and devoutly instruct his parishioners. He was benign, wonderfully diligent, and patient in adversity, as he was often tested. He was loath to excommunicate for unpaid tithes, but rather would *give to his poor parishioners* out of the church alms and also *of his own substance; in little he found sufficiency. His parish was wide and the houses far apart*, but not even for thunder or rain did he neglect to visit the farthest, great or small, in sickness or misfortune, going on foot, a staff in his hand....He would not farm out his benefice, nor leave his sheep stuck fast in the mire, while he ran to London to St. Paul's, to get an *easy appointment as a chantry-priest*, or to be retained by some guild, but *dwelled at home and guarded his fold well*, so that the wolf would not make it miscarry....There was nowhere a better priest than he. *He looked for no pomp and reverence*, nor yet was his conscience too particular; but the teaching of Christ and his apostles he taught, and first he followed it himself [emphasis added].²⁷

Thus, while the actual house church may only boast a membership in the single digits, the house church *parish* is much larger—perhaps into the hundreds as is the case with this author—and the

²⁶ Catherine de Hueck Doherty, *Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1990), 32.

²⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, Prologue, lines 479-530 (modern English translation).

overall ministry is more unto like that of Christ's own—feeding, healing, forgiving, engaging in all the cycles of community life—whether the people attend the services or not.

The distinctions of what constitute a parish are, no doubt, hard-to-alter ecclesiastical perspectives, although the stirrings of change may be on the horizon. This author's diocese belongs to a larger communion which requires annual congregational reporting—a detailed report that far exceeds any category in which a house church might participate. In fact, last year's report made such sweeping expectations of what the parishes in the communion should report on in terms of attendance, missions giving, conversions, baptisms, valuation of church property, clergy salaries, etc., that many smaller parishes opted to go unreported. This, of course, resulted in far fewer reports (and statistical data) than what the communion desired. As a corrective, an email announcing the particulars of this year's report made this subtle change:

Please realize that for the purposes of this report, the working definition of a 'Congregation' is more broad than that of an established parish. A Congregation is "*a unique worshipping community where the Word is preached and the sacraments are celebrated* [emphasis added]." In the past, some congregations have not reported when they could have because they assumed that they needed to be fully independent.²⁸

While this is certainly a move to encourage greater reporting, it is, nevertheless, a glimmer of recognition from the provincial level that congregations come in different sizes and with different calls from God for unique ministry to their local communities. Only time will tell if this acknowledgement will eventually trickle down as impetus for changes to the Canons of each diocese.

²⁸ Andrew Gross, e-mail to Anglican Church in North America mailing list, March 6, 2014, with link to the Congregational Reporting Help page (FAQs), <http://www.acna.org/help> [accessed March 7, 2014].

House Church Worship

Anglican worship is sacramental. Anglican worship is traditional. Anglican worship is deeply rooted in the Catholic liturgical tradition. Anglican worship is adaptive and flexible within the ‘fence line’ of the rubrics. And Anglican worship is scriptural—from the opening words of “Blessed be God” to the closing words of “Thanks be to God,” every sentence, every phrase comes from the Bible.²⁹ Anglican worship is ‘encounter’ with the living presence of the Risen Lord through Eucharistic Celebration. Anglican worship is many things, but Anglican worship is not church-bound. In his opening comments on ‘how’ to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, Anglican liturgy expert Dennis Michno says,

Thus, in the Holy Eucharist, the principal act of worship in the Christian community, the elements of mystery, order, continuity, artistic taste and clarity must be joined together carefully so that expressiveness, simplicity, and beauty may reach out and touch the hearts of the people of God gathered together to proclaim the Lord in their midst.³⁰

Nowhere in Michno’s manual for priests does one find a requirement for a church building in order to celebrate the Eucharist. In fact, the only mandatory items spoken of in the opening rubrics for “The Holy Eucharist” in the *Book of Common Prayer* are “the Lord’s Table” and the Communion gifts that are placed upon it.³¹ So while it is *customary* to celebrate the Eucharist in a beautiful church setting, it is not *mandatory* or *necessary*. What qualifies the Eucharist as being valid worship is not the venue at all but right order, right formula, right actions, right agency or instrumentality, and right authority (p. 3). Each of these elements can be accomplished in a house, and quite well. The difficulty ensues when bishops, priests, and

²⁹ See Appendix C, Liturgy and Scripture, for a detailed analysis of the scriptural foundation of Anglican worship.

³⁰ Dennis G. Michno, *A Priest’s Handbook: The Ceremonies of the Church*, 2nd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1986), 30.

³¹ “Concerning the Celebration” in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 354,406.

deacons are uncertain of the best way to manage these elements, or worse, they ‘invent’ ways to get around or modify the elements. This only results in jeopardizing the validity of the sacrament and making null that congregation’s tie of continuity with the faithful worship of ages past.

Much of the confusion comes in trying to emulate the meeting patterns of other evangelical house church methods. Because of this desire to “be like the nations around them,” a comparison of the order of sacramental worship and the patterns of evangelical, non-denominational house church worship will be helpful.

In Kreider and McClung’s book, *Starting a House Church*, the authors describe the great latitude in evangelical house church worship with this descriptive statement:

House churches are flexible and fluid and can take place in any location. Church can be as simple as gathering around a meal in a café, to meeting in a business boardroom, to laughing and fellowshiping together in a park, a mall, art gallery, factory, or youth center.³²

They go on to suggest that such gatherings should include breaking bread (many house church experts use the contrived term ‘meating’ and is a reference to the shared potluck rather than to communion)³³, fellowship, singing, and prayer. It should be a rather loosely structured time wherein members “gather weekly to explore issues of faith or work on projects as they study the Bible, eat, pray, play, share the Lord’s Supper and baptize new believers.”³⁴

House church expert Steve Lorch presents his own model for a small group worship meeting. The basic structure of his meeting includes an opening prayer, the reading of Scripture, a verse-by-verse interactive Bible study, a reflection and response to the Bible study, intercessory prayer, snack and fellowship time, and dismissal with the bulk of the overall time

³² Kreider and McClung, *Starting a House Church*, 65-66.

³³ Atkerson, *House Church*, 41.

³⁴ Kreider and McClung, *Starting a House Church*, 68.

given to the Bible study.³⁵ And what about music as an act of worship in this ‘bare bones’ offering to God? There is none.³⁶ Completely opposite of this is Frank Viola’s *Finding Organic Church* wherein he says that meetings should contain lots of singing, personal sharing, eating together, and having fun together.³⁷ Bible study? According to Viola, it’s a 19th century invention which can splinter the group and smother authentic body life.³⁸ It would seem then, that except for the fact that Protestant house churches ‘gather’ together (and mostly to eat), there is little agreement on the rest of what happens. In fact, Viola’s final assessment of house church worship is that we are “learning how to participate in an...informal gathering of God’s people.”³⁹ This concept is absolutely antithetical to Anglicans; an oxymoron—there is no such thing as “informal worship.”

When pressed by a number of leaders for a definitive house church worship service template, Kreider and McClung lament,

...it is nearly impossible to give an accurate picture of any given gathering, since they can and should change from week to week. One thing is certain, House-church meetings should not be a smaller duplicate of a typical Sunday morning meeting.⁴⁰

In another book written by Kreider, *House to House*, the author says,

³⁵ Steve Lorch, *Welcome Home: A Practical Guide to House Churches, Small Groups, Home Fellowships or Whatever Else We Call Them* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2009), 203-208.

³⁶ Lorch, *Welcome Home*, 211.

³⁷ Viola, *Finding Organic Church*, 199-206.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

³⁹ Frank Viola, “How to Have Participatory House Church Meetings,” in *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader*, ed. Rad Zdero (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 396.

⁴⁰ Kreider and McClung, *Starting a House Church*, 103.

I am really hesitant to give guidelines for what should happen at a small group or house church meeting because I believe it is so easy to trust the format rather than being truly open what the Holy Spirit wants you to do.⁴¹

In the end, however, he finally ‘suggests’ that a house church worship service should be built around four basic components: eating, meeting, small group ministry, and post-meeting personal time for one-on-one encouragement and prayer. The ‘meeting’ portion of the gathering can be nebulously comprised of worship, teaching (to which he admits that a basic problem in most house churches is a lack of biblical teaching and sound teachers), and discussion. He also considers that the post-meeting personal time (or what he refers to as the “meeting after the meeting”) is the most important element of the entire gathering.⁴²

The Shape of House Church Liturgy

In view of the theology of liturgy and worship presented in Chapter Three of this thesis, the question isn’t whether or not evangelical house churches know how to gather for food, fellowship, and prayer. The question is whether or not evangelical house churches are fully cognizant of what constitutes authentic worship. Worship is man in communion with God through the agency of sacrifice. Everything in Anglican liturgy flows into and out of that Eucharistic moment.⁴³ And since liturgical worship attempts to duplicate the eternal worship of heaven based on the revealed patterns of God, the “shape of the liturgy” is to be followed with

⁴¹ Kreider, *House to House*, 163.

⁴² Ibid., 164-165.

⁴³ This author was present at a 2002 speech given to the chaplains of the Archdiocese of the Armed Forces of the Charismatic Episcopal Church by Roman Catholic guest speaker Major General William J. Dendinger (Air Force Chief of Chaplains). The speech was presented at the annual convocation of the Archdiocese at Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, MD. During his speech Fr. Dendinger stated a simple axiom for how his chaplains should conduct their worship and their ministry: “If it does not flow into and out from the altar, it is not a priority for my chaplains.” The altar is the crux of all Anglo-Catholic worship.

continuity, consistency, and fidelity regardless of the venue in which the Eucharist finds itself, house church or cathedral.

This normative ‘shape’ of liturgical worship, however, does not find its way into a number of Anglican house churches. When asked about the worship liturgies used by their house churches (Q14), three-quarters of the respondents replied that their house churches use the same liturgy as their larger churches; the rest indicated that their house churches do not use the same liturgy or even an abbreviated form of the liturgy.⁴⁴ And of the house churches that don’t use a liturgy, two-thirds are new mission ‘plants’ of predominantly non-Anglicans coming into liturgical formation. The remaining third are Anglicans worshiping apart from the liturgy (Q15).⁴⁵ Again, an oxymoron among orthodox Anglican communions. Using the Constitution and Canons of this author’s parent Anglican province as an example, this confused issue of worship’s form and liturgy is clearly stated:

The Book of Common Prayer as set forth by the Church of England in 1662, together with the Ordinal attached to the same, are received as a standard for Anglican doctrine and discipline, and, with the Books which preceded it, as the standard for the Anglican tradition of worship....[I]t is the responsibility of the Bishop with jurisdiction to ensure that the forms used in Public Worship and the Administration of the Sacraments be in accordance with Anglican Faith and Order.⁴⁶

Every Anglican diocese, jurisdiction, communion, and province has a similar statement in their own Canons which governs the form of their worship. It is a part of the bishop’s episcopal duties to ensure these proper forms are exercised within every parish under his care.

⁴⁴ Q14: If you have house churches, are they expected to follow the same worship liturgy as your larger parishes or an abbreviated liturgical structure (e.g., the form contained in the 79 BCP, pp. 400-405)?

⁴⁵ Q15: If neither, are these house churches new mission ‘plants’ primarily attended by non-Anglicans and slowly entering into liturgical formation?

⁴⁶ Constitution and Canons, “Title II: Worship and Administration of Sacraments; Canon 2, Of the Standard Book of Common Prayer; Sections 1 and 2,” The Anglican Church in North America, Constitution and Canons PDF download, <http://www.anglicanchurch.net/?/main/page/about-acna> [accessed March 13, 2014].

The logistics of Anglican house church worship are also of paramount concern. For even though the only criteria for authentic worship is right order, formula, actions, agency, and authority, these criteria are executed in a tangible setting and require physical elements to help aid and advance the worshipers toward sacrificial communion with God. And as mentioned earlier, the one constant in Anglican liturgy is a requirement for “the Lord’s Table”—“a surface large enough for the sacred vessels, the altar book, and, if desired, a pair of candlesticks.”⁴⁷

This is a far cry from how the Lord’s Supper is observed in many contemporary house church settings. Consider this description of a typical house church gathering:

The meal is potluck, or as we jokingly say, “pot-providence.” Everyone brings food to share with everyone else. When the weather is nice, all the food is placed on a long folding table outside. A chest full of ice sits beside the drink table. Kids run wildly around. They are having so much fun that they must be rounded up by parents and encouraged to eat. After a prayer of thanksgiving is offered, people line up, talking and laughing as they load their plates with food. In the middle of all the food sits a single loaf of bread next to a large container of the fruit of the vine. Each believer partakes of the bread and juice/wine while going through the serving line. [Women cluster together to eat while talking about home schooling, sewing, or child training while the men gather together and solve the world’s problems.] It is a great time of fellowship, encouragement, edification, friendship, caring, catching-up, praying, exhorting, and maturing. The reason for the event? *In case you did not recognize it, this is the Lord’s Supper* [emphasis added], New Testament style!⁴⁸

The closest example to that of a ‘traditional’ communion is version presented by Steve Lorch. His guidelines include, “We only need some bread, some cups and some grape juice—nothing fancy required.”⁴⁹ And then he maps out a simple communion service that follows the Bible teaching and includes Paul’s words of institution, a passing around of the bread and cups, a

⁴⁷ Galley, *The Ceremonies of the Eucharist*, 4.

⁴⁸ Atkerson, *House Church*, 31. See also Banks, *The Church Comes Home*, 165-168. In these pages it is even suggested that there not even be a requirement for bread and juice/wine; that the Lord’s Supper simply be an *agape* meal comprised of whatever food is brought to the gathering.

⁴⁹ Steve Lorch, *Welcome Home*, 162. The directions are presented on an accompanying CD with the book; PDF file 12c, “Sample Communion.”

period of self-examination, and then each person communicates when they feel they are finally right with the Lord.

The Place of House Church Liturgy

Anglican liturgy places absolute centrality on the altar as the *focal point* of worship and the Eucharist upon the altar as the *focus* of worship. How is this focal point accomplished in the house church setting when such a sacred piece of furniture is absent? According to Hebrews 13:10, “We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.” While the author is establishing the superiority of the Eucharist over the sacrifices of the Old Testament, he is also referring to a place where the act of sacrificial eating takes place. The Greek used here is the same term used in the Septuagint to describe both Jewish and pagan altars (e.g., Leviticus 6:9; Judges 6:25). The fact that this term is applied to the Eucharist is of considerable importance⁵⁰ because, as Jesus said, “Which is greater: the gift or the altar that makes the gift holy?” So whether made of stone, wood, or some other material, the Table of the Lord conveys the dignity, solemnity, and sacramental immediacy to the Eucharist for those who partake of it. Will a coffee table suffice? Or a card table? A TV tray? What if there is nothing else available?

The respondents who answered this survey question said that only 25% of their clergy had concerns about what to use for their house church altars.⁵¹ The surprise wasn’t in the fact that so few house church clergy were concerned about what to use for an altar, but that so many of them were not. Does this reflect a troubling trend in their seminary or theological training? Or a

⁵⁰ C. E. Pocknee, “Altar,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J. G. Davies (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 6.

⁵¹ Q20: If you have house churches, has your ordained leadership raised concern regarding upon what to place the Eucharistic vessels and elements in the absence of a consecrated altar?

failure to instruct seminarians in the theology and sacerdotal aspects of sacred space? Has the trend to remove the ‘mystery’ of worship in exchange for the ‘emotion’ of worship crept into Anglican liturgy? Are we reaping the fruit of the liturgical innovations of the late sixties that gave license to informality and even encouraged sloppiness?⁵² As Martin declares:

Our approach, then, will be in the constant awareness of our weakness and sinfulness; and we shall draw near with becoming reverence and fear, as Hebrews xii, 28, 29 directs us. One cannot be ‘pally’ or flippant with the God who is an all-consuming fire!⁵³

There can be no worship of the Wholly Other without this awareness.⁵⁴ And in Anglican worship, this happens at the altar whether in a church or a finished basement den.

When an Anglican house church meets consistently in one of the member’s homes, perhaps even that of the priest, several options present themselves. The first option is that a room is permanently arranged as a chapel in which case a specifically purposed movable altar can be used. The second option is that a room (e.g., a living room, den, studio, study, etc.) must be transformed into a worship space on a regular basis. If that room does not have a movable altar—kept ‘protected’ and covered during the week so as not be used as a regular piece of furniture—then a portable altar can be used. In any event, the “Table of the Lord” deserves religious respect, “because it is a table set aside solely and permanently for the Eucharistic banquet. Consequently, before a movable altar is put to use, if it is not dedicated, it should at least be blessed...by the bishop of the diocese or by the presbyter who is rector of the church.”⁵⁵ A part of the dedication includes this prayer:

⁵² Michno, *A Priest’s Handbook*, 30.

⁵³ Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 14.

⁵⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship: Playground, Battle Ground, or Holy Ground?*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 25.

⁵⁵ International Commission on English in the Liturgy, *Ceremonial of Bishops* (Collegeville, MN: The

Lord God, hear us. Sanctify this Table dedicated to you. Let it be a sign of the heavenly Altar where your saints and angels praise you for ever. Accept here the continual recalling of the sacrifice of your Son. Grant that all who eat and drink at this holy Table may be fed and refreshed by his flesh and blood, be forgiven of their sins, united with one another, and strengthened for your service. Blessed by your Name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; now and for endless ages. Amen.⁵⁶

How does this high view of the “Table of the Lord” play out among the survey respondents, particularly if an Anglican house church has neither a movable altar in a room permanently arranged for worship nor a portable altar that can be set up in the home of the host family? The respondents were presented with two options: The use of an *antimension* (Q21)⁵⁷ or the use of portable folding table (Q22).⁵⁸

The *antimension* was presented as an option for those circumstances when, without the availability of an altar, the Eucharist must be arranged on an alternative flat surface such as a coffee table or card table—something that is not dedicated and will be returned to its normal use after the service. As Question 21 indicates, an *antimension* (from the Greek *αντιμηνσιον*) literally means “instead of table.” Used primarily but not exclusively in the Orthodox Tradition, it is comprised of a silk or linen cloth decorated with representations of the Passion and burial of Christ and blessed by a bishop. In some instances it is signed by the bishop and dedicated to specific use of a single parish and returned to the bishop when its use was no longer required. It

Liturgical Press, 1989), 265.

⁵⁶ “Dedication of Church Furnishings and Ornaments,” in *The Book of Occasional Services-1994* (New York, NY: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1995), 197-198.

⁵⁷ Q21: If so, have you considered the Orthodox option of conferring an 'antimension' (from the Greek, 'instead of a table') to your house church leaders? This is a Greek-style corporal sometimes with small fragments of relics sown into it, blessed and often signed by the bishop, and containing printed images of the Passion and entombment of Christ; basically a portable “altar stone” that can be placed on top of an unconsecrated surface.

⁵⁸ Q22: If not (again referring to Question 21), have you made available or suggested to your leaders the purchase of small, adjustable height, folding tables that can be specifically blessed and set apart for use as an easily transportable altar? Some are manufactured out of plastic with a center-folding 4'x2' surface area with adjustable height up to 36" and similar in style to a military portable field altar.

is used in those circumstances when there was no properly consecrated altar and, when placed on a suitable surface, it effectively serves as a portable altar.⁵⁹ As convenient a solution as this might be, 100% of the respondents did not consider this as an option for their house churches even though they were familiar with this Orthodox practice.

Regarding the option of using a designated folding table (blessed by a bishop and used only as the “Table of the Lord”) in Question 22, 50% of the respondents had not considered this as an option. The other 50% indicated that half of their house churches used folding tables and the other half did not. All told, without the use of an *antimension*, 75% of the house churches represented by the respondents used undedicated, alternate furniture or flat surfaces upon which to celebrate the Eucharist. This, again, is a sad indictment against the current state of house church theology and leadership among the various North American Anglican jurisdictions.

The Sound of House Church Liturgy

Anglican worship is characterized by a revered and treasured hymnody deeply rooted in both its Catholic tradition and Reformation passion as well as an openness to contemporary Christian music. In some Anglican churches you can find a convergence or fusion of sacred music that includes Plainsong chant, Latin choral responses, ancient hymns, and contemporary praise. In fact, if the issue is pressed, the ancient Anglican tradition is to sing the whole service—a practice no doubt derived and passed down to the Early Church from the cantors and chants of the synagogue.⁶⁰ And while the use of hymns in Anglican worship is not absolutely mandatory (at the place where a hymn is customarily used in the liturgy, the rubrics in the BCP typically

⁵⁹ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., “antimension, also antimimension,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 77-78.

⁶⁰ Galley, *The Ceremonies of the Eucharist*, 46.

read, “A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung”⁶¹), a service is less the richer without it. In fact, the Episcopal hymnal of 1940 quotes Canon 24 of The Episcopal Church, saying,

It shall be the duty of every Minister to see that music is used in his congregation as an offering for the glory of God and as a help to the people in their worship in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer and as authorized by the Rubric or by the General Convention of this Church. To this end he shall be the final authority in the administration of matters pertaining to music with such assistance as he may see fit to employ from persons skilled in music.⁶²

The ‘richness’ a hymn accords to a service, then, is through its contribution of artistic beauty and theological expression. In the Early Church, hymns were used as a vehicle for conveying Apostolic Tradition in hymnic form. As Williams observes,

By putting key elements of the orthodox faith to music or rhyme, a highly effective means was established for preserving and transmitting that faith, making it easy to digest and harder to forget.⁶³

In this way even the illiterate among the early believers could musically rehearse theological truths and be imbued with an antiheretical consciousness against the surging tide of paganism and worldliness.⁶⁴ Anglicans, accordingly, love to sing. And as noted earlier in this chapter, many evangelical house churches also make singing a priority while others do not. How, then, is this Anglican love for sacred hymnody translated into the worship of its house churches?

According to the respondents in Question 23⁶⁵, all of their house churches sing as a part of their Eucharistic celebrations, albeit half of them use recorded accompaniment while the rest

⁶¹ As an example, this is the first rubric found at the beginning of The Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 355. See also the first page of Appendix C: Liturgy and Scripture.

⁶² The Church Pension Fund, *The Hymnal* (New York, NY: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1940), ii.

⁶³ Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition*, 63.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Q23: Regarding the use of worship music in your house churches, do the majority of these parishes sing with live instrumental accompaniment (e.g., guitar, keyboard), with recorded music, without any music (a cappella),

are split between the use of instruments or singing *a cappella*. In 75% of the house churches, the service leader (priest, deacon, or commissioned lay minister) is also the music leader; the remainder are led by the leader's spouse (Q24).⁶⁶ And true to Anglican fashion which strives to be the *via media* (essentially, "the middle road") between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, at least 25% of those house churches use a combination of worship styles that include traditional hymnody, Gospel hymns, and contemporary praise, (Q25).⁶⁷ Finally, it was both surprising and gratifying to find that in 50% of those house churches that do not have musicians among their membership, the respondents make available digital hymn players pre-loaded with a full library of worship resources (Q26).⁶⁸

Chapter Summary

This chapter could very well have been expanded into a full thesis in its own right since no other resources exist regarding Anglican house church governing principles, leadership, or worship. Regretfully, its presentation here only scraped the surface and more concerns and suggestions for future engagement will be presented in the final chapter. One conclusion, however, is certain: Anglican house churches are a part of the growing house church movement, and they can be an effective and formidable tool in the evangelism and church planting strategies of any diocese or jurisdiction.

or simply don't sing?

⁶⁶ Q24: If there is worship music in your house churches, who most often serves as the worship leader in the majority of circumstances?

⁶⁷ Q25: If there is worship music in your house churches, does it tend to reflect traditional hymnody, gospel hymnody, contemporary praise, or a combination of styles?

⁶⁸ Q26: If there is worship music in your house churches but no live musicians, do you confer or loan to your leaders one of the many digital hymn players on the market preloaded "out of the box" with several thousand digital hymns and praise songs?

Central to the role of the Anglican house church is its commitment to maintain fidelity and obedience to the liturgy. This can be difficult when faced with the trend of our nation's religious penchant to question matters of liturgy, rule, and order over the individual's personal likes, dislikes, and emotional whims where worship is concerned. The Anglican ethos is found in its liturgy and its liturgy is rooted in the revealed patterns of worship given by God to the faithful of all ages.

The most important factor regarding the legitimacy of the Anglican house church is its ability to function as a full and complete parish on par with the other churches in its diocese. The only drawback is the scarcity of standardized guidelines, methodologies, or church canons that support this growing trend within vast segments of Anglicanism. These Anglican house churches are faithfully supported by dedicated clergy, priests and deacons; and a number of Anglican home fellowships are served by passionate commissioned lay ministers. In every case, these house church parishes are larger in their local impact than the number of people who attend their services; they also embrace the communities and neighborhoods where they are found.

Finally, Anglican house churches are to reflect the worship of the larger Anglican Communion in its shape, place, and sound. Just because Anglican worship can find itself in *familial* settings does not give it license to be conducted in *familiar* or group-determined practices. The Anglican house church does not want to be found guilty of offering to God "golden hemorrhoids" (see Chapter Three, "Philistines Return the Captured Ark") but only that which God desires as His worship and which echoes the eternal worship of heaven.

Chapter 7.

Summary and Conclusion

As the vicar of an Anglican house church for the past three years, this author has been surprised to find that no guidelines, policies, or directives—formal or informal—exist for the facilitation of sacramental house churches. The house church model does not factor into Anglican church planting strategies. The training of young Anglican seminarians preparing for Holy Orders fails to introduce them to the possibility of a ‘tent-maker’ ministry in the house church movement. Bishops who sponsor these seminarians frequently neglect to share with them their heart for impassioned clergy who are just as willing to serve a handful of people as they would be to serve a larger church with all of its benefits.

Summary

The house church movement is making deep inroads into the landscape of North American Christianity, with aggregate adult attendance far exceeding that of even the largest denomination. And among these house churches can be found small gatherings of sacramental Christians under the care of extremely committed priests. But for all of their passion and zeal, many of them exist as, for lack of a better expression, “experimental outposts” within their diocese or communions—acknowledged, but far from being understood or supported in a way that adds episcopal sanction, corporate legitimacy, or invested significance to their priestly charges.

This thesis sets out to accomplish four things. First is to explore the biblical foundations of sacramental liturgy and its esteemed place in Christian worship. Second is to establish a theological foundation for worship in the private home. Third is to trace the historical existence

of house churches. Finally, it advocates for the role of sacramental house churches under the care of an ordained priesthood, testing this objective against data collected from bishops who reported to have house churches under their episcopal care. This writer believes these four goals are now accomplished.

The basic research of this thesis is supported by a number of excellent resources, both theological and practical. Of the theological resources, a rich body of literature exists which documents the sacrificial, ritual, and sacramental nature of worship. These works represent a ‘past-to-present’ perspective; documenting God’s ancient revealed, ancient patterns and insisting that those same patterns should inform and shape today’s worship through liturgy. This type of hermeneutic is rather foreign to many other books about contemporary worship. These writers begin with an *a priori* conviction that today’s contemporary worship style should be the normative standard for the Church. The result is a ‘present-to-past’ perspective which attempts to look backwards for its supporting principles in the ancient patterns. This hermeneutical difference actually serves to highlight the ‘past-to-present’ ethos of sacramental worship; i.e., to follow the ancient, revealed, and authentic patterns of worship with fidelity in spite of current whims or crazes. It is God’s chosen worship, not ours.

Research Challenge and Format

Of those resources consulted for the facilitation of house churches, not a single one could be identified—book, journal article, academic paper—regarding Anglican, liturgical, or sacramental house churches. In fact, every resource was written with nearly vehement opinions about liturgy, submission to higher ecclesiastical authority, or the place of ordained clergy. The house church resources, then, were ‘excellent’ in that they demonstrated the suspected void of

information on liturgical house churches and some of the contrasts that exist between hierarchical, sacramental faith and independent, evangelical faith. What follows is a brief summary of each of the four main chapters of this thesis and how the above research was employed in the writing of this thesis.

Chapter Three examined the biblical basis of liturgy as a worship theology. Beginning with a scriptural examination of false worship, the foundation was laid for an overview of the sacrificial antecedents of Jewish worship prior to the Tabernacle. With Moses' commission from God to construct the Tabernacle, the reader was introduced to God's inviolable patterns for authentic worship; patterns based on the eternal worship of heaven. These patterns were also traced through the worship of the Temple and the devotional life of the synagogue. They were finally brought to complete fullness in the life and atoning ministry Christ, and were continued with precise fidelity by the Apostles and the Primitive Church. These divinely revealed patterns of liturgical order, prayer, and sacrifice are to be the normative template for authentic worship today—worship according to God's criteria rather than our desires because its perfect act of sacrifice points to the eternal Victim and Victor, Jesus Christ.

Chapter Four was a study on the biblical foundations of the house church as a worship context. The close-knit, familial design of worship flows out of the *concilium* of God's own uniplurality. This image of God, this desire for inter-communion, was poured into Adam and Eve and was expressed in their original state of perfect fellowship with God. And the Garden of Eden, mankind's first home, was also the place where the first sacrificial act of worship was offered as a propitiation for their sin. From the Garden of Eden to the home of the Emmaus disciples who recognized Jesus in the 'breaking of bread,' a scriptural framework was unveiled which demonstrated the sanctity of the home as a divine intersection between heaven and earth.

And after Jesus' ascension into heaven, the house church continued as the normative place for Christian worship through the ministry of the Apostles, particularly as revealed in the Book of Acts the epistles of Paul.

Chapter Five focused on the post-biblical history of the house church; tracing its existence from the first century to the contemporary house church movement. The house church was the only meeting place Christians had for worship well into the third century. And yet it was from out of this simple context of house worship that faithful believers evangelized the pagan Roman Empire. Even after such significant events as the conversion of Emperor Constantine, the shift of Christianity to a *religio licita* of the Empire, and the construction of state-funded basilicas, small groups of Christians continued to meet in private homes for worship. As the centuries went on, house churches were often established as a corrective against a Christianity that continuously fell to financial temptation and political aspirations; the greed for wealth and power. The monastic fathers along with the Waldensians, Hutterites, and Puritans; Luther, Wesley, and Bonhoeffer—they were all proponents of Christian brothers and sisters worshipping in the purity and order of the original house churches. In fact, the history of Christianity has never known a century without a witness to Christians worshipping in the private home.

Chapter Six pursued a dialogue between the survey results, the research literature, and examples from the Canons of this author's own Anglican jurisdiction. With a biblical basis for liturgical worship, a biblical basis for house churches, and a continuous history of house church worship from the first century to the present, the question focused in why no structural or methodological support existed for Anglican house churches. The survey respondents indicated that 100% of them had house churches under their care. All of them also believed that house churches were legitimate expressions of parish life. Nevertheless, several of the respondents

wanted their house churches to grow beyond such a limited existence in order to develop into ‘full service’ parishes. Survey questions also dealt with house church governance, pastoral leadership, and the particulars of worship. Each set of questions was examined and critiqued against biblical tenets and orthodox Anglicanism. The resulting conclusion is that while there are Anglican house churches in operation, they rarely receive the administrative support, canonical authority, formalized methodologies, or peer encouragement so necessary to flourish within their episcopal jurisdictions.

Immediate Recommendations

What can be done in order to better support and facilitate Anglican house churches? It must first begin by recognizing that no resources exist which address the unique character of liturgical/sacramental house churches. It must also be acknowledged that the vast majority of books and manuals written for the general house church movement are actually downgrading and acerbic toward those who follow liturgy, uphold the sacraments, and look for leadership from ordained clergy. These two realizations alone clearly demonstrate the desperate need for a standardized guide for the house church priest and his parish; whether this kind of guide is compiled by individual Anglican communions and jurisdictions or if a comprehensive guide can be produced that is acceptable to all Anglicans. Otherwise the facilitation of Anglican house church ministry is hit-and-miss at best.

Regarding the role of presiding bishops and the diocese, communions, jurisdictions, and provinces they serve, several steps can be taken to bolster the house churches under their episcopal cover. Suggestions and recommendations include:

- Draft and ratify appropriate Canons which recognize house churches as full parishes rather than as missions.

- Seize the role of house churches as part of a church planting strategy.
- Share the vision of house church ministry through guest speaking arrangements at Anglican seminaries and recruit seminarians preparing for Holy Orders specifically for this vocation.
- Helping new or young priests with the discernment process of being called to house church ministry.
- Support new or young house church priests with Mass kits containing the necessary sacerdotal equipment (e.g., chalice, paten, oil stocks, ciborium, altar linens, etc.) and vestments. Once a house church can afford to purchase their own, the kits can be returned to their bishops for distribution to other new house churches.
- If necessary, support house churches with the loan of portable altars and digital hymn players.
- Make regular episcopal visits on the house church parishes with as much intentionality as visits to the larger churches.
- Hold annual diocesan convocations for all house church clergy and laity to include venue-specific seminars, training, corporate worship, and blessing.
- Provide travel scholarships when necessary to help house church priests attend clergy-specific diocesan events (e.g., clericus gatherings, diocesan council meetings, clergy convocations, etc.).

It is truly unfortunate that, given the wealth of books written since the late 1970s on the house church movement, no scholar, author, or Anglican body has contributed a book on the facilitation of sacramental house churches. This needs to be corrected. And while there are some areas of commonality and overlap between independent, evangelical house churches and sacramental house churches, enough peculiarities exist between the two to justify such an addition to the broader body of work. Such a book or manual, like this thesis, would do well to begin the following:

- An overview of the current and growing trend in house churches.
- A biblical case for the theology of liturgical and sacramental worship.
- A biblical case for house church worship.
- A post-biblical history of house churches to the present day.

Once this foundation is presented to readers, general concerns common to all house churches can be examined. These may include:

- Matters of incorporation as a not-for-profit for purposes of providing charitable contribution statements for house church tithes and offerings.

- The pros and cons of seeking status as a 501(c)(3) entity or being able to use the corporate EIN of the parent diocese or communion.
- How to cooperate with local ordinances, zoning restrictions, and community bylaws, particularly those that may hinder home gatherings for religious purposes.
- How to account for, safeguard, and distribute offerings.
- After-the-service considerations (e.g., fellowship, the common meal, Sunday School or lectionary study, etc.).
- How to host episcopal visits by the bishop for confirmation and other sacramental or special occasions.
- How to deal with the pastoral discouragement when families are sick or on vacation, reducing the size of the house church parish by 50% or more.

Following these and similar general concerns, those issues more particular to Anglican house churches and the priestly ministry can be addressed. These may include the following topics:

- A discussion geared to seminarians regarding the privilege and call of serving a house church parish.
- A discussion geared to priests in traditional settings who are discerning a call to house church ministry and the emotional and pragmatic ‘retooling’ that will be required of them.
- A house church priest’s relationship to his bishop and diocese.
- Accepting a bi-vocational (tent-making) call as God’s provision for the care of the priest’s family and as a legitimate call to ministry. Bi-vocational clergy are not second-class clergy.
- Making ‘holy space’ when preparing a home meeting place for the celebration of the Eucharist.
- The safekeeping of sacerdotal equipment, reserved host, oil stocks, etc., between services.
- Considerations for conducting liturgical worship in non-traditional surroundings.

These and a host of other Anglican-specific issues can easily fill a manual acceptable to the majority of Anglican jurisdictions. It is hoped that these considerations may be taken up and pursued by those whose futures are invested in the growth of the Anglican house church.

Episcopal Benefits

Demonstrating the theology and historical precedents for Anglican house churches may answer the *what* for this model of ministry. Short- and long-term recommendations can even

articulate the process of *how*. But both of these are unable to answer the *why*. Indeed, *what* it is and *how* it should operate are very different concerns from *why* an Anglican house church should even matter. Why should a bishop encourage and promote house churches in his diocese? What are the advantages to those in episcopal authority and leadership? Why shake the current diocesan structure with the inclusion of a new paradigm? What are the benefits—both tangible and intrinsic—to Christ and the Church? The potential gains for each bishop are as unique as the various Anglican bodies represented throughout North America, but several points of rationale are herein offered:

- The Anglican house church capitalizes on a growing church trend already embraced by 25% of worshipping Christians.
- It dramatically increases the number of worshipping communities listed on online diocesan parish directories.
- It becomes a strategic tool for evangelism in hard-to-penetrate communities.
- It allows for immediate church planting with little to no diocesan funding—a tangible boon for those parishes trying to establish themselves in financially depressed regions.
- The house church becomes a way to actively engage those registers of non-parochial clergy in their priestly functions.
- It demonstrates a willingness and desire on the part of the diocese to minister to people outside the traditional parish model.
- A diocesan focus on house churches will generate a missions and evangelism spirit among existing traditional parishes that would like to establish or sponsor a house church plant.
- It provides an opportunity for existing traditional parishes to donate funds or equipment for new house church altar/vestment kits.
- House churches are able to contribute far more in diocesan missions giving programs per capita than traditional parishes because they don't carry the burden of clergy stipends, rent, or mortgage payments.
- House churches provide immediate pastoral opportunities for newly ordained priests—particularly younger priests who may be more receptive to new models of ministry.
- The inclusion of house churches into a diocese will often necessitate a call for the creative review and adaptation of Canons that are frequently outdated.
- Establishing formal house church methodologies and guidelines will foster a unity of order and liturgy within all the parishes—traditional and micro—of the bishop's see.

Future Research and Engagement

The most startling aspect of this study was to discovery, almost categorically, the near vehement reaction other leaders in the house church movement have toward liturgical worship, sacramental faith, ordained clergy, and obedience to episcopal (or any ecclesiastical) authority. While this writer understands their interpretation of the nature of ‘organic church,’ their reluctance to extend a hand of fellowship or an acknowledgement of Christian unity with others not like themselves will continue to fracture and divide the Body of Christ. There must be, even at an elemental level, an application of Paul’s description of the Body—i.e., the foot is not the hand, the hand is not the ear, the ear is not the eye, etc. Otherwise, “if they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body” (1 Corinthians 12:19-20). The traditional, the evangelical, the independent, the hierarchical, the institutional, the micro-church, the mega-church, the sacramental, the fundamental; each has its role in the Body of Christ. Each has its ministry to a special group of sheep.

In order to facilitate the groundwork for a more godly and collegial relationship between independent, evangelical house churches and liturgical, Anglican house churches, an apologia must be attempted. Like an extended olive branch, it must not only demonstrate the validity of liturgical house churches in a way clearly understandable to their evangelical brothers (the theology and vocabulary barriers are formidable but not impossible), but should also explore ways in which these different house churches can partner with each other for support, encouragement, and activities that promote Christ’s prayer for unity in John 17.

Congruent with the challenges and findings of this thesis, additional recommendations for future research and engagement should include:

- Researching the procurement steps necessary for Anglican jurisdictions to contract with manufacturers of Chaplain Corps portable military field equipment (e.g., portable altars,

mount out boxes, Mass kits, high-use-harsh-environment sacerdotal equipage) for the production of their civilian equivalents. This will provide house church priests with everything they need for “church in a box.”

- The development of talking points and recruiting information that can be used by bishops or Anglican jurisdiction vocational representatives in seminary settings for introducing prospective clergy to the Anglican house church model of ministry.
- Drafting the outline, syllabus, and major presentations for a Bible college or seminary class on the liturgical/sacramental house church which can be adopted for use in Anglican seminaries.
- Conduct an examination of Anglican Canon Law to ascertain the ramifications of changing or adapting church Canons to accommodate the house church ‘equation’ within their bylaws regarding parish life. This should include redefining the distinctions between a mission vicar and a parish rector, what constitutes a parish, the representation of house church lay delegates as part of diocesan councils, and the place ‘pro-tem’ vestries as a part of house church government.
- Examining the potential of an inter-communion dialog or symposium regarding the role of house churches in an Anglican church planting and evangelism strategy.

These suggestions are just the beginning as this writer “passes the baton” to others who also have a heart for liturgical house churches, particular to those who may be well positioned within their diocese or communions to effect positive future change for the glory of Christ.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this writer has had the distinct privilege of serving God in a number of varied and significant ministry venues:

- Pastoring and preaching at the Navy’s Recruit Training Command to mega church youth-style recruit services exceeding 2,000 attendees with at least 300 individuals responding each week to altar calls for salvation and personal ministry.
- Preaching to a multi-national coalition of military Christians—Canadian, British, American, Netherlands—in the United Arab Emirates seaport of Abu Dhabi.
- Celebrating the Eucharist on “The Pile” with emergency responders at the World Trade Center in the days immediately following 9/11.
- Preaching at Evergreen Chapel, the Presidential Retreat chapel at Camp David in Thurmont, MD.
- Conducting worship in Kodiak, AK for visiting Russian military personnel which also included the distribution of hundreds of Slavic Bibles.
- Serving as the personal host to His Holiness, Alexi II, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, during his visit to the US for the 200th Anniversary of Orthodoxy in America.

Each one holds a special place of memory, but nothing captures the spiritual and emotional warmth of the Holy Spirit more than when a handful of people, gathered around a living room altar, join this writer in antiphonal worship—

“The Lord be with you.”

“And with your spirit.”

“Lift up your hearts!”

“We lift them up to the Lord.”

“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.”

“It is right to give Him thanks and praise.”

And with these words commences the greatest mystery of all as the power of Christ’s Passion—numinous and tangible—is ushered into the very midst of those assembled. Through prayers as ancient as the Church itself, the bread and wine are sacramentally transformed by the Holy Spirit into the Real Presence of Christ, the Lamb of God slain from the foundations of the world. And as each one receives the elements of the Supper in turn, there is no doubt that this small, spiritual family has been gathered to the very hearthstone of heaven; a mystery even “into which angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:12, ESV).

The Anglican Church embraces that same patrimony which flows through the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches; an Apostolic Succession traced back to that night when Jesus breathed on His disciples (Greek, literally ‘puffed into them’) the impartation of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). And with that divine anointing also came their Apostolic authority to act as His direct proxies to the Church and to the world. Their first order of business was not to *build* grand structures for worship—edifices of marble and stone—but to *grow* the Church, house by house,

grafting new believers to Christ through baptism and the Body and Blood of the New Covenant; nurturing them through the Word and Sacraments.

This is the Anglican heritage. And while many Anglican communions can boast of the presence of house churches within their jurisdictions, there exists a general and systemic lack of support, formation, polity, recruitment, or formal methodologies which would allow these humble micro-churches to flourish alongside of their larger, more traditional, diocesan partner churches. Christianity was given birth in house churches. Christianity has been lovingly transmitted down through the centuries in house churches. Christianity has been (and still is) protected in house churches in places of dark persecution. And Christianity is once again facing an era in which the faithful are turning their hearts toward home. Will the Anglican Church be there? Will its house churches serve as the home-based vanguard of ancient liturgy and sacramental mystery? This writer certainly hopes so and prays for that day.

*Non nobis Domine,
non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam.¹*

¹ From the Latin Vulgate of Psalm 115:1a, “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your Name give the glory.”

GLOSSARY

Alb (or Cassock Alb). A white, full-length garment generally gathered at the waist by a rope cincture. It is the ‘base layer’ of vestments worn by those in Holy Orders serving at the altar. The color is a visual symbol of white robe that all believers will receive in heaven (cf., Revelation 6:11;7:9,13-14).

Antimension (or antiminsion). From the Greek ἀντιμνησίου which literally means ‘instead of a table.’ It is a silk or linen cloth a little larger than a placemat and decorated with images of Christ’s Passion and entombment. Most often used in Eastern or Orthodox churches, it essentially serves as a ‘portable altar’ so that the Eucharist can be celebrated in a setting where there is no properly consecrated altar. Sometimes a small fragment of a relic is stitched into it and it often bears the signature of a bishop certifying that it has been blessed and consecrated.

Apostolic Succession. The method whereby the ministry and authority of bishops is directly received from the original Apostles by a continuous and unbroken succession through the laying on of hands by bishops who already stand in this succession. By this consecration the anointing, authority, and charisms originally breathed onto the Apostles by Christ are transferred to every successive bishop.

Canons (or Canon Law). The body of ecclesiastical rules by which a religious communion or jurisdiction governs itself. The rules often include the organization of a communion’s corporate structure, the particulars of its worship, its finances, and even the discipline and trial of its clergy.

Chalice. The “common cup” used for the wine in all catholic Eucharistic liturgies (e.g., Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, etc.).

Chancel. The area of the church which properly contains the altar and the space reserved for the clergy and choir. This area is now more commonly referred to as the ‘sanctuary’ (and inappropriately referred to as the ‘platform’). See also Nave.

Chasuble. The outermost garment worn by bishops and priests for the celebration of the Eucharist. In shape it resembles a poncho or small tent with a hole for the head. It most often conforms in color to the liturgical colors of the Church calendar.

Ciborium. From the Greek κιβώριον. A vessel similar in shape to a chalice and includes a fitted lid. Used for holding the host (sacramental bread) of the Eucharist.

Corporal. From the Latin *corpus*, body, since it ‘bears’ the Body of Christ; a square piece of linen upon which the sacramental bread and wine are placed on the altar and consecrated for the Eucharist.

Epiclesis. From the Greek *επίκλησις*. The prayer or invocation which ‘makes’ Eucharist. A petition at the heart of the *anaphora* (the central prayer of the Eucharistic liturgy) which can only properly be said by a bishop or priest, asking the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the elements of bread and wine in order that they may become the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ.

Episcopal (or Episcopacy). From the Greek *ἐπίσκοπος*. When used with the lower case ‘e’ it refers to the form of hierarchical Church government under the order of bishops in Apostolic Succession; the “Apostolate of Christ.” As a proper noun it refers to the American Province of the global Anglican Communion, i.e., The Episcopal Church (TEC), and formerly the Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA).

Eucharist. From the Greek *ευχαριστία*, thanksgiving. The central act of sacramental worship. The term is derived from its institution at the Last Supper when Christ ‘gave thanks’ and by its locus as the supreme act of Christian thanksgiving.

Host. From the Latin *hostia*, sacrificial victim, from whence our English ‘hostage.’ The term given to the bread used for consecration in the Eucharist and received as the Sacrifice of the Body of Christ. Typically a round, flat communion wafer.

Holy Orders. The higher levels of ordained ministry within magisterial or catholic Christianity. The *sacri ordines* of bishop, priest, and deacon which can only be conferred at the hands of bishop in Apostolic Succession.

Holy Water Font. A small receptacle often mounted within the entrance door to a church nave, holding blessed water that the faithful may apply to themselves in the form of a cross as they enter for worship.

Incardination. The process of formally accepting a clergyman from one communion, jurisdiction, or diocese into another.

Lavabo Bowl. A small water ewer and bowl with which the celebrant at the Eucharist washes his hands prior to handling the bread and wine.

Liturgy (or liturgical). From the Greek *λειτουργία*, work of the people. The ordering of Christian worship according to the “shape of the liturgy” as handed down through history and Apostolic Tradition, ensuring its authenticity through God-ordained words and acts.

Magisterium (or Magisterial). The Apostolic and collective governing authority of the Church resident within its bishops, particularly for the establishment or interpretation of teaching and doctrine according to the Tradition, Scripture, and reason.

Nave. That area of the church between the main entrance or ‘narthex’ and the ‘chancel’ which is reserved for the seating of the laity. Often and inappropriately referred to as the ‘sanctuary’.

Oil Stocks (variously, Ambry Set or Chrismatory). A set of vessels in which are kept three kinds of blessed oils used for anointing—namely, oil of the catechumens (used in child and adult baptisms and sometimes for exorcisms), holy chrism (used in infant baptisms, confirmation, ordinations, consecrations, and the dedication churches or sacred objects), and oil of the sick or infirmed (for healing and/or extreme unction for the dying).

Paten. The small dish or plate upon which the host is placed on the altar—particularly the larger priest's host used during the 'elevation'—at the celebration of the Eucharist.

Purificator. A linen towel used for wiping the rim of chalice as the celebrant presents the wine to each communicant during the distribution of the Eucharist.

Real Presence. The sacramental doctrine that Christ is resident in the elements of bread and wine through the prayer of epiclesis at the Eucharist; that through Christ's command of *anamnesis* (ἀνάμνησις) in Luke 22:19, communicants are brought to a place of re-presentation and participation in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

Rubrics. Rules, directions, or guidelines for ordering the proper ceremony of liturgical worship.

Sacerdotal. That which specifically relates (e.g., objects, functions, ceremony) to priests or priestly ministry as distinct from the ministry of Protestant clergy; doing that which is sacred or sacramental.

Sacrament. From the Latin *sacramentum* used to translate the earlier Greek μυστήριον, mystery. The tangible means by which Christ communicates Himself to mankind through the rites of the Church (e.g., the Eucharist, baptism, ordination, confession, etc.); according to St. Augustine, a tangible or visible form of an invisible grace through which Christ's 'virtue' is conferred upon the faithful.

See. Technically, the official seat (*sedes*) or throne (*cathedra*) of a bishop which designates the ecclesial 'epicenter' of his jurisdiction; the diocese in which a bishop holds and exercises his episcopal authority.

Stole. A liturgical vestment made from a long strip of colored cloth (conforming to the liturgical color of the Church calendar) and worn over the shoulders overtop the alb. In shape and use, it visually symbolizes the yoke of Christ (cf., Matthew 11:29-30).

Thurible (or Censer). A metal vessel pierced with holes for the burning of incense; it is suspended from a chain from which it can be swung, typically for the solemn incensation of the altar, the participating clergy, and the congregation at the start of the celebration of the Eucharist.

APPENDIX A:

ANGLICAN BODIES IN NORTH AMERICA

1.	AAC	American Anglican Church
2.	AAC	American Anglican Council
3.	AAC	American Anglican Convocation
4.	AAC	Apostolic Anglican Church
5.	AANF	Anglican Alliance of North Florida
6.	AC	Anglican Church, Inc.
7.	ACA	Anglican Church in America
8.	ACAA	Anglican Churches of America and Associates
9.	ACA	Anglican Church of America
10.	ACC	Anglican Catholic Church
11.	ACC	Anglican Church of Canada
12.	ACCA	Anglo-Catholic Church in the Americas
13.	ACCC	Anglican Catholic Church of Canada
14.	ACI	Anglican Church International
15.	ACiC	Anglican Coalition in Canada
16.	ACIC	Anglican Church International Communion
17.	ACiNW	Anglican Communion in New Westminster
18.	ACNA	Anglican Church OF North America
19.	ACNA	Anglican Church IN North America
20.	ACTA	Anglo-Catholic Church in the Americas
XX	ACUSA	Anglican Church in the USA
21.	ACV	Anglican Church of Virginia
22.	ACW	Anglican Church Worldwide
23.	ADCA	Anglican Diocese of Central America
24.	ADGS	Anglican Diocese of the Good Shepherd
25.	ADV	Anglican District of Virginia
26.	AEC	American Episcopal Church
27.	AEC	Anglican Episcopal Church
28.	AEC	African Episcopal Church
29.	AEFC/AEF	Anglican Essentials Federation in Canada
30.	AFDV	Anglican Fellowship of the Delaware Valley
31.	AGMP	Anglican Global Mission Partners
32.	AIC	Anglican Independent Communion
33.	AMiA	Anglican Mission in America
34.	AMIA	Anglican Mission in the Americas
XX	ANAC	All Nations Anglican Church
35.	ANiC	Anglican Network in Canada
36.	AOC	Anglican Orthodox Church
37.	APCGS	Anglican Province of Christ the Good Shepherd
38.	APCK	Anglican Province of Christ the King
39.	APSJ	Anglican Province of Saint Jude

40.	ARAA	Anglican Rite Archdiocese of the Americas
41.	ARCC	Anglican Rite Catholic Church
42.	AROCC	Anglican Rite Old Catholic Church
43.	ARJA	Anglican Rite Jurisdiction in America
44.	ARSA	Anglican Rite Synod in the Americas
45.	CAC	Catholic Anglican Church
46.	CANA	Convocation of Anglican Nigerians in Americas
47.	CANA	Convocation of Anglicans in North America
48.	CAPAC	Council of Anglican Provinces of the Americas and Caribbean
49.	CCA	Common Cause Appalachia
50.	CCF	Common Cause Federation
51.	CCMS	Common Cause, Mid-South
52.	CCP	Common Cause Partners
53.	CEC	Charismatic Episcopal Church [see ICCEC]
54.	CEC	Communion of Ecumenical Churches
55.	CEC	Christian Episcopal Church
56.	CEEC	Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches
57.	DBS	Diocese of the Blessed Sacrament
58.	DCK	Diocese of Christ the King
59.	DEUS	Diocese of the Eastern United States
60.	DGL	Diocese of the Great Lakes
61.	DGS	Diocese of the Good Shepherd
62.	DHC	Diocese of the Holy Cross
63.	DHS	Diocese of the Holy Spirit
64.	DMH	Diocesis Misionara Hispana
65.	DOR	Diocese of the Resurrection
66.	EAC	Evangelical Anglican Church OF America
67.	EAC	Ecumenical Anglican Church
68.	EACA	Evangelical Anglican Church IN America
69.	EACC	Ecumenical Anglican Catholic Church
70.	EEC	Evangelical Episcopal Church
71.	EFC	Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
72.	EMC	Episcopal Missionary Church
73.	EOC	Episcopal Orthodox Church
74.	EOCAA	Episcopal Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of America
75.	ESA	Episcopal Synod of America
76.	ESAMS	ESA Missionary Society
77.	FACA	Federation of Anglican Churches in the Americas
78.	FAMA	Federation for Anglican Ministry in America
79.	FEC	Free Episcopal Church
80.	FIFNA	Forward in Faith North America
81.	FWS	Fellowship of Word and Spirit
82.	GLAN	Great Lakes Anglican Network
83.	HCAC	Holy Cross Anglican Communion
84.	HCC	Holy Catholic Church, Anglican Rite
85.	HRCC	Hawaiian Reformed Catholic Church

86.	HCC-WR	Holy Catholic Church-Western Rite
87.	IAC	Independent Anglican Church
88.	IALA	Iglesia Anglicana Latino-Americana
89.	IADO	Independent Anglican Diocese of Ontario
90.	IAL	La Iglesia Católica Latina Rito Anglicano
91.	IAMD(USA)	Independent Anglican Missionary District of the USA
92.	ICCEC	International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church
93.	IERE	La Iglesia Española Reformada Episcopal
94.	IMDUSA	Independent Missionary District of USA
95.	IND	Independent Episcopal Church
96.	MIEC	Mexican Independent Episcopal Church
97.	NACC	National Anglican Catholic Church
98.	NACDP	Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes
99.	NER	New Episcopal Religion
100.	OAC	Orthodox Anglican Communion
101.	OAC	Orthodox Anglican Church
102.	OACS	Orthodox Anglican Church of the South
103.	OCC	Orthodox Church of Canada
104.	OPEC	Old Protestant Episcopal Church
105.	PCGS	Province of Christ the Good Shepherd
106.	PEC	Primitive Episcopal Church
107.	RACC	Reformed Anglican Catholic Church
108.	REC	Reformed Episcopal Church
109.	SEC	Southern Episcopal Church in the United States of America
110.	TAC	Traditional Anglican Communion
111.	TEC	Traditional Episcopal Church
112.	TEC	The Episcopal Church
113.	TIFPEC	The International Free Protestant Episcopal Church
114.	TPEC	Traditional Protestant Episcopal Church
115.	UAC	United Anglican Church
116.	UAC	Universal Anglican Church
117.	UACA	Universal Anglican Church of America
118.	UECNA	United Episcopal Church of North America
119.	WOCA	Western Orthodox Church in America

APPENDIX B:
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1: YOUR HOUSE CHURCH GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

1. Do you have house churches operating within your communion or diocese?
Yes 100%
No 0%
2. If so, do you have canons, formal guidelines, or established policies which help to standardize your house church parishes?
Yes 0%
No 100%

[This is a critical element of my study. If you are willing to share a copy of this reference material with me, please consider emailing me at aandraeas@liberty.edu so that I can make appropriate arrangements with you.]

3. Is the establishment of Anglican house churches part of a larger plan for church planting within your communion or diocese?
Yes 50%
No 50%
4. If so, are these house churches expected to grow and transition into ‘full service’ parishes or are they encouraged to remain as house churches?
Expand 66%
Abide 34%
5. Do you feel that house churches are able to represent a full parish expression of relational and sacramental life?
Yes 100%
No 0%

PART 2: YOUR HOUSE CHURCH LEADERSHIP

6. If you have house churches, are they led by priests, deacons, or lay ministers? (Indicate number for all that apply.)
- | | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Priests | 10 |
| Deacons | 7 |
| Commissioned Lay Ministers | 12 |

7. If you have house churches led by priests, what percentage of them are bi-vocational (i.e., meeting their personal/family expenses primarily through secular employment)?

100%

8. If you have house churches led by priests, what percentage of them are assisted by deacons?

25%

9. If you have house churches led by priests, what percentage of them receive even a small portion of the offering in the form of a stipend, honorarium, or remuneration for ministry expenses?

25%

10. If you have house churches led by deacons, what percentage of them are bi-vocational?

100%

11. If you have house churches led by deacons, what percentage of them receive even a small portion of the offering in the form of a stipend, honorarium, or remuneration for ministry expenses?

25%

12. If you have house churches led by commissioned lay ministers, how many of them receive even a small portion of the offering in the form of reimbursement for ministry expenses?

0%

13. Do the majority of your house church leaders enter this model of ministry because they are personally answering a call from the Holy Spirit and ask for your authorization to proceed or are they assigned and appointed to this ministry by those in authority over them?

Called 100%

Appointed 0%

PART 3: YOUR HOUSE CHURCHES AT WORSHIP

14. If you have house churches, are they expected to follow the same worship liturgy as your larger parishes or an abbreviated liturgical structure (e.g., the form contained in the 79 BCP, pp. 400-405)?

Same liturgy 75%

Abbreviated liturgy 0%

Neither 25%

15. If neither, are these house churches new mission 'plants' primarily attended by non-Anglicans and slowly entering into liturgical formation?

Yes 66%

No 34%

16. Do you provide your house church leadership with a ministry kit of non-consumables (e.g., chalice, paten, ciborium, water/wine cruets, altar linens, Gospel book, copies of the liturgy intended for use, and even basic vestments) or are they expected to obtain their own?

Provide	25%
Obtain	75%

17. If you have house churches under the leadership of deacons, are they authorized to officiate at a “Deacon’s Mass” with pre-consecrated host?

Yes	34%
No	66%

18. If not, are they authorized to officiate at a “Dry Mass” or “Ante-Communion” service (following the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist up through the prayers of the people and concluding with the Lord’s Prayer—e.g., per the rubrics in the 79 BCP, pp. 359,406-407)?

Yes	50%
No	50%

19. If you have house churches under the leadership of commissioned lay ministers, are they authorized to officiate at a “Dry Mass” (same as above) and/or with the liturgies from Morning or Evening Prayer?

Yes	66%
No	34%

20. If you have house churches, has your ordained leadership raised concern regarding upon what to place the Eucharistic vessels and elements in the absence of a consecrated altar?

Yes	25%
No	75%

21. If so, have you considered the Orthodox option of conferring an *antimension* (from the Greek, ‘instead of a table’) to your house church leaders? This is a Greek-style corporal sometimes with small fragments of relics sown into it, blessed and often signed by the bishop, and containing printed images of the Passion and entombment of Christ; basically a portable “altar stone” that can be placed on top of an unconsecrated surface.

Yes	0%
No	100%
I was not familiar with this Eastern practice	0%

22. If not (again referring to Question 21), have you made available or suggested to your leaders the purchase of small, adjustable height, folding tables that can be specifically blessed and set apart for use as an easily transportable altar? Some are manufactured out of plastic with a center-folding 4’x2’ surface area with adjustable height up to 36” and similar in style to a military portable field altar.

Yes	25%
No	25%
I had not considered this as an option	50%

23. Regarding the use of worship music in your house churches, do the majority of these parishes sing with live instrumental accompaniment (e.g., guitar, keyboard), with recorded music, without any music (*a cappella*), or simply don't sing?

Live accompaniment	25%
Recorded music	50%
Without musical accompaniment	25%
Don't sing	0%

24. If there is worship music in your house churches, who most often serves as the worship leader in the majority of circumstances?

The service leader	75%
The service leader's spouse	25%
Another lay member of the house church	0%

25. If there is worship music in your house churches, does it tend to reflect traditional hymnody, gospel hymnody, contemporary praise, or a combination of styles?

Traditional	75%
Gospel	0%
Contemporary	0%
Combination	25%

26. If there is worship music in your house churches but no live musicians, do you confer or loan to your leaders one of the many digital hymn players on the market preloaded "out of the box" with several thousand digital hymns and praise songs?

Yes	50%
No	50%

27. If you have house churches, do you or one of your fellow bishops make episcopal visits on these house churches to celebrate the Eucharist during their scheduled worship—particularly for such occasions as confirmation—or are the congregants encouraged to travel to larger parishes in order to be a part of episcopal visits?

A bishop visits the house church	100%
The house church travels to the bishop	0%

28. Please take a moment to offer any other comments regarding your house churches or house churches in general that you believe may benefit this study.

[Not recorded here because the answers would compromise the anonymity of the respondents and the diocese which they represented.]

Thank you for your time and assistance.

APPENDIX C:

LITURGY AND SCRIPTURE

A question posed by many churchmen is whether or not liturgy has the ability to communicate God's truth and presence to the worshipping community. To wit: Can something 'mechanical' convey the freshness and immediacy of worship found in a more contemporary setting? More specifically, is liturgy *dead* or *alive*? There is a fundamental flaw in that question. It's not a matter of freshness or immediacy; of whether liturgy is dead or alive. The real heart of the matter is whether liturgy is *true* or *false*; whether it stands on Scripture or if its very fabric is an invention.

In the pages that follow, the standard Sunday liturgy for the Celebration of the Eucharist has been reproduced from the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979). This author has annotated the order of worship with scriptural references, demonstrating how the liturgy—in addition to inheriting the ancient, biblical revealed patterns of worship—is drawn entirely from Scripture; something many contemporary services cannot claim or do. Ideally, the goal of worship is for spiritually *alive* people to participate in scripturally *true* liturgy.

The Word of God

A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung.

The people standing, the Celebrant says

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.
Amen.

2 Corinthians 1:3
1 Kings 9:8; Psalm 145:13

The Celebrant may say

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our
hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may
perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;
through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

1 Chronicles 28:9; Hebrews 4:12
Hebrews 9:14
Psalm 34:3

When appointed, the following hymn or some other song of praise is sung or said, all standing

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Luke 2:14

Psalm 95:3

Psalm 47:6

Psalm 145:1

Revelation 15:3

Matthew 26:63; Mark 1:1

John 1:29

Matthew 9:27

Luke 22:69; Colossians 3:1

Psalm 143:1

Mark 1:24

Acts 2:36; Acts 10:36

Acts 16:17

Philippians 2:11

Philippians 4:20

The Collect of the Day

The Celebrant says to the people

People The Lord be with you.
Celebrant And also with you.
Let us pray.

Ruth 2:4

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Romans 15:33

The Celebrant says the Collect.

People Amen.

2 Corinthians 1:20

The Lessons

The people sit. One or two Lessons, as appointed, are read, the Reader first saying

Luke 4:16-17; Colossians 4:16

A Reading (Lesson) from _____ .

A citation giving chapter and verse may be added.

After each Reading, the Reader may say

People The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

1 Peter 1:25

2 Corinthians 9:15

or the Reader may say Here ends the Reading (Epistle).

Silence may follow.

A Psalm, hymn, or anthem may follow each Reading.

Then, all standing, the Deacon or a Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

People The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to _____ .
Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Mark 1:1

Hebrews 13:21; 2 Peter 3:18

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.
People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Acts 20:24
2 Thessalonians 1:8

The Sermon

On Sundays and other Major Feasts there follows, all standing

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
 the Father, the Almighty,
 maker of heaven and earth,
 of all that is, seen and unseen.
 We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
 the only Son of God,
 eternally begotten of the Father,
 God from God, Light from Light,
 true God from true God,
 begotten, not made,
 of one Being with the Father.
 Through him all things were made.
 For us and for our salvation
 he came down from heaven:
 by the power of the Holy Spirit
 he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
 and was made man.
 For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
 he suffered death and was buried.
 On the third day he rose again
 in accordance with the Scriptures;
 he ascended into heaven
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
 and his kingdom will have no end.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
 who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
 With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
 He has spoken through the Prophets.
 We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look for the resurrection of the dead,
 and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Deuteronomy 6:4; Malachi 2:10
1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6
Psalms 115:15
Colossians 1:16
1 Corinthians 8:6
Matthew 27:43; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:35
John 1:14
John 10:30

Acts 13:33; Hebrews 5:5; John 14:9

John 1:10
John 12:27; 1 John 3:8

Luke 1:35

Matthew 27:22; Mark 15:15; John 19:16
Mark 15:46; Luke 13:29
Acts 13:30; 1 Corinthians 15:20
Psalms 16:10; Acts 2:3; Acts 13:37
Proverbs 30:4; John 3:13; Acts 1:9-11
Acts 2:33; Luke 22:69; Colossians 3:1
Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5
Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:33
John 6:63; John 20:22; Job 34:14-15

2 Corinthians 13:14
Acts 28:25
Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 12:23
Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27
John 5:29; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Philippians 3:11
Revelation 21:2

The Prayers of the People

Prayer is offered with intercession for
The Universal Church, its members, and its mission
The Nation and all in authority
The welfare of the world
The concerns of the local community
Those who suffer and those in any trouble
The departed (with commemoration of a saint when appropriate)

Confession of Sin

A Confession of Sin is said here if it has not been said earlier. On occasion, the Confession may be omitted.

The Deacon or Celebrant says

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

1 John 1:9

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Psalm 86:15; Luke 18:13

Psalm 51:4

Isaiah 1:18

Romans 3:23

Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37

Matthew 22:39

Ezekiel 18:30,32; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19

Luke 17:13; Matthew 6:12

Psalm 1:2; Psalm 40:8

Psalm 1:1

1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 96:8

The Bishop when present, or the Priest, stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins
through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all
goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in
eternal life. *Amen.*

Jeremiah 31:20; Psalm 25:18; 1 John 1:9; 2:12

Isaiah 41:10

Romans 15:13; Ephesians 3:16

Galatians 6:8

The Peace

All stand. The Celebrant says to the people

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People And also with you.

1 Kings 2:33

*Then the Ministers and People may greet one another in the
name of the Lord.*

The Holy Communion

During the Offertory, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung.

*Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread
and wine, and money or other gifts, to the deacon or celebrant. The
people stand while the offerings are presented and placed on the Altar.*

The Great Thanksgiving

*The people remain standing. The Celebrant, whether bishop or priest,
faces them and sings or says*

The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Lift up your hearts.
People We lift them to the Lord.
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People It is right to give him thanks and praise.

John 20:26; 1 Kings 2:33

2 Timothy 4:22

Lamentations 3:41

1 Chronicles 16:8; Psalm 9:1

Daniel 2:23

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere
to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of
heaven and earth.

2 Samuel 22:50

Exodus 31:17; 2 Kings 19:15; Psalm 115:15

Here a Proper Preface is sung or said on all Sundays, and on other occasions as appointed.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Celebrant and People

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The people stand or kneel.

Then the Celebrant continues

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

At the following words concerning the bread, the Celebrant is to hold it or lay a hand upon it; and at the words concerning the cup, to hold or place a hand upon the cup and any other vessel containing wine to be consecrated.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Celebrant and People

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

The Celebrant continues

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new

Revelation 7:9

1 Chronicles 16:23; Psalm 96:2; Hebrews 2:12

Isaiah 6:3

Revelation 4:8

Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:10

Exodus 33:19; Genesis 1:26

Romans 5:14-15

1 Peter 1:3

Luke 9:35; Hebrews 4:15

Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20

Luke 23:33; Hebrews 9:14

Luke 22:42; Leviticus 22:21; Ephesians 5:2

Matthew 26:26

1 Corinthians 11:24

Luke 22:19

Mark 14:22

John 6:48

1 Corinthians 11:25

Mark 14:23

Matthew 26:27-28

Luke 22:20

John 6:55

1 Timothy 3:9

Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

John 14:2-3

Luke 1:68; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7

Hebrews 13:15

Romans 6:4-5; 1 Peter 2:5

1 Corinthians 10:16; Hebrews 9:14

and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy,

and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever.

People AMEN!

And now, as our Savior
Christ has taught us,
we are bold to say,

People and Celebrant

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.

A period of silence is kept.

Then may be sung or said

[Alleluia.] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. [Alleluia.]

In Lent, Alleluia is omitted, and may be omitted at other times except during Easter Season.

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following Invitation

The Gifts of God for the People of God.

and may add Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

The ministers receive the Sacrament in both kinds, and then immediately deliver it to the people.

The Bread and the Cup are given to the communicants with these words

The Body (Blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in everlasting life. [Amen.]

*1 Corinthians 11:26-27
2 Chronicles 33:16; Joshua 24:24*

*Romans 6:5
2 Peter 1:11*

*John 14:13
Romans 11:36
1 Timothy 1:17; Revelation 4:11; Revelation 7:12*

Luke 11:1

Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

1 Corinthians 5:7

John 4:10; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Peter 2:10

*Romans 5:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 3:18
Psalm 34:8; Ephesians 3:17*

Romans 5:7

or with these words

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. [*Amen.*]
The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. [*Amen.*]

John 6:51
Psalms 116:13; Hebrews 9:14

During the ministration of Communion, hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung.

After Communion, the Celebrant says

Let us pray.

Celebrant and People

Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17; Matthew 5:16
Romans 15:7
Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18
1 Corinthians 10:3; John 6:55-56
1 Corinthians 10:16
John 17:18
Isaiah 41:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 1 Peter 5:10
Deuteronomy 10:12; Joshua 22:5
Psalms 4:7; Acts 2:46
Jude 1:25

The Bishop when present, or the Priest, may bless the people.

The Deacon, or the Celebrant, dismisses them with these words

Deacon Let us bless the Lord.
People Thanks be to God.

1 Chronicles 29:20; Psalm 103:1
2 Corinthians 9:15

APPENDIX D:

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR THESIS DEFENSE



SACRA DOMUS:
The Anglican House Church in
Theology and Context

by
Fr. Alan L. Andraeas

Sacra Domus:
Building a Case for the Anglican House Church
(A + B = C)

- A. Establish the scriptural foundations for a theology of liturgical and sacramental worship.
- B. Establish the scriptural, theological, and historical precedents for house churches.
- C. Establish a complementary union between sacramental, priestly ministry and the house church model of worship.

The House Church Movement (HCM)

- 24.5 percent of all Americans surveyed attend small groups as their **PRIMARY** form of spiritual gathering (Towns and Stetzer).
- 20 million attended house churches on a **WEEKLY BASIS** in 2006 (Barna Group).
- **4 TIMES** the people attend house churches as attend mega churches (Thumma and Bird).
- The house church movement is our nation's largest 'denomination' by a **FACTOR OF 3** (ex., SBC average Sunday attendance in 2012 was 6,138,776).

Liturgical House Churches?

While there is no empirical data, liturgical house churches exist in almost every Apostolic form of Christianity in North America.



One of the major changes in the Roman Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council was the willingness to bring "church" out into the daily lives of parishioners. Here mass is being celebrated at a private home in the inner city of West Philadelphia.
Religious News Service

Sacra Domus: A Plan of Attack

- Biblical Liturgy: A Worship Theology
- Biblical House Church: A Worship Context
- Post-Biblical Precedents for House Churches
- Current Trends and Issues for Anglicans
- Recommendations for Future Study and Engagement

Biblical Liturgy: A Worship Theology

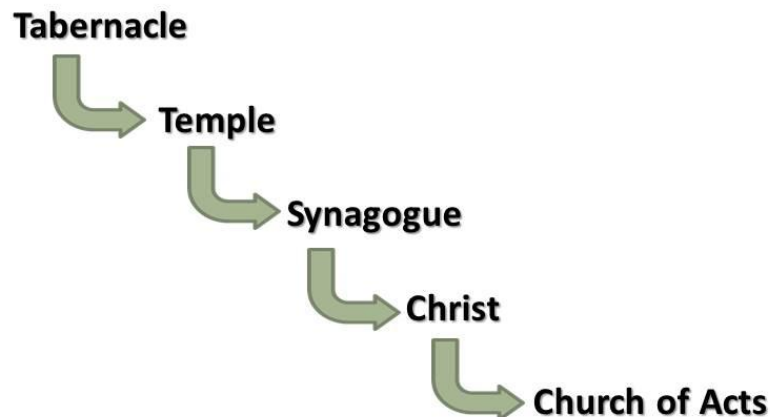
- **Worship begins with a state of humility:**
"We ourselves do not know with what we shall serve the LORD" (Exodus 10:26).
- **Man-contrived worship will always fail.**
- **Authentic worship differentiates between those who are God's and those who do not.**
"Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction Between Egypt and Israel" (Exodus 11:7).

Biblical Liturgy, cont.:

- **The Tabernacle—Heavenly Worship in Miniature**
“Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you” (Exodus 25:9).
- **20 times in Exodus:** *“...as the LORD commanded Moses.”*
- **God’s specific patterns reflected in:**
 - ✓ Organization of sacred space and furnishings
 - ✓ Liturgy and ritual
 - ✓ Sacrificial observance
 - ✓ Priestly clergy class
 - ✓ Vesture for holy duty

Biblical Liturgy, cont.:

Authentic Worship = Fidelity to the Pattern



Biblical House Church: A Worship Context

- The Garden of Eden
- Noah's Altar
- The Tent of Abraham
- Blood on the Doorposts
- The Inn of the Nativity
- The Last Supper
- Breaking Bread in Emmaus
- Acts and the Birth of the Church
- Paul's Letters to the Church

Post-Biblical Precedents for House Churches

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Constantine • Constantine • The Monastic Movement • Celtic Missionary Movement • Priscillian • Waldensians • John Wycliffe and the Lollards • John Hus and the Bohemian Brethren • Martin Luther • The Anabaptists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Moravians • The Hutterites • Puritan Conventicles • Quaker Home Meetings • Jacob Spener and the Pietests • Little Gidding • The Methodists • Bonhoeffer's Community • Parish and People • Today's House Church Movement |
|---|--|

**No century of Christian history has been without
a witness to the house church.**

Current Trends and Issues for Anglicans

- 100% of surveyed Anglican bodies have house churches.
- 100% of those bodies have no formal house church guidelines.
- 100% believe these micro-parishes are full sacramental churches.
- 50% want these house churches to “grow up.”
- 34% of the house churches are pastored by priests.
- 100% of these priests are bi-vocational “tent-makers.”
- 25% of the house churches do not use Anglican liturgy.
- 25% of the priests were uncertain about proper logistics for celebrating the Eucharist.

Summary and Conclusion

- The house church movement serves 25% of surveyed Christians.
- Liturgical house churches are numbered among them.
- No methodologies exist for liturgical house churches.
- It is incumbent upon Anglican bodies to reflect this trend in their Canons and provide the necessary guidelines, support, and resources.
- Possible future engagement:
 - ✓ Train/recruit seminarians for liturgical house church ministry.
 - ✓ Determine the feasibility of an inter-communion symposium on using house churches for evangelism and church planting strategies.
 - ✓ Draft an apologia that explains the liturgical house church to the larger house church movement to help mitigate division.

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CURRICULUM VITA

The Rev. Dr. Alan L. Andraeas, Th.D., ObSB +

EDUCATION

- Th.D. in Convergence Worship, Biblical Life College & Seminary, 2011.
- M.Div. in Pastoral Psychology & Counseling, Ashland Theological Seminary, 1989.
- B.S. in Pastoral Studies, Valley Forge Christian College, 1986.

MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS

- Christian Worker's Certificate, Assemblies of God, 1986.
- License to Preach, Assemblies of God, 1987.
- Ordination, Assemblies of God, 1989.
- Priesthood, Charismatic Episcopal Church, 1996.
- Transfer of Holy Orders, Communion of Corpus Christi, 2006
- Transfer of Holy Orders, United Anglican Church, 2008.
- Transfer of Holy Orders, Anglican Church in North America, 2012.

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

- Rector, Holy Trinity Chapel at Saint Brendan's, Dennysville, ME, 2011-present.
- Interim Pastor, Jonesboro Union Church, Jonesboro, ME, 2010-2010.
- Father Prior, Saint Brendan's, Dennysville, ME, 2005-present.
- Senior Pastor, Christian Temple Church, Lubec, ME, 2005-2010.
- Staff Chaplain, Naval Station, Great Lakes, IL, 2004-2005.
- Command Chaplain, USCG Air Station, Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, 2001-2003.
- Command Chaplain, USCG Support Center, Elizabeth City, NC, 1997-2000.
- Aide to the Chief of Chaplains, Navy Pentagon, Washington DC, 1995-1997.
- Protestant Command Chaplain, USCG Support Center, Kodiak, AK, 1992-1995.
- Command Chaplain, USS SHASTA (AE-33), Concord, CA, 1989-1991.
- Pastor, Mohicanville United Church of Christ, Mohicanville, OH, 1987-1989.
- Director of Youth, First Congregational Church, Mansfield, OH, 1985-1986.
- Religious Program Specialist, USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC-20), Norfolk, VA, 1981-1983.
- Religious Program Specialist, Naval Submarine Base, Bremerton, WA, 1979-1981.

CERTIFICATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

- Certified by the Ohio Association of Mental Health Care Chaplains.
- Member of the FEMA Chaplain Emergency Response Team (CERT).
- Member of the Delta Epsilon Chi Honor Society of American Bible Colleges.

PERSONAL

DOB: August 11, 1960

Married: Susan G.F. Carman, July 14, 1999.

Children: Audralee, Zachary, Quinton.

IRB LETTER



The Graduate School at Liberty University

March 26, 2013

Alan Andraeas

IRB Exemption 1562.032613: Sacra Domus: Theology and Praxis of the Anglican House Church

Dear Alan,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054



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