

THE MEETING

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THE MEETING

James W. Garrett

In this study, we will explore what took place when the New Testament Church gathered for what the contemporary church describes as, "the worship service." For the purposes of this study, we will simplify the matter by using the term, "The Meeting." PART ONE will examine the relevant post-Pentecostal New Testament texts. PART TWO will be an examination of documents from the first half of the Second Century (documents produced after the middle of the Second Century describe a church that had become more formalized and structured). Thus, through an examination of the New Testament and the early post-biblical documents, we will explore The Meeting as it is described during the first 120 years of the Church's existence.

PART ONE: THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORD

There is no single passage of the New Testament that instructs us concerning what should be included in The Meeting. The historical record of Acts uses the broadest of terms to describe The Meeting, or describes only certain elements of The Meeting. The same is true of the corrective and instructional material in the epistles. Even so, by examining the passages that do describe some aspect of The Meeting, we can get a fairly accurate picture of what took place in the gathered local church. In PART ONE, we first will examine the historical material in Acts, then we will turn to the epistles.

Section I The First Church Acts 2:42-47

The first forty-one verses of Acts 2 describe the birth of the Church on Pentecost Sunday. The final six verses of the chapter present a cursory description of the infant Church.

Verses 43 - 47 describe the daily life of the believers:

And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Verse 42 describes the focus of the community.

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The verb translated, *devoting*, in verse 42, *proskartereo* ($\pi\tau\sigma\kappa\alpha\rho\tau\epsilon\omega$), indicates constant attention. Its meaning is heightened by the use of the present tense in this verse, *proskarterountes* ($\pi\tau\sigma\kappa\alpha\rho\tau\epsilon\omega\nu\tau\epsilon\zeta$), from which comes the sense of *continually devoting*.¹

¹ In my opinion, "devoting" [RSV, NAS, NIV, et al.] is not a good term to use in rendering $\pi\tau\sigma\kappa\alpha\rho\tau\epsilon\omega$ in this passage. They were "devoted" to Christ, not to those things that were instruments or expressions of Him. It seems to me that a better rendering would be "continually gave their constant attention to," or "spent their time listening to the apostles' doctrine, participating in the fellowship, ..." JWG

As we progress in our study, it will become apparent that the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers were the core of The Meeting, in every locale.

The use of the definite article with each of the four elements that were the object of devotion indicates that each of these terms refers to very specific items. Literally, the verse reads,

And they were continually devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

- Thus, *the teaching of the apostles* refers to a specific body of instruction imparted by a particular set of apostles. Obviously the expression refers to the activity of the Twelve. They were living up to the role of New Covenant scribes.

Matthew 13:52 And He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old."

They were able to fulfill this role because they were experiencing the fulfillment of the unique promise that Jesus had given to the Twelve.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

John 16:13-15 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.

John 15:14-16, 26-27 You are My friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you...When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

The Twelve had been with Jesus from the beginning. He had chosen them out of the company of the disciples. They had seen and heard all that had transpired during Jesus' three and one-half year ministry. They did not remember everything nor did they understand all that they did remember. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who would cause them to remember and to understand everything, would overcome this human deficiency. An example of this refreshed memory is recorded in John 2:19-22.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.

The apostles' role in the Church was to impart this revelation concerning Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. Their role outside of the Church was to give testimony that Jesus had come forth from the tomb.²

F. F. Bruce accurately describes the situation described in this verse.

"Luke presents in this paragraph an ideal picture of this new community, rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. The community, the apostolic fellowship, was constituted on the basis of the apostolic teaching. This teaching was authoritative because it was the teaching of the Lord communicated through the apostles in the power of the Spirit. For believers of later generations the New Testament scriptures form the written deposit of the apostolic teaching. The apostolic succession is recognized most clearly in those churches which adhere most steadfastly to the apostolic teaching."³

The apostles understood their role. Acts 6:4 records their declaration of ministry priorities.

But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

Our examination of other scriptures and post-biblical writings will demonstrate that the teaching of the apostles always had a prominent place in The Meeting.

- *And to the fellowship*, as stated already, must refer to something definite, because of the definite article. It could not mean that these Jerusalem believers were devoted to the experience of fellowship, or just to fellowship in general. For one thing, the expression certainly conveys a commitment to the local body of believers, the community of the saints.

Paul, however, uses the term, *koinonia*, (the term translated, "fellowship," in Acts 2:42) to refer to the collection and distribution of gifts.

Romans 15:26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a koinonia [contribution] for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 8:4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of koinonia [participation] in the support of the saints,

2 Corinthians 9:13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your koinonia [contribution] to them and to all,

Hebrews 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and koinonia [sharing]; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Of signal interest is Paul's use of *koinonia* in his letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 1:3,5 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ... in view of your koinonia [participation] in the gospel from the first day until now.

As Lightfoot points out, the correct rendering of the Greek expression in Philippians 1:5 is not, "in the Gospel," but rather, "toward the Gospel" (Greek: εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον *eis to euangelion*).⁴ Thus, it is apparent that the *koinonia* referred to in this verse was the money

² Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32, et al.

³ Bruce, F.F., *The Book of Acts in The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) p. 73

⁴ Lightfoot, J.B., *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Hendrickson Publishers, third printing 1995 [original 1868]) page 83

they had collected and sent to Paul so he could give himself fully to the preaching of the Gospel (cf. Philippians 4:15-16).

In the light of the verses that follow Acts 2:42 (44 & 45), the collection and distribution of money and goods for the needy must be included in the meaning of *the fellowship*. The collection and distribution of gifts is one of the chief means of being devoted to *the fellowship*. This understanding of *koinonia* continued in the early church.

- *The breaking of the bread* again refers to more than sharing a meal. Without the article, "to break bread," is an euphemism for eating a meal (cf. Verse 46). However, a definite event is signified by *the breaking* and a definite bread is signified by *the bread*. This expression became an euphemism for the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

It should be noted that the early post-biblical church considered some of the passages where the definite article was missing also to refer to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper also is another expression of *koinonia*: ...*the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing [koinonia] in the blood of Christ? ... the bread which we break a sharing [koinonia] in the body of Christ?* This is why the Lord's Supper also is called "communion."

- *And to the prayers*, refers to definite prayers. This is does not refer to one who is "devoted to prayer," as is mentioned in Acts 1:14; 6:4; etc. The definite article infers that there either were set times of prayer, which would be consistent with those who were of Jewish background (Acts 3:1 *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer*), or that there were prescribed prayers, a lectionary, as would be followed in a synagogue. In the Jewish lectionary, certain Psalms were recited as prayers at prescribed times. Since the synagogue seems to have been the model for The Meeting, the practice of following a lectionary could have been carried over from the synagogue. Following a lectionary is a practice that is followed in many contemporary churches.

In all probability, the expression, *the prayers*, refers to the prayers that were offered in the corporate gathering of the Church. These inaugural believers were faithful to be present when the church met for prayer.

These four elements, described in Acts 2:42, constituted the activity of the gathered Church:

1. The teaching of the apostles
2. The sense of community, including the reception of an offering for the community
3. The Lord's Supper
4. The Prayers

As stated above, an examination of post-biblical record confirms that these four elements continued to be the core elements in the Church's regularly scheduled meetings.

Section II

The Church at Troas

Acts 20:5-11

But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. And we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead. But Paul went down and fell upon him and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." And when he had gone back up, and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.

By this time, the Church was approximately twenty-five years old. Established routines had developed under the guidance of the apostles. One of these was the practice of meeting regularly on the first day of the week. Note that Paul and his company had arrived in Troas on Monday. They were on a schedule, but they chose to remain for seven days so that they could join the church at its weekly meeting. The meeting began after the close of the workday and lasted all night. Paul and his company left early Monday morning, without any sleep. The Meeting was important to them.

The first day of the week had great significance for the Church. This was the day that Christ had come forth from the grave. Several of Christ's appearances were on the first day of the week. The Church was born on Pentecost, which was the first day of the week. Thus, the first day of the week became the day for the Church's regularly scheduled meeting.

It is interesting to note how Paul mentions the first day of the week in I Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

This passage addresses Paul's gathering of an offering from the Gentile churches to be given to the Christians in Judea. Note that Paul already had instructed the Galatian churches to do what he now was requiring of the Corinthians. On the first day of each week, each individual was to take stock of his money and put some of it into a private hoard, which he would release upon Paul's arrival. The Greek participle in this passage (*Θησαυρίζων thesauridzon* - "storing up") indicates that each individual himself is to save up the money until the designated time. The believers were not instructed to bring the money to a church service and put it into an offering, week by week.

Since this was to be done as a private act, why did Paul instruct them to make this transaction on the first day of the week? We must not assert more than the passage states. However, we can make passing comment. Gordon Fee points out that since Paul mentions this day at all, rather than saying, "once a week," implies significance to the day. This was not the day on which people were paid, so there must have been another reason. The only possibility is that this is the Christian's special day.⁵

By the time that the Apocalypse was written (95-99 AD), the first day of the week had become "the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). This is the name for the first day of the week that often was used in the Post-Apostolic era.

"The first day of the week" was Jewish terminology. So, the question must be asked, "Was Luke using Jewish or Roman time in Acts 20:7, in determining the first day of the week?" In other

⁵ Fee, Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987) p. 813

words, "Was the meeting held after sunset on Saturday evening, (when the Jewish first day of the week began) or late Sunday night?" We must reject the idea that Luke is using the Jewish method of reckoning the day, because Luke describes sunrise as the next day (verses 7 and 11 harmonized). Thus, using Roman time, midnight and sunrise mark the next day even as they do in our present usage.

The meeting was held late Sunday night, since Sunday was a workday for everyone. It was not until the reign of Constantine that Sunday became a day off. Constantine made this change in Roman society so that Christians would not have to work on their day of worship. Where there is a record of the time of The Meeting (pre-Constantine), it was early Sunday morning before the workday began, or in the evening. In some places, it was both.

The purpose of The Meeting was to "break bread." Verse 7 must be understood in the light of verse 11, which speaks of Paul's breaking *the bread*.

*And when he had gone back up, and had broken **the bread** and eaten*

The church had gathered for an *agape* feast. The Lord's Supper was the central event. So, in verse 11, Paul is pictured as participating in the Lord's Supper, then snacking at the *agape* feast (the word translated, "eaten," [geusamenos - γευσάμενος] literally means, "to taste") while continuing to discourse with the brothers.

Three of the Acts 2:42 elements in The Meeting are mentioned, therefore, in this passage:

1. The Lord's Supper
2. The Teaching of the Apostles (Paul's speech).
3. The Fellowship (the *agape*)

There is no mention of The Prayers in this account, although Paul did pray for Eutychus.

Excursus: The Agape Feast

The *agape* had its origin in the shared meals in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem communal meals came into existence because of the need for a communal existence in the embryonic Church. Poverty in Jerusalem always had been very great, but a new element was added when many of the Jews from the Diaspora accepted the Gospel. As noted in Acts 2, the audience for Peter's Pentecost sermon included Jews and proselytes from fifteen nations or regions. They had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. Many of these accepted the Gospel message and remained in Jerusalem to be a part of the newly formed Jerusalem Church. This is evident from the Acts 6 record of the conflict between Palestinian Jewish Christians and those from the Diaspora. These former pilgrims had no place to stay, no income, and their resources quickly were exhausted.

As the Holy Spirit shed love abroad in the hearts of the new converts (Romans 5:5), those with means surrendered their possessions for the use of the corporate body (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32, 37; 5:2). Hospitality became a necessary means of survival. Believer's homes became boarding houses with free room and board. Those with property sold their assets and gave the money to the apostles for the provision of food for the common meals. These shared meals came to be called, "*agape* feasts," after a period of time, since they were an expression of the love for Lord and for the brethren. The terms, "brother" and "sister," had real meaning. They were the family of God.

By the time that the Acts 6 controversy arose, there seems to have been an adjustment to the pattern. In Acts 6, food is distributed to the widows, rather than having them share in a communal meal provided by the common purse.

When the need for the communal meal ceased, the *agape* continued as a tradition in many quarters. The continuance of this tradition probably was enhanced by the fact that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in conjunction with a sacred meal. In some regions, the *agape* became regular part of The Meeting (perhaps even the heart of The Meeting).

It should be no surprise to us that the *agape* was observed among many of the Gentile churches. Most religions of the Gentiles included feasts in the pagan temples as a part of their religious expression. Thus, when these pagans became Christians, the *agape* was a very natural transition. A study of the churches of the New Testament and their respective cultures cause us to conclude that in each locale, the culture did effect what happened in The Meeting.

Section III

The Lord's Supper and the Abuse of the Agape in Corinth

I Corinthians 11:17-34

But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.

In Corinth, the *agape* had gotten out of hand. The purpose of the Sunday gathering should have been to partake of the Lord's Supper. Instead, the Corinthians were focusing on the *agape*, and had become very self-indulgent at the meal. Not only were they given to gluttony and drunkenness, but also they were very insensitive to the poor among them.

In order to understand the scene, we must pay attention to the place of The Meeting. The Sunday meetings were held in the more spacious homes of prosperous Corinthian Christians. The New Testament records two and possibly three such homes among the converts of Corinth. The first is the home of Titus Justice, whose house was next to the synagogue. This is where the church gathered after being excluded from the synagogue.⁶

⁶ Acts 18:7

The second house would be that of Gaius (I Corinthians 1:15), whom Paul described as *host to me and the whole church* (Romans 16:23, written from Corinth).⁷

A third possibility would be the home of Crispus, the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue (Acts 18:8). A person of this high status in society would have had a fine house.

The architecture of these houses helps to understand some of Paul's comments. The average Corinthian house contained a dining room, called the *triclinium* (the term, *triclinium*, refers to a three-sided table at which the diners reclined while eating), which could accommodate 9 to 12 diners (average size of a *triclinium* was about 18 x 18 feet) and an *atrium* (a large entry courtyard), which would accommodate 30 to 50 guests. Thus, the host and those whom he invited, would eat in the *triclinium*. The majority of the church would eat in the *atrium*.

Gordon Fee states,

"In a class-conscious society such as Roman Corinth would have been, it would be sociologically natural for the host to invite those of his/her own class to eat in the *triclinium*, while the others would eat in the *atrium*. Furthermore, it is probable that the language, "one's own supper," (v. 21) refers to the eating of private meals by the wealthy, in which at the common meal of the Lord's Supper they ate either their own portions or perhaps privileged portions that were not made available to the 'have-nots.'"⁸

Paul did not eliminate the social distinctions as such. They still would have their houses in which to eat their private meals (vv.22-23). What he did speak against was the insertion of these social distinctions into the meeting, where Christ had made them one, signified by their eating *one loaf*.

1 Corinthians 10:17 *Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*⁹

Instead of sharing as an expression of *koinonia*, the *agape* in Corinth had become an occasion of self-display and self-indulgence. Each person satisfied his own hunger, even to the point of gluttony. The *agape* had become the opposite of what its name implies.

The Lord's Supper, which should have been the focus of their meeting, was obscured by the *Agape*. The Lord's Supper had become just another element in a common meal. This blasphemy brought forth a stinging rebuke from Paul. He told them that if eating and drinking is why they got together, they should do it at home.

Paul's statement, that they could eat at home, places the *agape* in the realm of tradition, but not a necessary one. The Lord's Supper, however, was another matter. It was sacred and should have been the focus of their gathering.

The verses before us in I Corinthians 11 constitute a key passage concerning the regular gathering of the local church. First is the language that Paul uses in verses 18 and 20.

⁷ Bruce suggests that Gaius and Titius Justice are the same person (Bruce, F.F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible [London, 1971]. Thus, his full Roman name would have been Gaius Titius Justice. This is plausible, but there seems to be no reason to take this position.

⁸ Fee, Gordon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987) p. 534

⁹ The Greek term translated, 'bread,' in this passage is ἄρτος (*artos*), which means 'loaf.'

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it... Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

The phrase, *when you come together* in verse 18, and *meet together*, in verse 20, are renderings of the Greek term, συνέρχεσθε (*sunercheste*). This term is repeated five times in verses 17-22 and 33-34. It is used the same way in 14:23 and 26. The word had become a semi-technical term for the "gathering together" of the people of God for worship (The Meeting).

The expression, *as a church*, is a rendering of ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (*en ekklēsia*), which carries the idea of "in assembly." *Ekklesia* is a term that originated in the Greek city-states. Every citizen of the city had a right and responsibility to attend the meetings in which the decisions for the city were to be made. However, every city had more non-citizens than citizens in residency. Therefore, when it was time for a city meeting, a crier would go through the streets calling the citizens out of the populace to come to the meetings. *Ekklesia* literally means, "the called out ones." They were called out of the general populace to attend the meeting. Because of this, *ekklesia* came to mean, "The Assembly." "Assembly" seems to have replaced the etymological meaning of the word ("called out ones"), at least when speaking of a group. This background explains the language of the town clerk in Acts 19:39-41, and his anxiety over the illegal *ekklesia* [an illegal gathering]. *Ekklesia* is the term used in Acts 19: 39 & 41 for the illegal assembly that had gathered and the legal assembly where the matters should have been dealt with.

"But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly [ekklesia]. "For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's affair, since there is no real cause for it; and in this connection we shall be unable to account for this disorderly gathering." And after saying this he dismissed the assembly [ekklesia].

In the Septuagint, *ekklesia* was used to refer to Israel as a gathered people (Deuteronomy 4:10 and scores of other references).

Deuteronomy 4:10 *"Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble [ekklesia] the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'*

Even though the term came to be a generic designation for the people of God, the idea of being "gathered together" always was inherent in the term. Because of this underlying meaning (as well as Paul's use of the term, *en ekklēsia* in the passage before us), it is not incorrect to say that we are "going to church," when we speak of attending The Meeting.

Thus, informal gatherings in their homes or other impromptu meetings are not described in this passage. This passage refers to the set meeting of the church, what in our tradition is the Sunday morning worship service. It was The Meeting. The group gathered with that as its identity.

Paul scolds them that even though they ostensibly were coming together to partake of the Lord's Supper, they were not doing so. Their irreverence toward the loaf and the cup of the Lord's Supper made their partaking an empty gesture. More than that, it made them *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27).

It is not within the scope of this study to embark upon a theology of communion, i.e., is it a sacrament, a memorial, etc. The point that is relevant to this paper is that the Corinthian Church considered the reason for their being gathered together was to partake of the Lord's Supper and Paul affirmed that this should have been the purpose of their gathering.

We find two elements in this passage that are relevant to our study:

1. *Koinonia* (although *koinonia* was aborted) in the *Agape* feast (which Paul said was optional)
2. They partook of the Lord's Supper

Section IV

Charismata in The Meeting in Corinth

I Corinthians 14:26-33

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

The three chapters, Twelve through Fourteen of First Corinthians, speak to the problem of spiritual manifestations in Corinth. In these chapters Paul gives correction concerning the abuses of tongues and prophecy that were present in the Corinthian Church. For the purposes of our study, only verses 26-33 (especially verse 26) are relevant.

First, we must state that outside of this passage, there is no mention of charismatic activity in a worship service until the Montanist movement in the last quarter of the Second Century. That movement, incidentally, was very heretical (see Addenda A). The existence of prophets is mentioned both in Scripture and post-biblical documents. One of the post-biblical documents instructs the church to give the prophets, which were itinerant, freedom to speak in the meeting. However, there is no description of the sort of activity described in I Corinthians 12 -14.

Paul is not exhorting the church to include these gifts in the meeting, but is giving guidelines for their use, if they are present. That they were being manifested in the gathering at Corinth should not surprise us.

The Corinthians had been won to Christ out of religions in which this sort of activity took place in the temples. That is why Paul wrote, *Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

In some of the Corinthian cults, "inspired utterances" (including tongues) were a part of the worship, in spite of the fact that the adherents were worshipping mute idols. The inspired utterances in the pagan worship probably came from demons (I Corinthians 10:20-21). Therefore, when tongues began to be manifested in the gatherings of the Corinthian church, some wanted to forbid them. They were seen as an intrusion of the demons from the pagan religions. One of the noteworthy differences between the prophetic and inspired utterances of the pagans and that of the Christians was the matter of ecstasy. In ecstasy, the worshipper has no control over himself. He is "beside himself." The servant of Christ, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, never loses the ability to choose his behavior.¹⁰

¹⁰ The only recorded possible exception to this axiom was when classes of individuals had an initial encounter with the Holy Spirit (Jews in Acts 2; Gentiles in Acts 10; and disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19). The manifestation

1 Corinthians 14:32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

Throughout this section, Paul speaks of order, which is not possible in the presence of ecstasy, but very necessary in a meeting that has the approval of God.

1 Corinthians 14:33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

The expression, *each one* (verse 26), describes a service in which there is a general participation. This verse (26) as well as verse 23, and 11:2-16 (in which women are praying and prophesying in the assembly), indicate that there was general participation by all members and that there was considerable expression of the more spontaneous gifts of utterance. Paul spoke no word of disapproval of this type of a meeting, as long as it was regulated. For instance, he regulated the demeanor of women who were involved in such public expressions (11:2-16).

One evidence of the congregational participation is the "amen" (14:16). Everything that took place should involve the whole congregation. Every prayer should be intelligible so that every member could respond by saying, "Amen."

The elements which Paul sought to regulate but to allow in the service were singing (chanting), instruction, revelation, messages in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. The phrase, *when you come together each one has*, implies that at least some of these items had been prepared before arriving at the service.

- *Each one has a psalm.* The Greek word, ψάλλω (*psallo*), originally meant, "to touch," then came to mean, "to pluck" the string, to cause it to spring, referring to the string of a bow. Very early, the term also came to refer to plucking the strings of a musical instrument. The term occurs forty times in the Septuagint, always referring to playing a stringed instrument, sometimes including a song that is sung. In some instances in the New Testament, the term refers to one of the Old Testament psalms. In the passage before us (I Corinthians 14:26) the term would refer to a song that someone has composed to be sung in the worship service. The composer probably planned to sing a solo, perhaps accompanied by a musical instrument.
- *Has a teaching* is difficult to define. Perhaps certain ones had insight into Old Testament scriptures that they wanted to elucidate. Testimony may have been involved here.
- *Has a revelation* would refer to prophecy. This is seen from the use of the term in verses 29 & 30.
- *Has a tongue, has an interpretation* are a unit. In 14:5 & 13, the tongues speakers are urged to seek the gift of interpretation. So, someone could have received a tongue with an interpretation during the week. On the other hand, if someone has a tongue without the interpretation, and there is no known interpreter present, he is to keep silent. This language goes against the common practice in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in which a word in tongues is given and then there is a pause to see if anyone has the interpretation. Verse 28 clearly indicates that tongues messages should be given in the service only if the presence of an interpreter is known in advance of the delivery of the tongues message. The implication

in each case was praising god in a language unknown to the speaker and in one instance (Acts 19), prophesying. Although it is not stated, some would understand the recipients of the Spirit in these three passages to be speaking in tongues apart from their will to do so. The case could be argued, however, that this is not the necessary meaning of the language of the text.

of this is that those who had the gift of interpretation were known for having that gift and were so identified.

The purpose of all activity at The Meeting should be to build up the corporate body as well as to encourage individual believers in holy living.¹¹

1 Corinthians 14:26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, ...let all things be done for edification.

Hebrews 10:23-26 addresses this purpose of The Meeting.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

This passage from Hebrews is one of several in the epistle that warn against apostasy and/or backsliding. The main concern is that no believer falls back into willful sin. The prescription for avoiding this is for believers to stimulate and to encourage one another in godly living. The setting for this edifying activity is in *The Meeting of ourselves* (literal translation).¹² Thus, a primary purpose for The Meeting is for the mutual encouragement of believers. Hebrews does not spell out how that is to be done.

The concept of mutual encouragement is a remote concept in many church gatherings today. This passage describes something far different from a meeting in which church members enter the building, sit down as spectators, and listen to professional singers, professional choirs, and a professional orator, then go home. It's not that having musicians and speakers is wrong, but if the structure of the service does not allow for some interaction between believers, before, during, or after The Meeting, *stimulating one another* and *encouraging one another* just can't happen.

The one exception to this statement is attendance itself. Just being present in a meeting is an encouragement. To miss a meeting is to discourage. All of us have experienced the difference between the encouragement of a full room, and the discouragement of empty seats. Every believer should feel the need to be present in the meeting, because his presence is uplifting to the church.

I Corinthians 14:26 is key to this activity. When the Holy Spirit gives individual members songs, words, and prophecies, there should be a place in an orderly service for these blessings to be bestowed upon the body, within the numerical limits set by Paul in verses 27 and 29,

If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; ...And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

¹¹ "The building up of the community is the basic reason for settings of corporate worship; they probably should not be turned into a corporate gathering for a thousand individual experiences of worship" (Fee, Gordon, *I Corinthians* NICN)

¹² The Greek terms here are very rich in meaning. We must avoid the temptation to pause and consider them, because this would not be relevant to the theme of this paper

Section V

Exhorting one another in Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Song

Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18-20

Two other passages that relate to mutual edification are Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Ephesians 5:18-20 ...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father...

There is much similarity between these two passages. First we will note the distinctives and then the material that they have in common.

- *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.* The Greek term, *of Christ*, is subjective genitive, indicating that Christ is the speaker of the word. There doesn't seem to be any reference to any specific body of truth, either written or oral, but the idea is that the word spoken by Christ should be in the heart of the believer as an inner monitor. Over the centuries, the expression usually has been interpreted as the Gospel.

The exhortation is, *richly dwell within* you, not *among* you. The Greek term is *enoikew* (ἐνοικέω), which means to "indwell." Therefore, this is an exhortation to the individual Colossians, not just to the corporate body. Lightfoot renders this phrase, "richly dwell in your hearts."¹³ Parallel passages are I John 1:10; 2:14b.¹⁴

1 John 1:10 *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

1 John 2:14b *I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

- *Be filled with the spirit* [literal translation - "keep on being filled with the Spirit"], is a statement contrasting two states: one is the result of the excitement of wine and the other is the result of the inspiration and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The Colossian letter's exhortation to allow the Word of Christ to dwell richly in the heart, and this exhortation to remain filled with the Spirit, encompass the two sources of spiritual life for the believer: the Word (Scripture) and the Spirit.
- *With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another...speaking to one another.* This brings to mind Paul's description of his role as preacher, *And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ* (1:28).

¹³ Lightfoot, J.B, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philippians* (Hendrickson Publishers, reprint of 1875 edition, reprinted in 1995) page 224

¹⁴ Acts 18:5 is another possible parallel: *But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word* [literally, "was pressed by the word], *solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

Here, he states that not only is it the preacher's responsibility to admonish and teach, but it is the responsibility of the entire congregation to be so engaged. "Teaching and "admonishing" are opposite sides of the same activity.

- *with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* This is how the teaching, admonishing, and speaking to one another is to take place, through the positive action of reciting psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, couched in a spirit of thanksgiving. There is nothing here of "speaking into one another's lives." Instead, through our singing, we should create an atmosphere in which teaching and admonishing are the spiritual air breathed by our redeemed spirits.
 1. *Psalms* may be restricted to Old Testament Psalms, but this is improbable, here. Psalms would be more formal compositions. Because of the etymology of the term, we assume that they are songs that lend themselves to being accompanied by a musical instrument.
 2. *Hymns* are songs or poems sung or recited to God in praise of God. Very few songs in "the hymnal" are hymns. Most are psalms or spiritual songs. Whereas psalms and hymns are terms used exclusively for religious songs or poems, the term translated *songs*, both in the Ephesian and the Colossian passages, is a general word for any type of song.
 3. *Spiritual songs* are songs that are neither psalm nor hymn, but still are uplifting songs, and spiritual in nature. This would include, but not be limited to, spontaneous songs given by the Holy Spirit.

The import of these verses is that whether a psalm, a hymn, or a spiritual song, each one should be the vehicle of instruction, admonition, and encouragement of thanksgiving to God.

Neither of these passages (Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20) can be restricted to being a description of only what happens in The Meeting. This is an exhortation concerning the general conduct and attitude of believers. However, these passages do describe singing as one means of *stimulating one another* and *encouraging one another*. They fall within the parameters of The Meeting, as described in Hebrews 10:23-26 and I Corinthians 14:26.

The question arises, "Were musical instruments used in The Meeting?" This is an age-old question that often has divided the Church. This question was a source of conflict in almost every denomination in America, during the early years of our nation's history. Various groups spun off from the parent denominations as a result of the debate. For example, there still is a small group of Presbyterians that are "non-instrumental." The largest contemporary group of non-instrumentalists are the Churches of Christ. In some southern and western areas of the U.S., there are more non-instrumental Churches of Christ than any other type of church. Most of them are relatively small. In the northern and eastern states, various Anabaptist groups are a capella.

In my opinion, this question cannot be answered with absolute certainty. However, the etymology of *psallo*, leads me to conclude that stringed instruments were permitted, possibly even assumed to be present, if available.

Section VI

The Prayers in Colossae

Colossians 4:2-3

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

The Greek terminology here is the same as Acts 2:42. Literally, the passage reads,

In the prayer, all of you continue, watching in it with thanksgiving, praying together also concerning us...

The definite article, *the prayer*, and *praying together*, indicate a prayer meeting of the church. This is not just an exhortation to individuals to be “devoted to prayer.” Again, it is an exhortation to faithfulness to the times of prayer in the church, when they are together.

Section VII

Reading Apostolic Letters in Colossae & Laodicea

Colossians 4:16

Colossians 4:16 *And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.*

Tychicus was Paul's companion and fellow laborer. He was with Paul in Rome, where Paul was a prisoner awaiting judgment before Caesar. Epaphras, a member of the Church at Colossae, visited Paul and Tychicus and reported on the strange heresy that was spreading at Colossae and the surrounding churches. From the statements in the Colossian epistle, the heresy seems to have been a mixture of Judaism and Gnosticism. Paul's distress was extreme. He responded immediately by writing four letters (or three, see footnote).¹⁵ The first was to Colossae and a second to Laodicea. A third letter, Ephesians, probably was written as circular letter for the churches of Asia (Ephesus was the leading city) which Tychicus would carry from church to church.

Onesimus, a fugitive slave from Colossae, had come to Rome, hoping to find anonymity there. Through some unknown means, he met Paul and became a Christian. Since Tychicus was traveling to Colossae with the letters, he took Onesimus with him, planning to return him to his master, Philemon. Tychicus was greatly respected as Paul's companion fellow laborer. He could provide protection from Philemon's anger toward Onesimus, but Paul did not leave it at that. He wrote a letter to Philemon.

Paul assumes that his Colossian letter will be read in The Meeting. He urges the church also to read the Laodicean letter. The circular letter, Ephesians, also would have been read at Colossae. Thus, The Teaching of The Apostle(s), the apostolic epistles carried by Tychicus, would have been read in The Meeting.

Section VIII

Paul's Instructions to Timothy

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul wrote that the reason for his writing the epistle was to give instruction on proper behavior in the church.

1 Timothy 3:15 *but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

The epistle contains a number of instructions relating to church life, including qualifications for leadership, proper conduct in meetings, the behavior of women believers, etc. Some statements are relevant to The Meeting. Two exhortations concerning The Prayers are relevant:

¹⁵ The Laodicean letter has been lost, unless this title refers to the Letter to the Ephesians. There is an argument that can be made for the view that Ephesians is the letter coming from Laodicea, since Tychicus would have visited Laodicea before he came to Colossae and would have read the Ephesian circular letter there. If this is true, then Paul wrote only three letters, instead of four.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 *First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*

1 Timothy 2:8-9 *Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension. Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments;*

Two exhortations concerning The Teaching of The Apostles are relevant:

1 Timothy 4:13 *Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.*

1 Timothy 4:16 *Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*

Thus, Paul instructed Timothy on the proper conduct of two elements in The Meeting:

1. The Teaching of The Apostles
2. The Prayers

PART TWO: POST BIBLICAL TEXTS

The post-apostolic period was a time of transition for the Church. Problems no longer could be solved by an authoritative answer from an apostle. The Church had to deal with various subtle teachings that began to arise in certain quarters. Respected leaders and others, who are anonymous, produced documents that sought to bring order and stability (in some instances, uniformity), to the maturing Church. Some advocated a single overseer in each local church, who would be authorized to pronounce judgment on truth and error. As the decades progressed, some began advocating a hierarchy in which a single overseer had authority over certain geographical districts. Indeed, this is what happened and territorial overseers (bishops) became the norm by the Third Century.

A number of documents from the Second Century and early in the Third are available for our study. One thing that immediately grabs the attention of the unbiased student is how quickly after the passing of the Twelve, religion began to infest the Church. As an example, we cite *The Didache*, which is one of the earliest and most respected documents. In the New Testament, when someone accepted Christ as Savior, he immediately was immersed. There was no prolonged period of teaching or probation. He was immersed in water and received the Holy Spirit. This was considered a given.¹⁶ The apostles and their companions trusted the Holy Spirit to renew the convert's mind and to transform his inner spirit. However, by the time that *The Didache* was composed, immersion had become a religious event. It no longer was a transaction between the new convert and Christ, but it had become a transaction between the convert and the increasingly formalized Church. In the *Didache* section on immersion (Chapter 7), water seemed to have sacramental value and immersion must be preceded by fasting (both the one being immersed and the one doing the immersing). A period of instruction was required between the time the convert confessed Christ and his immersion. *The Didache* also contains the first reference to a substitute for immersion,

¹⁶ The one exception is in Acts 8, in which the Samaritans believed and were baptized, but did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came to Samaria. It is apparent that the reason for this exception was the necessity of giving credibility to the admission of Samaritans into the Church. Up to this point, only Jews had been admitted. With the sanction of Peter and John, there was not question as to the validity of the Samaritan Church.

Now concerning immersion, immerse as follows: after you have reviewed all these things,¹⁷ Immerse in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you have no running water, then immerse in some other water; and if you are not able to immerse in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And before the immersion, let the one immersing and the one who is to be immersed fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be immersed to fast one or two days beforehand.

The necessity of a period of fasting preceding immersion, concerns for the right sort of water (running, cold, etc.), the sacramental view of water (water as an agent is important), is a reflection of the religious view of the initiatory act. The important thing was the symbolism acted out in immersion (the death of the old man and birth of the new, as well as participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ). The symbolism and the significance of the event was important, not the application of water.

Another example from the *Didache*, advances a salvation by works:

Do not be someone who stretches out his hand to receive, but withdraws when it comes to giving. If you earned something by working with your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins.

The point is that in reading the early post-biblical documents, we must be wary. It is important to note the practices that are consistent with the New Testament, and those which are not. However, there is great value in reading these documents. They did come from the age closest to the Twelve and many of the documents were produced by those who had heard the apostles or who were students of those who were companions of the Twelve. They flesh out for us some of the areas in which the New Testament gives only a glimpse. We will move through our study by beginning with the earliest documents referring to The Meeting.

Section I

An Ancient Christian Sermon

The most ancient Christian sermon in existence has been erroneously labeled, *The Second Letter of Clement*. It is not a letter, nor was it written by Clement. It is a sermon, based on Isaiah 54:1, urging repentance. The preacher is an unnamed elder. It is a call to repentance, purity, and steadfastness. It is rather lengthy. Some scholars date the sermon at around 100 AD, and some as late as 140 AD. This is a sermon that would have been delivered in The Meeting. In one passage, it speaks of the elders' admonishing the congregation and urges the believers, after they go home from the service, to not forget what the elders said and urges a frequent return to the place of The Meeting.

And let us think about paying attention and believing, not only now, while we are being admonished by the elders, but also when we have returned home let us remember the Lord's commands and not allow ourselves to be dragged off the other way by worldly desires, but let us come here more frequently and strive to advance in the commandments of the Lord, in order that all of us, being of one mind, may be gathered into life.¹⁸

¹⁷ I.e., reviewed with the candidate all of the material in the *Didache* preceding this section

¹⁸ Translated by J.B. Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers, Greek Texts and English Translations of their Writings* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1992) page 125

A few lines later, the preacher comments on the judgment day fate of those who do not heed the elders.

...saying, "Woe to us, because it was you [Jesus], and we did not realize it nor did we believe; and we did not obey the elders when they spoke to us about our salvation."¹⁹

Here we have an example of a sermon that was preached in The Meeting and reference to the elders' preaching in The Meeting. Preaching or exhortation was a part of The Meeting at the opening of the Second Century. This is consistent with the picture that we have seen in the New Testament.

Section II The Letters of Ignatius

Ignatius' writings (composed around 110 AD) are the first occurrence of the idea of a single overseer [bishop] with authority over a geographical area. His letters reveal that he was committed to enforcing a three-level church government in each locale: (1) a single overseer who was like Christ Himself in authority; (2) a council of elders, which was like the apostles in authority; (3) deacons, who were to be honored as the servants of Christ. This is a sharp departure from the two categories (elders and deacons) that are pictured in the New Testament and in all documents that precede Ignatius.²⁰ His letters inform us of his anxiety over the growth of false teaching that is moving through the churches. He defines the overseer as the person responsible for declaring false teachers as heretics and that any who did not agree with the overseer were not in harmony with Christ.

Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch in Syria. For some unknown reason, he was arrested and transported to Rome in the custody of ten soldiers (whom he called, "leopards") to be executed. At a fork in the road, probably near Laodicea, the soldiers decided to take the northern route through Philadelphia to Smyrna, thus bypassing the churches that lay along the southern route. Delegations from the southern churches met Ignatius along the way and he responded by writing letters to each of the churches. He also sent a letter ahead to Rome, alerting the church of his pending arrival there. Later he sent two letters back to Philadelphia and Smyrna and a letter to his friend Polycarp. His letters reveal that three things were on his mind: (1) the struggle with false teachers within the churches; (2) the unity and structure of the churches; (3) his impending death.

In his **Letter to the Ephesians**, he describes the prayers that take place in The Meeting and urges the Ephesian Christians to attend The Meeting and participate in the prayers.

Let no one be misled: if anyone is not within the sanctuary,²¹ he lacks the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two has such power, how much more that of the bishop together with the whole church! Therefore whoever does not meet with the congregation thereby demonstrates his arrogance and has separated himself, for it is written: "God opposes the arrogant."²²

Later he urges,

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Some documents that are contemporary with Ignatius and some that came later, reflect the elder/deacon pattern of leadership, rather than the three tiers advocated by Ignatius.

²¹ The term, "sanctuary," is used in reference to the Church, the *ekklesia*. There were no church buildings at this time, so the term could not refer to the auditorium in which the local church gathered.

²² Lightfoot and Harmer, *Apostolic Fathers* page 141

Therefore make every effort to come together more frequently to give thanks and glory to God. For when you meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are overthrown and his destructiveness is nullified by the unanimity of your faith.²³

At the end of this letter, he addresses the sustaining power of the Lord's Supper.

...with an undisturbed mind, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ.²⁴

In Ignatius' **Letter to the Magnesians**, he likewise urges the importance of gathering for prayer.

Do not attempt to convince yourselves that anything done apart from the others is right, but, gathering together, let there be one prayer, one petition, one mind, one hope with love and blameless joy, which is Christ Jesus, than whom nothing is better.²⁵

In his **Letter to the Philadelphians**, he urges faithfulness to the Lord's Supper (frequently called "the Eucharist" in early Christian writing).

Take care, therefore, to participate in one Eucharist, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup which leads to unity through His blood... in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God.²⁶

In the **Letter to the Smyrnaeans**, Ignatius condemns those who hold heretical opinions, one of which is the denial of the appropriateness of the Lord's Supper

Now note well those who hold heretical opinions about the grace of Jesus Christ which came to us; note how contrary they are to the mind of God...They abstain from the Eucharist and prayer because they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by His goodness has raised up.²⁷

The letters of Ignatius mention two elements in The Meeting:

1. Prayer
2. The Lord's Supper

Section III The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles by the Twelve Apostles (the *Didache*)

This document usually is referred to today as the *Didache* ("The Teaching"), although its full title is that quoted above. It is one of the most fascinating and in some ways perplexing documents to emerge from the early church. Although the title was known from references to it in ancient literature (some even used it as Scripture), no copy was known to exist before 1873. In that year, Bryennios discovered a manuscript that contained many ancient documents, including the *Didache*. There are a number of quotes and references to the *Didache* in documents from the First through the Fifth Centuries.

²³ *ibid.* page 145

²⁴ *ibid.* page 151

²⁵ *ibid.* page 155

²⁶ *ibid.* page 179

²⁷ *ibid.* page 189

Even before the Bryennios discovery, various leaders, responding to quotes found in other ancient writings, were influenced by the *Didache*. For example, Wesley required Methodist preachers to follow the quotes from the *Didache* on fasting. The Pharisees fasted on Mondays and Thursdays, because those were market days and more people would notice their fasting. So, the *Didache* forbade fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, because those were the days that hypocrites fasted. The *Didache* prescribed fasting on Wednesday and Friday. Wesley felt so strongly about this matter, that he refused to ordain anyone to Methodist ministry who did not fast on those two days.

The *Didache* has been the subject of intense study, since its discovery in 1873. In spite of all of the attention given to it, no one knows who wrote it, where it was written, nor the exact date of its origin. Internal evidence makes clear that it is a composite of earlier documents, some of which seemed to have been written 60 - 80 AD (one scholar argues for 40 AD as the date for one portion of the document). There are sixteen short chapters, or sections, in the *Didache*. Some sections come close to contradicting one another, because they were written by different people in different settings. For example, ADDENDA B illustrates the different things said about how to handle prophets.

We cannot determine with certainty when the compilation of these documents was completed. Some have argued for as late as 150 AD, but most students of the document would date it much earlier. 120 AD is a general peg on which to hang the date of the compilation.

The *Didache* is divided into two parts:

1. Instruction about the "Two Ways," which is a summary of basic instruction about the Christian life to be taught to those preparing for immersion and church membership;
2. A manual of church order and practice, which includes instructions about food, immersion, fasting, prayer, the Eucharist, and various offices and positions of leadership.

There are several things in the *Didache* that refer to The Meeting.

The *Didache* has a high view of preachers:

My child, night and day remember the one who preaches God's word to you, and honor him as though he were the Lord. For wherever the Lord's nature is preached, there the Lord is. 4.1²⁸

Confession of one's sins in the meeting is commanded:

In church you shall confess your transgressions, and you shall not approach your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life 4:14^{29 30}

²⁸ *ibid.* page 255

²⁹ *ibid.* page 257

³⁰ This command in the *Didache* is very consistent with the other witnesses. Sin was not considered a private matter in the early Church, but it was something that destroyed the unity of the *koinonia*. Early on the debate took place about restoring backsliders. Believing that all of one's sins were washed away in immersion, the Christians struggled about what to do about one's sins afterward. Three sins in particular - sexual immorality, murder, and denial of the faith (apostasy) - were considered to be forgivable by God but not by the Church. The penalty for anyone of these was exclusion from the *koinonia* and the deprivation of the Lord's Supper. Most believed that communion was a source of divine grace and withholding it put a person's salvation in peril. The first leader to accept repentant sinners as a matter of policy was Callistus, who was the overseer in Rome during the years 217-222. He readmitted penitent sinners who had been guilty of adultery. He argued that the church is like Noah's ark, containing both clean and unclean animals. The debate continued to be intense. In time the most stringent opposition to re-admission came from

Specific prayers are to be prayed at the Lord's Table:

Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks as follows.

First, concerning the cup:

We give you thanks, our Father,
 For the holy vine of David your servant,
 Which you have made known to us
 Through Jesus, your servant;
 To you be the glory forever.

And concerning the broken bread:

We give you thanks, our Father,
 For the life and knowledge
 Which you have made known to us
 Through Jesus, your servant;
 To you be the glory forever.
 Just as this broken bread was scattered
 Upon the mountains and then was
 Gathered together and become one,
 So may your church be gathered together
 From the ends of the earth into your kingdom;
 For yours is the glory and the power
 Through Jesus Christ forever.

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been immersed into the name of the Lord, for the Lord has also spoken concerning this: "Do not give what is holy to the dogs." 9:1-5³¹

Novatian, an elder and respected theologian in Rome. Novatian lost the day. The Roman Catholic sacrament of penance for sins following immersion grew out of this controversy.

³¹ *ibid.* page 260-261

Following the Eucharist, another long prayer of thanksgiving is prescribed, with the following note at the end:

But permit prophets to give thanks however they wish.10:7³²

As illustrated in ADDENDA B, the *Didache* addresses the proper conduct of apostles and prophets (traveling ministries) and how to treat these two. In one paragraph, apostles are called prophets, so there is some overlapping in the rules. These, however, were traveling ministries that would speak in The Meeting.

Faithfulness to The Meeting is urged, as well as reconciliation before partaking of the loaf. The Lord's Day was the designated day for The Meeting.

On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the sacrifice concerning which the Lord said, "In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is marvelous among the nations."³³

In the *Didache*, we find the following elements in The Meeting:

1. Preaching & teaching (preachers, apostles, and prophets)
2. The Lord's Supper
3. Prayer
4. The confession of sin (which relates to preserving the life of The Fellowship)

Section IV

Justin Martyr

Christian theology seemed to be the utmost nonsense, to most educated and cultured Greeks and Romans. The moral sobriety and devotional piety of Christians made them appear unconventional. Their doctrines caused them to be viewed as politically dangerous. In the Second Century several apologists arose to defend and explain Christianity. Justin was one of the foremost. He was a Greek, born in Flavia Neapolis, near ancient Shechem. He was trained as a teacher of Platonic philosophy. He came to the Christian faith through - not in spite of - the philosophic traditions of his day. Wearing the philosopher's garb, he opened the first Christian school in Rome. His defense of Christianity was very rational. Tradition says that he was beheaded during the reign of Marcus Aurelius for refusing to offer token sacrifices to the Roman Gods. Justin's writings are c. 150 AD.

These selections are from Justin's **First Apology**

Section 61 (this is a section on immersion. We begin the reading at the place where the new convert is taken into The Meeting to participate in the Lord's Supper) On finishing the prayers we greet each other with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of water and mixed wine are brought to the president of the brethren and he, taking them, sends up praise and glory to the Father of the universe through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanksgiving at some length that we have been deemed worthy to receive these things from him. When he has finished the prayers and the thanksgiving, the whole congregation present assents, saying, "Amen." "Amen" in the

³² *ibid.* page 263: i.e., The prophets did not have to follow the written prayers, but could pray freely.

³³ *ibid.* page 267

Hebrew language means, "So be it." When the president has given thanks and the whole congregation has assented, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the consecrated bread and wine and water, and they take it to the absent.

Section 66 This food we call Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or as common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God's word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus. For the apostles in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, thus handed down what was commanded them: that Jesus, taking bread and having given thanks, said, "Do this for my memorial, this is my body"; and likewise taking the cup and giving thanks he said, "This is my blood"; and gave it to them alone (Mark 14:22-24; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). This also the wicked demons in imitation handed down as something to be done in the mysteries of Mithra; for bread and a cup of water are brought out in their secret rites of initiation, with certain invocations which you either know or can learn.

Section 67 After these [services] we constantly remind each other of these things. Those who have more come to the aid of those who lack, and we are constantly together. Over all that we receive we bless the Maker of all things through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites [us] to the imitation of these noble things. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the congregation assents, saying the Amen; the distribution, and reception of the consecrated [elements] by each one, takes place and they are sent to the absent by the deacons. Those who prosper, and who so wish, contribute, each one as much as he chooses to. What is collected is deposited with the president, and he takes care of orphans and widows, and those who are in want on account of sickness or any other cause, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers who are sojourners among [us], and, briefly, he is the protector of all those in need. We all hold this common gathering on Sunday, since it is the first day, on which God transforming darkness and matter made the universe, and Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturday, and on the day after Saturday, he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them these things which I have passed on to you also for your serious consideration.³⁴

This is the most important document from the post-apostolic era, concerning The Meeting. Because it was written as an "apology," it carries much weight in that it is a part of a document in which Justin is arguing for a fair hearing from the Emperor. In this lengthy *First Apology*, he was careful to describe Christianity in detail, so that the Emperor would know in depth what Christians were about.

³⁴ *Readings in Christian Thought*, Hugh T. Kerr, Editor (Abingdon, Nashville, 1978) pages 25-26

Several things arrest our attention in these selections. First is the fact that the Church met "on the day called Sunday." Note that Justin used the Roman name for the first day of the week, since he was writing to a Roman Emperor.

There seems to have been a break in the service, an informal time, in which they greeted one another with a kiss. The kiss following the prayers had an important part in the service of the early Church. In time, this practice came to be known as "The Kiss of Peace." This certainly would be an expression of *koinonia*.

The memoirs of the apostles or the writing of the prophets are read. The "memoirs of the apostles" were the Gospels. The "prophets" was a standing designation among Christians for the entire Old Testament. However, the Old Testament prophets had special appeal to the early Christians because so many prophecies concerning Christ are found therein. There was not a set length for the reading, but it was "as long as time permits."

The "presiding brother" then delivered a sermon. It was an expository sermon, based on the scripture reading of the day.

The congregation stood for prayer and sent up "prayers." Standing for prayer was the customary posture for prayer in The Meeting. Other texts and paintings from this era confirm this. Standing for prayer meant that one had special privileges to come to God the Father through Christ. To stand before the Father meant that one was accepted by God and had the right to speak freely. The prayer seems to have been a corporate free prayer. Earlier in his *Apology*, Justin describes the content of their prayers:

We praise the Maker of the universe as much as we are able by the word of prayer and thanksgiving for all the things with which we are supplied... Being thankful in word, we send up to him honors and hymns for our coming into existence, for all the means of health, for the various qualities of the different classes of things, and for the changes of the seasons, while making petitions for our coming into existence again in incorruption by reason of faith in Him.

Justin uses the common post-biblical name for the Lord's Supper, the "Eucharist" (the term, *eucharistas*, means, "thanks"). He presents this as a central element of The Meeting. The water and wine used in the Eucharist was the common table drink of that era. Wine was diluted with water. The loaf and the cup were sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer. The overseer's thanksgiving (Greek - *eucharistas*) made the bread and mixed wine no longer common bread and common drink. They now were set apart.

Note that the description of the Eucharist in the *Didache*, and the description in Justin have some minor differences. In the *Didache*, the cup was prayed for first. In Justin, the loaf is first. In Justin, the wine is mixed with water. In the *Didache*, there is no mention of such mixing.

The weekly reception of the Eucharist was so important to spiritual life, and to the sense of *koinonia*, that the deacons took it to those who were not able to attend the meeting. Thus, every member of the congregation expressed his oneness with the *koinonia* by individually partaking of the loaf and the cup each week.

An offering was received from those who were able and inclined to give. The purpose of the offering was for benevolence. There is no mention of tithing for the support of the local church, as is urged in most evangelical churches today.

Note that in Justin's description, the four elements of Acts 2:42 are described, no more and no less:

1. The apostle's doctrine (reading Scripture and preaching)
2. The Fellowship (including an offering)
3. The breaking of the bread
4. The prayers

This was what The Meeting consisted of in Rome, 140 AD

Because music is so important in contemporary Christianity, we naturally would ask, "Where's the music?" If it did exist in The Meeting, it would have been included in the prayers. Chanting prayers was the practice in the synagogue and there is strong evidence that the synagogue was one of the models for early Christian worship. An example of this in Justin's description of the service is the "Amen." When an individual offered a prayer in the synagogue, the congregation chanted loudly, "Amen." It is interesting that the synagogue so influenced the church that this Hebrew word was taken over into the church and used by Greek speaking and Latin speaking Christians in Rome.

To quote Dr. Everett Ferguson, "It is commonly said that in the medieval church the Mass was emphasized at the expense of other activities of worship, and that in the Reformation (I would add Evangelicalism - JWG) preaching was highlighted at the expense of the rest of worship. The worship described by Justin brings us back to fundamentals."³⁵

Section V

Pliny

The Roman Emperor, Trajan, had commanded persecution of the Christians throughout the Empire. The Roman governor of Bithynia seems to have been troubled by this. He arrested Christians and thoroughly investigated Christianity. Torture was one means of interrogating Christians. He could not find any crime with which to charge them. Wanting to remain faithful to Roman law, he didn't know what to do. In 112 AD, he wrote to the Emperor for guidance in how to conduct the persecution. The following is an excerpt from his letter to Trajan.

...maintained that the amount of their fault or error had been this, that it was their habit on a fixed day to assemble before daylight and recite by turns a form of words to Christ as a god; and that they bound themselves with an oath, not for any crime, but not to commit theft or robbery or adultery, not to break their word, and not to deny a deposit when demanded. After this was done, their custom was to depart, and to meet again to take food, but ordinary and harmless food.

We have to wonder how much Pliny understood what really went on in The Meeting, but we do see that the practice of Christians in Bithynia was to gather at a set time. The "recitation by turns" probably referred to some sort of responsive Scripture reading, a common practice in the synagogue. Furthermore, in the synagogue model, Scripture and prayer were combined as they prayed Scripture. The food may have been the Lord's Supper or an *agape*.

In this fragment, the elements of Acts 2:42 seem to be present:

1. The apostles doctrine
2. The fellowship (including the meal)
3. Possibly but not certain: the breaking of the bread
4. Prayers

³⁵ Dr. Everett Ferguson, *How We Christians Worship*, in Christian History Magazine, Issue 37, Vol. XII, No.1, page 10

There are many other documents that could be studied from the second half of the Second Century and the first half of the Third Century. However, desiring to stay as close to the New Testament as we can, we limit our study to those documents from the first half of the First Century.

Conclusion

What do we conclude from a study of the New Testament and these post-biblical documents? What should constitute The Meeting in a contemporary New Testament Church? We must avoid the legalism of those who would restrict our meetings to include only those things that are recorded in these documents. In every age and in every place the Holy Spirit will lead humble elders to design and oversee services that are appropriate for the health of the church in every setting. However, the fact that the Church, (a) under the direct oversight of the apostles; (b) followed by the Church of the sub-apostolic period; (c) followed by the Church of the post-apostolic period; demonstrated consistency in what constituted The Meeting, must to some degree be our norm. To neglect any of the four core elements: The Teaching of The Apostles, The Fellowship, The Breaking of The Bread, The Prayers, is to fail to be a New Testament Church.

In the apostolic era, The Teaching of The Apostles was communicated by the apostles, in person. After the death of the apostles, the Church was devoted to Apostolic teaching through the reading of the apostles' writings. Note that even before the close of the First Century, The Teaching of The Apostles was being put into "Scripture" (II Peter 3:15-16).

The Teaching of The Apostles is found in the New Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament would not be excluded, however, for much of the New Testament makes no sense apart from a knowledge of the Old Testament. Paul would exhort us, even as he exhorted Timothy, *Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.*³⁶

It is not the role of New Testament leadership to come up with new and innovative teachings. Our role, on the contrary, is to **avoid** coming up with anything new, and to present, faithfully, the *faith once delivered unto the saints.*³⁷ Thus, much of a leader's ministry is reminding people of what they already know.³⁸ One of the main sources of doctrinal perversions is the need to present some new teaching or some new insight. Many believers, caught up in this, are like the Athenians who spent their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.³⁹ The following apostolic warning has been fulfilled in every era since the founding of the Church.

2 Timothy 4:1-4 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

³⁶ I Timothy 4:13

³⁷ Jude 3

³⁸ The New Testament contains several exhortations to remind people of what they already know: I Timothy 4:6; II Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 13:3, 7; II Peter 1:12-15; 3:1; Jude 5

³⁹ Acts 18:21

This being true, it is important that every elder practice accurate exegesis and follow a responsible hermeneutic. Our first responsibility is to determine what the Holy Spirit said through the human author. This and only this is what we are to communicate to the church. To do otherwise is to run the risk of presenting our teaching instead of The Teaching of The Apostles. Usually, when an elder rejects these disciplines, it is because he does not want the accountability to truth that is imposed by such care.

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

The Fellowship clearly refers to the Church. We must be concerned that our understanding of "church" includes a sense of being an organism. We have written so much on this in previous conclave papers that there is no need to labor the point. Needless to say, the New Testament Church knows nothing of the individualism that characterizes the contemporary American Church. Neither is it expressed in the institutionalism that developed in the Second Century and now is full blown in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Denominations.

The attitude that believers have toward the fellowship should be one of giving. *Agape* commitment toward the fellowship is required. *Agape* is a word that involves the will, a choice to do or say, without regard to one's emotions. *Agape* is a foreign concept to baby-boomer Christians, who are feeling oriented.

The offering, the prayers, the Lord's Supper, all are opportunities for us to give ourselves to expression of *koinonia*.

Agape says, "I will not attend the meeting because of what I can get out of it, but because of what I can give to it." *Agape* says, "I will attend the meeting and hope that the Holy Spirit will use me to feed, encourage, or instruct, even if I am able to do no more than add my voice to the congregational chorus." The "church-hopping" phenomena, so common in our day is in direct contradiction to being devoted to The Fellowship.

When He established the Lord's Supper, Jesus did not say how often the rite should be observed. He said, *As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of Me.* The Lord's Supper was instituted at the Passover, an annual event. We might conclude, therefore, that the Lord's Supper was to be observed annually. However, the early Church did not so conclude. Under the guidance of the Apostles, it was observed weekly.

It is clear that The Breaking of The Bread was the focus of The Meeting in the New Testament and the early Second Century. For that matter, it was the focus of The Meeting until modern times. There is no other area in which the contemporary evangelical movement has departed from the New Testament more than this one. In many congregations, The Lord's Supper never is observed. In others, it is observed off in a small room somewhere, rather than being at the center of The Meeting. In some congregations, it is observed but a few times each year. In most churches, it is considered to be an optional event. All of this is a far cry from the New Testament Church's being devoted to The Breaking of The Bread. One has to wonder what positive effects we would see in our churches if the Lord's Supper, properly observed, were at the center of our weekly service.

The Prayers are but a brief interlude in most Sunday services. There almost is an embarrassment if the public prayers last too long. We seem to be in a season in which God is calling His Church to return to a devotion to The Prayers. One wonders if leaders and congregation really believe that prayer makes any difference. If we do, then there is nothing more important that we can do on Sunday morning, than to unite in prayer. After the prayers are prayed, let there be a sense that

"We have just done something that is going to make a difference and we have done it together, as The Fellowship."

One of the things that hinder the New Testament model in our day is the influence of the evangelistic crusades in previous generations. In many congregations, Sunday morning is the time to evangelize. This is not the New Testament model, although it may be appropriate in varying degrees in certain settings. Making Sunday morning an evangelistic meeting is one of the chief sources of shallow Christians and of churches that are no more than institutions. The Meeting should be devoted to building up The Fellowship, through The Teaching of The Apostles, The Breaking of The Bread, and The Prayers.

ADDENDA A **The Montanists**

Sometime between 155 and 172 AD, Montanus emerged in Phrygia, demanding a higher standard for the Church and separation from the world. He was concerned about the growth of formalism in the Church and the dependence on human leadership, rather than the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He saw the rising prominence of a single bishop in the local church as an expression of this tendency. If he had gone no further than advocating pure living, holiness, and less formalism in the Church, Montanus would have done nothing but good. However, he went much further. He believed that the Church was overly reliant on Scripture. Montanus advocated a Spirit-guided Church. Montanus contended that inspiration was immediate and continuous and that he was the Paraclete through whom the Holy Spirit spoke, even has the Holy Spirit had spoken through Paul and the other apostles. When he did refer to Scripture, it was with a fanatical misinterpretation. He and his two prophetess associates, Prisca and Maximilla, went about prophesying in the name of the Holy Spirit. The Montanists prophesied in a state of ecstasy, as though their personalities were suspended while the Holy Spirit spoke through them. They described themselves as lyres across which the Spirit swept to play a new song, and declared that any opposition to their new prophecy was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Montanus developed an elaborate eschatology, prophesying the speedy Second Coming of Christ. He taught that the Kingdom of Christ soon would be set up at Pepuza in Phrygia and that he would have a prominent place in that kingdom. In order to be prepared and qualified for this coming kingdom, He and his followers practiced strict asceticism (much fasting, eating only dry foods, and no remarriage for widows or widowers, etc.). His doctrine of a new age of the Spirit suggested that the Christian period, centering on Jesus, had ended. He claimed the right to push Christ and the apostolic message into the background. In the name of the Holy Spirit, Montanus denied that God's decisive and normative revelation had occurred in Jesus Christ. The movement was strongest around Carthage and the eastern lands. Montanism was regarded as heresy in most churches. Finally, in 381, the Council at Constantinople officially declared that Montanists were pagans.

The Montanist's puritan approach to life appealed to the Roman lawyer, Tertullian, who had become a Christian while practicing law in Rome. About 202 AD, Tertullian became a Montanist. A prolific writer and apologist, Tertullian wrote a description of Charismatic activity in a Montanist church service (from "A Treatise on the Soul," *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1975 American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition), Volume 3, Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian (Hendrickson) page 336.

"For, seeing that we acknowledge spiritual charismata, or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift, although coming after John (the Baptist). We have now amongst us a sister whose lot it has been to be favored with sundry gifts of revelation, which

she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church: she converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord; she both sees and hears mysterious communications; some men's hearts she understands, and to them who are in need she distributes remedies. Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions. It may possibly have happened to us, whilst this sister of ours was rapt in the Spirit, that we had discoursed in some ineffable way about the soul. After the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services, she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in vision (for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed). "Amongst other things," says she, "there has been shown to me a soul in bodily shape, and a spirit has been in the habit of appearing to me; not, however, a void and empty illusion, but such as would offer itself to be even grasped by the hand, soft and transparent and of an ethereal color, and in form resembling that of a human being in every respect." This was her vision, and for her witness there was God; and the apostle most assuredly foretold that there were to be "spiritual gifts" in the church. "

ADDENDA B

The Didache on how to handle apostles and prophets

Section 11:3 Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle leaves, he is to take nothing except bread until he finds his next night's lodging. But if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. Also, do not test or evaluate a prophet who speaks in the spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven. However, not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he exhibits the Lord's ways. By his conduct, therefore, will the false prophet and the prophet be recognized. Furthermore, any prophet who orders a meal in the spirit shall not partake of it; if he does, he is a false prophet. If any prophet teaches the truth, yet does not practice what he teaches, he is a false prophet... But if anyone should say in the spirit, "Give me money," or anything else, do not listen to him. But if he tells you to give on behalf of others who are in need, let no one judge him.

12:1 Everyone "who comes in the name of the Lord" is to be welcomed. But then examine him, and you will find out - for you will have insight - what is true and what is false. If the one who comes is merely passing through, assist him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you for more than two or, if necessary, three days. However, if he wishes to settle among you and is a craftsman, let him work for his living. If he is not a craftsman, decide according to your own judgment how he shall live among you as a Christian, yet without being idle. But if he does not wish to cooperate in this way, then he is trading on Christ. Beware of such people.

13:1 But every genuine prophet who wishes to settle among you is "worthy of his food." Likewise, every genuine teacher is, like "the worker, worthy of his food." Take, therefore, all the firstfruits of the produce of the winepress and threshing floor, and of the cattle and sheep, and give these firstfruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if you have no prophet, give them to the poor. If you make bread, take the firstfruit and give in accordance with the commandment. Similarly, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the firstfruit and give it to the prophets. As for money and clothes and any other possessions, take the "firstfruit" that seems right to you and give in accordance with the commandment.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Lightfoot & Harmer, pages 263-267